

October 2021

ONcall

ready-to-use NEWS

Plan your PR with tickler folders

You want to get organized for the new school year, and that means thinking ahead further than the tasks that need to get done this week. Your plate is so full with today's projects that it can seem overwhelming to also think about future ones.

What to do? Create a tickler file system.

Tickler files are folders that include notes and reminders about upcoming tasks. They help you stay on top of your schedule without your head exploding from an overload of dates and information. Here's how they work:

Create 12 folders for the months of the year and 31 folders for the days of the month. Throughout the year, as you learn about upcoming events, stick a reminder and any supporting documents into the folder for the appropriate month.

At the start of each month, review all the tasks and documents in that month's folder and assign them to a specific date. The first task on your daily "to-do" list should be to review that day's tickler file. If, for some reason, you can't complete it that day, assign it to a different day.

As with all tools, a tickler file is only useful if you actually use it, so it's important to establish the habit of looking at your tickler file first thing each morning and addressing the outlined tasks.

Go digital.

While some people use paper folders for their tickler files, most people opt for electronic folders. There are a number of task management software systems available, such as fortythree.me, which will automatically send you reminders about the tasks in your tickler folders. You can also set up tasks and alerts in a Google calendar.

What do you include in a tickler file?

Start with all the dates and activities that happen on a regular basis throughout the year: reminders about back-to-school events; updates on important activities, such as concerts and plays; information about new curriculum and programs; and publication dates for district newsletters and staff communications.

The National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA) publishes a useful tool for helping you stay on top of important dates. Their "Resources for Planning the School Calendar" includes dates for a variety of national observances, from National Bullying Prevention Month to National School Lunch Week to Administrative Professionals Week.

For subscription information, contact WSSDA at (360) 890-5781 or (425) 314-0215.

For content questions, contact: Marcia Latta Communications Consultant (503) 580-2612.

Reproduction rights for materials distributed as part of *On Call* are granted only to subscribing districts and are restricted to distribution as part of their local public relations programs.



(Over)

Curious about when different holidays are observed? This calendar lists the dates, along with those of special events like Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day, National School Nurse Day and many more. The calendar sells for \$40 per copy, plus shipping and handling and can be ordered online at nspra.org/products.

The “Key Dates” issue of this publication uses this resource guide. It is published each spring.

Throughout the year, use your tickler file to collect information that will save you time and effort. For instance, if your school board passes a proclamation honoring teachers for National Teacher Appreciation Week, insert a copy of the proclamation into your file, so you have it handy for next year.

Include photos and other graphics that you may need to illustrate content in your newsletter. Include registration information about relevant conferences. Add reminders about co-workers’ birthdays and important events. A tickler file is for any information that will help you stay more organized and on top of things.

Check in daily.

Keeping an active presence on social media is easier if you have a tickler file filled with reminders about upcoming dates and activities. Tools like Hootsuite (hootsuite.com) allow you to schedule your Facebook and Twitter posts days and even weeks ahead of time, using details in your tickler files. That allows you to keep your pages active even when you’re on vacation or busy with other tasks.

Once you set up your system, it is easy to manage, but you need to be consistent in checking each day’s folder. If you skip a day, you may skip an important task.

If you’re lucky enough to have a communications staff, a regular editorial meeting is a great time to review the tasks in your tickler files, so everyone is up to date on what needs to be done. It also allows you to brainstorm how to plan and communicate about them.

In a nutshell, a tickler file helps keep you organized. It helps reassure you that you won’t forget important tasks and dates. It allows you to plan ahead, so you can be strategic in your messaging. It makes your work life easier.

Contributed by Connie Potter, communications consultant