

Predicting Your 2018 Marketing and Communications Calendar

A Study of Audience Intent by SHIFT Communications

We're fully into the year-end sprint, when marketers and communicators must score major wins before year's end and plan for the year ahead. Many of us are entering budgeting and financial forecasting now; marketing planning for 2018 begins in just a few weeks.

Wouldn't it be great to know ahead of time what the rest of the year looks like?
Wouldn't it be even better to know what to budget in 2018?

With technologies like predictive analytics, we do – and with this study, you will, too. Let's look at a few examples of the months to come.

Your Email Marketing Calendar

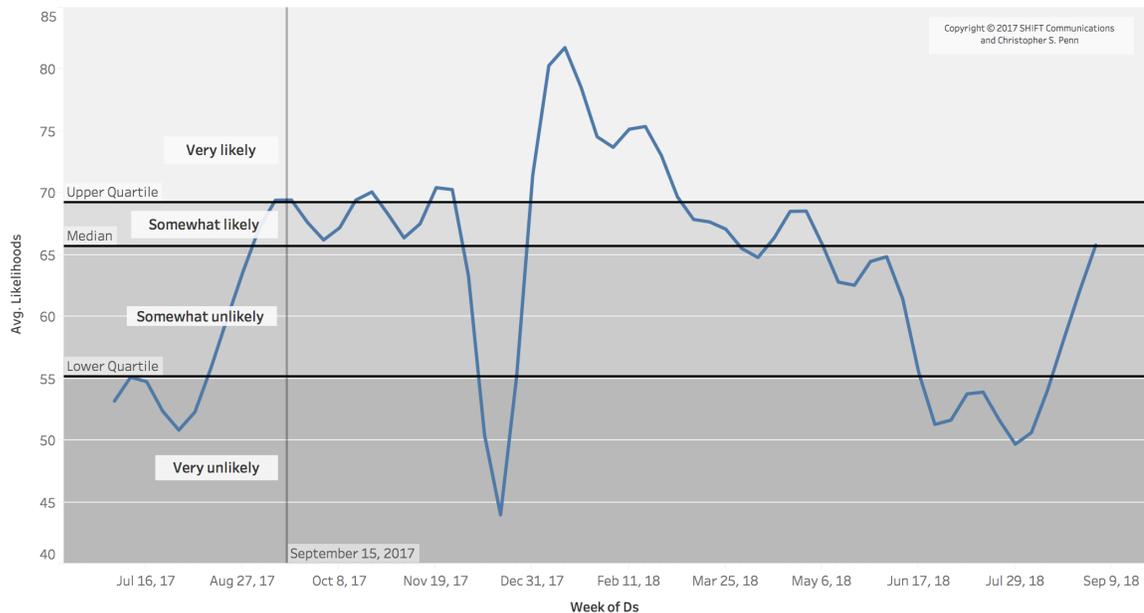
Marketers and communicators alike still rely on email heavily to reach journalists and publications. Most pitching is still done by email and phone for public relations and sales professionals.

Wouldn't it be great to know when people are reading their email - and when they're not?

If someone Googles for "outlook out of office", it's logical to assume they're looking for how to operate the feature. Generally speaking, we don't turn on our Out of Office message for just a few hours; we're out of the office at least a day, usually longer.

In this analysis of people searching for the term, we inverted the search volume - when are people **LEAST** going to be looking for the feature. The result? A week-by-week calendar of when we should be reaching out.

What weeks are people likely to read your email marketing?



The trend of average of Likelihoods for Ds Week. The data is filtered on Ds, which ranges from 7/1/2017 to 9/2/2018.

The most important times are those in the upper quartile, the lightest grey in the chart above. These are the periods of time when people are searching for “*Outlook out of office*” the least – meaning they’re in the office, reading email.

We have from the week of September 10th until the week of November 26th to land our messages in inboxes. After that, we don't see people checking back into their inboxes until the new year.

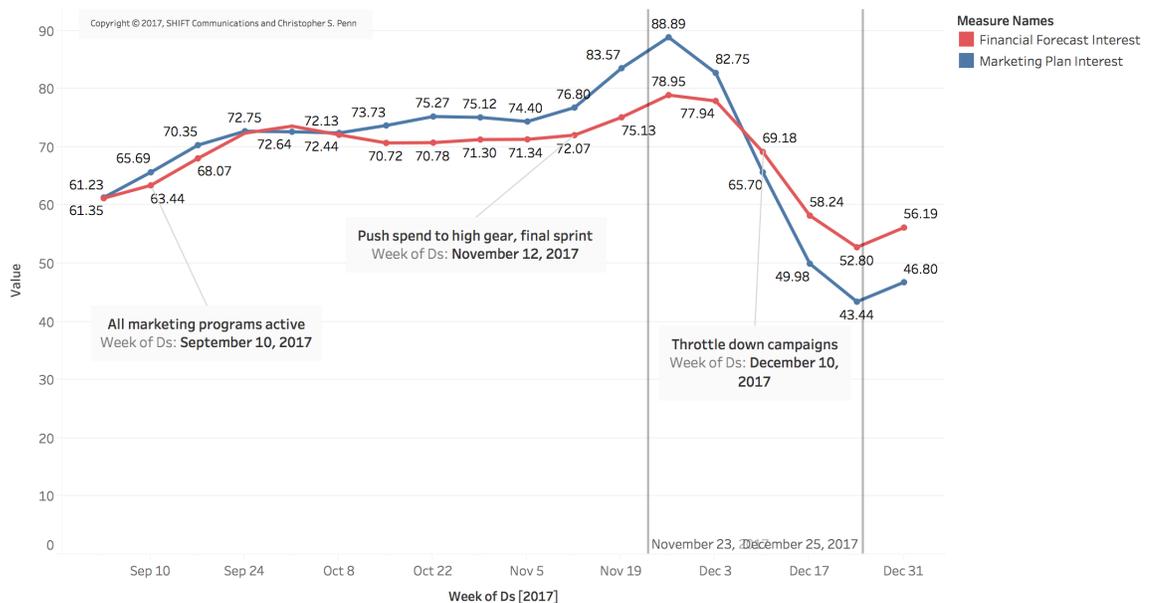
Speaking of which, the entire first quarter is when our email outreach should push to the highest of high gear, but especially the second week of January through the second week of February. Anything and everything we can do to reach people via email in Q1 will pay higher dividends than the rest of the next 12 months. Plan accordingly.

At SHIFT, we're planning our public relations programs around these behaviors. We know that during low periods, we'll need to be extra creative in how we pitch journalists and publications, because the traditional methods will simply net us an auto-reply vacation notice. Is your PR team ready? If not, we're happy to help guide them or supplement their efforts.

B2B Marketing and PR Calendar

For B2B companies looking to reach prospective customers, we often want to be present before budgets and forecasts are finalized. It's a much easier sale if we're penciled into the next year's budget! So, when are companies starting their planning and forecasting processes?

B2B Marketers Calendar



The trends of Financial Forecast Interest and Marketing Plan Interest for Ds Week. Color shows details about Financial Forecast Interest and Marketing Plan Interest. The data is filtered on Ds, which ranges from 9/1/2017 to 1/1/2018.

Above, we see search interest in financial forecasting (and related terms) in red, search interest in marketing plans, templates, etc. in blue.

Financial forecasting and planning picks up immediately after Labor Day and remains a strong topic of interest until about the second week of October. We have a narrow window, about a month, to help our current and future customers forecast their budgets for the coming year - including our companies' service offerings.

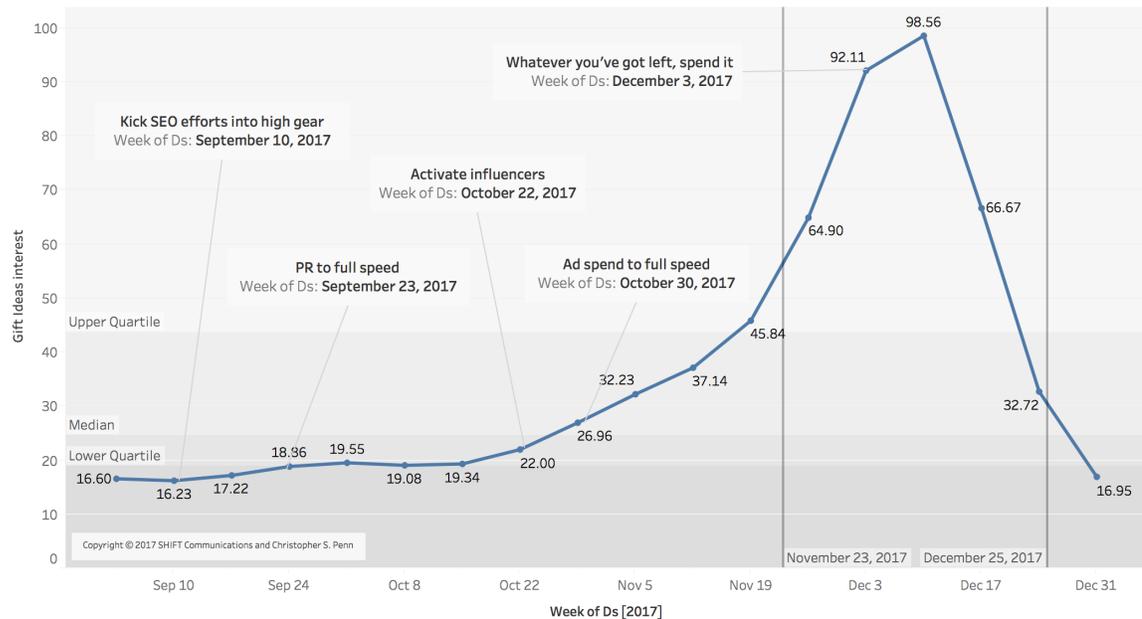
After that, the next cycle of budgeting and forecasting happens right after Thanksgiving. We have a *scant three weeks* to reach people before the holidays are over and the new year begins - with budgets already locked and potentially out of our reach.

At SHIFT, we're working with clients in advance of these search trends to ensure they're in year-end roundups, review sites, and top-tier business publications in their industries so that when business executives (and their interns) are Googling for companies to shortlist, our clients will make the list. Is your PR team doing the same? If not, we're happy to help guide them or supplement their efforts.

B2C Marketers and Communicators

For B2C marketers, undoubtedly Q4 is make-or-break. When do consumers begin their holiday shopping? When they start thinking about gift ideas, gift guides, and gift-related topics for the holiday season.

B2C Marketers Calendar



The trend of sum of Gift Ideas interest for Ds Week. The data is filtered on Ds, which ranges from 9/1/2017 to 12/31/2017.

Gift idea interest begins around the third week of October; to make the most of this, your public relations program should be in high gear already to ensure your placement in gift guides.

Mid-October is when to ramp up influencer outreach - especially video influencers and unboxing/product reviews!

The first week of November, bring ad programs and short-lead PR pitching to full speed - but save some budget for the stragglers.

We see a massive spike in the last-minute, "Amazon will have it" crowd the week of December 3, so having ads and pitches everywhere will pay the greatest dividends.

At SHIFT, we've been working on gift guides since August, when long-lead publications start asking for holiday roundups. Combined with custom-built social media influencer analytics, our clients will avoid coal in their stockings.

SHIFT is Ready to Help You

We hope these analyses help you meet or exceed your Q3/Q4 and 1H 2018 marketing and communications goals. We're ready to help you bring them to life, if your current agency or team is overloaded or overwhelmed.

If you'd like to talk to someone at SHIFT about exceeding your communications goals, or to commission a predictive study that's specific to your industry niche, reach out to us. We're ready to help you.

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