

TIPS FROM A WEB EXPERT

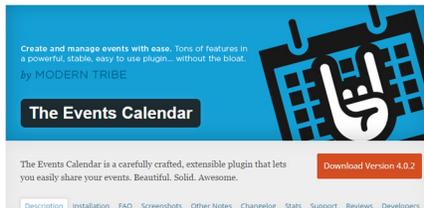
These insights were provided by Graham Budd, senior web developer at the [Rivers Agency](#).

Calendar on Websites

Calendars and events for websites can be one of the trickier things to present well. There can be many types of events and many considerations such as pricing, categorizing, multi-day events, repeat events, time zones and other concerns. Because of the complexities surrounding events, and depending on your organization's needs, you will want to decide early on if you'd like to develop your own calendar system specific to your needs, or if you'd like to use an existing system and work within what it offers. It will also depend on the platform that runs your website, as many CMS's have plugin tools available for them.

Some popular options, which offer customizability, flexibility and a good baseline of functionality are:

Wordpress



The Events Calendar - <https://theeventscalendar.com>

This powerful plugin comes in both free and paid versions and is highly customizable. You can import events from other ICS calendars, have community submitted events, style the output as you like and get a great many other features.

All in One Event Calendar - <http://time.ly>

Another good option, this plugin also comes as a self-hosted version which can be run on non-Wordpress sites. As with The Events Calendar, it has a free level, as well as some paid levels with more features.



Drupal

Date iCal - https://www.drupal.org/project/date_ical

A Drupal module that allows for standard event and calendaring options, as well as .ics feed imports and exports.

[Note that the [Atlanta Science Festival](#) team has experience using Drupal.]

Joomla

JEvents - <http://extensions.joomla.org/extension/jevents> <https://www.jevents.net>



A Joomla extension that is well regarded and supports many of the standard calendaring and event management features. You can style the output with some code knowledge and create complex interactions, though this may also take some familiarity with coding.

Ohanah - <http://ohanah.com>

This extension does not offer a free tier, but comes with a powerful backend for event management.



TIPS:

We generally recommend sticking within the functionality provided by the plugins as these will be the easiest to support and integrate into existing sites, and will handle plugin updates most smoothly in the future. Handling events and calendars is non-trivial, so advanced functionality may be best served with a custom coded solution or extensions. Your web developer or support team should be able to offer guidance and pricing estimates.

GETTING CONTENT FOR YOUR CALENDAR

One of the immediate concerns with a Calendar is having enough initial content, and continuing to keep up with new content as time moves on. Broadly speaking there are 3 avenues of populating events: manually entered, community submitted, and content feeds. An ideal solution is to use a combination of all three options if possible as this will provide the widest breadth of content.

Manually Entered Events

These are events which your web staff find out about or are informed about directly. They then log into the administration section of your website and manually create a new event, adding in all the data directly into your system. The event is then published and becomes live on the website.

Pros

Manually entered events will generally have correct information and can use all of the administrative tools at your team's disposal. The content, images, and other data can be tailored specifically to your audience and your website so that events look their best. No inappropriate or off-topic events – these can be filtered out.

Cons

Your staff will be responsible for directly entering the events. This can be a time consuming and tedious process. It is easy to get behind or to miss events altogether. Events must still be identified and the information about them gathered.

Community Submitted Events

Your website can offer the ability for visitors to submit events to the system directly. This significantly widens the net for capturing new events if your audience is willing to engage.

Pros

Your website team is not solely responsible for finding events and event information. Event addition can happen more quickly and your audience will be engaged with the site.

Cons

Events submitted should be curated for appropriateness and accuracy. Can be a more complex programming task to address security concerns around user submitted content. Can also be complex to provide appropriate and friendly error handling for edge cases.

TIPS

Sometimes it can be best to provide front-end options that allow for submitters to provide "human language" descriptions of their event schedules or pricing schemes as opposed to trying to code user-friendly tools to cover all possible cases. This data can then be presented during the backend administrator process so that event moderators can set up the most appropriate values to convert the intent.

Content Feeds

Events can be automatically imported from other calendars using a few different tools. These events are populated on your site using data available on other websites or data streams. Looks for calendars that offer RSS Feeds / Subscription options. These typically can be hooked into an automated importer that takes the data provided in the stream and converts it to events on your website.

Pros

Events automatically appear for moderation from many sources which are ideally already doing the vetting process on them. An easy way (once set up) to have a stream of new events without needing to manually find them or rely on visitors to submit.

Cons

Events should still be curated to ensure appropriateness and accuracy. This approach can involve significant programming to ensure correct behavior if the data stream changes or goes offline. Programming considerations also need to be made for caching content to prevent slow load times. Some calendars may not give permission to republish their content, even if they provide the technical feeds to do so. Not all calendars will provide easily importable feeds of content, many will not. Data provided by this system may be considerably less than data provided by other sources so the website will need to handle variable amounts of data on event displays as well as in categorization and searching.

Calendar / Site Must Haves and Nice-to-Haves

Must Haves

- **Responsive / mobile friendly**
Modern sites must work well across the increasingly diverse ecosystem of devices visitors are using.
- **Strong Search / Categorization Capabilities**
Users must be able to easily narrow down to the events of interest to them, especially if there is a large number of events. Useful methods include proximity to user, pricing, date, topic, etc.

Nice to Haves

- **Ability to save events to personal calendars**
Events which can be downloaded as .ics files give users the ability to add the event directly to their preferred calendar program. This makes it easier for visitors to remember and get notified about events.
- **Ability to share events to various social networks**
While this functionality is getting more and more built into operating systems, browsers and mobile devices natively, it can be useful to provide quick links for visitors to share events and other site pages on social networks. This allows word to spread quickly and easily about your events and your website.
- **Unique URLs for search results**

Search results on the site, after applying filters for various categories and other criteria should generate a unique URL. That way search results for a custom query can be bookmarked and a visitor can share it or return to it to see their customized search at any time with the latest events.