

## **Calendar Sharing Becoming New Social Phenomenon and Marketing Tactic**

By Ross Dunn, CEO, [StepForth Search Engine Placement Inc.](#)

Online calendars have been available for many years now but the calendar-sharing feature that Google has included in Google Calendar has opened the door to a great a form of social marketing that is bound to make waves and possibly increase your bottom line.

### **What is Google Calendar?**

If you are not a GMail user or even a fan of Google you may not know what I am talking about so here is some background. GMail is Google's free web-based email program, which has many [features](#) that has helped it create a significant user base. After the emergence of Google Mail (GMail), Google launched a number of additional free applications for Gmail users, which culminated in a combined solution called [Google Apps](#). One of these applications is Google Calendar, which is the subject of this article.

Google Calendar is similar to popular calendar applications like Microsoft Outlook and Yahoo calendar. Google Calendar (for the sake of brevity lets call it "GC" from now on) allows you to quickly and efficiently create single or recurring events with a click of a mouse. As with most Google applications, this software includes loads of functionality, far more than I can cover in this small article so this is a link to a [Tour of GC](#). The most interesting capability of GC is the ability to share your calendars with the world.

### **How Calendar Sharing Entered My Life**

My fiancée, Sara, has a brutal job that requires her to work obscene hours over strange stretches of time; she is a full-time critical care nurse. As a result, we often find it difficult to schedule time with friends because there is confusion over when she does or does not work. Thankfully, Sara switched to Gmail from Hotmail on the advice of a friend and began using Google Calendar. A short while later I received an invite by email to add her work calendar to my Google Calendar profile. Upon accepting I was delighted to find it allowed me to overlay her work schedule over mine. Voila! I shared my calendar with her and in an instant of googled technological wonder we were able to coordinate our busy lives.

The point of this story is that within all of this immersion into GC I soon found my marketing brain clicking into overdrive; there is commercial value in this free service! There had to be a way to offer a calendar on a website so that prospective customers could view it. This would be great for event-oriented companies; I had to know more.

### **Event Publisher Guide**

With my commercial nose in high gear, I spent more time reviewing the capabilities of this cool new software, which led me to Google's [Event Publisher Guide](#). Found in the 'About' section of GC, the Event Publisher Guide explains how anyone can offer their calendar publicly on their personal or commercial website. Trust Google to cover all the bases because this useful page provided the tools required to make Google Calendar very commercially viable.

So how does this work and how can it help you? The unfortunate fact is that it may not help all of you but it is likely to help those who need to market events. Here is an example of how this free technology could become an easy and effective method to market your business.

## Application Example

Imagine you are the marketing manager of a local playhouse and your job is to get the word out about all of the upcoming plays and concerts. You currently have a website that advertises this information in the form of a schedule but you are always on the lookout for additional ways to keep in the public eye. You also know that your target market will not always remember to check your site for the latest events.

Here is what you need to do to leverage Google Calendar and increase your exposure:

1. [Sign up for Google Calendar](#)
2. Create a new calendar and carefully create the title and description of your calendar so that it accurately describes the region and topic of your event listing. This part of the calendar creation requires some basic search engine optimization because once you make your calendar public it will be made available to prospective customers searching for event calendars in your locale.
3. Populate the event calendar with all of the year's upcoming events for your playhouse. In each event, make sure to provide a link directly to the reservation page on your website. If you can, add tracking to the URL so that you can tell the sale came from your shared calendar. When setting up the event in GC provide as much detail as you can within the space provided. After all, like any online resource you want your viewers to find this calendar extremely informative and useful. Once you are complete, set the calendar as public.
4. Follow the instructions on the [Event Publisher Guide](#) to find the address that directly links to your new calendar.
5. Now you can either add a text link or create a button for your website that accurately states what you are offering your viewers. Remember that they may not have a clue what Google Calendar is so be very clear. In this instance creating a link that states "Add Our Events to Your Google Calendar" may be enough to secure some interest; however, you might want to add a second link stating 'More Info' where you can provide a brief educational note. When a visitor clicks on the subscription link they will be taken to Google Calendar, asked for their login and password, and then asked whether they want to add your calendar to their calendar list. When they say 'yes' your calendar (based on the name you chose) will appear in their list of calendars.

## Why Is This So Cool?

So now you know how to implement Google Calendars into your website, but why is it so worthwhile?

- ✓ Your potential customer will be reminded to check for upcoming events whenever they see your calendar in their calendar list.
- ✓ Google Calendar is bound to be used more and more to aid planning nights out for busy couples and families.
- ✓ The calendar your potential customer subscribed to is dynamic. In other words, whatever you add or delete is reflected in every person's calendar immediately. This form of customer interaction is a marketer's dream and has been previously impossible with the exception of opt-in email notices, which have become seriously ineffective due to today's inundation of SPAM.

## Don't Give Up Hope

After seeing my example above you may be disheartened that Google Calendar has no commercial application for you. Before you dismiss this new tool, I challenge you to spend a little more time considering

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the potential applications for your business. This is a relatively new social phenomenon, and as such it is largely unexplored. After a little deep thought or a night's sleep, you may just discover an entirely different application that will work perfectly for you and your bottom line.

### **Catch the Gravy Train**

Google Calendar is catching on like wild fire and I expect that additional functionality will make it irresistible to marketers. Step up and get your foot in the door now before the Calendar craze becomes another SP@M fest where users get jaded and the potential gains diminish.

If you have been keeping up on my [SEO blog](#) you also know that [the latest research](#) conclusively shows that families are using the Internet to help them organize their increasingly busy lives. I have no doubt that Google Calendar is playing right into this niche and soon whole families will be signing up and sharing calendars. This is a ripe market with immense possibilities; welcome to the age of personalization and social search, I wish you the best of profits.

### **Authors Bio**

Ross Dunn is the CEO of StepForth Placement Inc., a search engine marketing company founded in 1997 and based in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. StepForth provides cutting-edge search engine optimization services that provide highly successful, targeted results for its clientele. Ross Dunn is a Certified Internet Marketing and Business Strategist (CIMBS) with a background in web design and online marketing. His broad Internet experience in combination with a talented staff has made StepForth a name synonymous with top results. Ross is currently the primary contributor to StepForth's SEO Blog; a regularly updated blog devoted to the latest in SEO and search engine news.