

adviser's survival guide

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> handling your staff

"what's in it for me?"

Yearbook isn't a class, it's a business. It's the closest high school ever gets to the real world. How often do students complain that their classes won't help them later in life? They won't make that complaint in yearbook if you have anything to say about it.

Tell them what they'll take with them AFTER yearbook. You want skills? How about organization, interpersonal, writing, presentation, leadership and problem-solving. No other class they can take in high school offers so much.

Staffers also benefit intrinsically. Every so often, remind them of how special they'll feel when they hold that book for the first time. To be able to tell their friends and parents "I took that photo," "I wrote that story" or "I designed that layout" is a wonderful feeling of pride and self-worth.

It's not that hard to find aspects of yearbook that answer the question "What's in it for me?" Make sure you take the time to answer this question for students, even if they do not ask.

motivating your staff

You don't have to wait until the book arrives to make their yearbook experience rewarding. Everyone is working hard. You, your editors, the staff. Never miss an opportunity to recognize someone or something good.

See a good picture? Ask who took it and tell them. Read a good story or headline? Find out who wrote it and tell them. See a cool layout? Find out who designed it and tell them. Has someone been working well for an extended period of time? Pull them aside and tell them that you've noticed and you are proud of them. Watch that smile grow ear to ear. It'll make you feel better too!

A simple pat on the back goes a long way. Having a "Staff Member of the Week" or throwing post-deadline celebrations are other ways you can show your staff that you appreciate them. Ask your own staff for recognition ideas.

Another thing you may want to try is calling parents. They are not used to getting "good" calls from school. This helps you out two ways. One, you just put a smile on that parent's face. Next time their kid has to stay late to help out, they'll be more supportive. Two, that parent will certainly say something to the student, scoring you major points with your staffer.

Remember: Praise builds confidence, confidence builds success.

It goes without saying that yearbooks are extremely important to a lot of people. Your staff is responsible for the memories of every student in the school. These two elements can be very motivating for staff members. Make them aware of their role and the impact they can have. When students feel they are important, they take a vested interest in what they are doing.

making lemonade

Sure, it's easy to recognize the positive things, but what do you do when you get work that is subpar? Turn a negative into a positive, that's what.

If the student worked hard but the results were not exactly the quality needed, first thank them sincerely for the effort they made. Then, have an editor (or yourself) take time to show them how to improve.

But what if the quality is low because you know they were lazy or sloppy? Quietly pull them aside and tell them how you feel. "John, this story isn't what I am used to seeing

from you. When you apply yourself and focus, your stories are really strong. I need that from you every time you sit down in front of that computer. I'm counting on you."

By pulling them aside and not bringing attention to this in front of their peers, you keep their dignity intact. Constructively criticizing, instead of just plain criticizing, will mostly likely gain you respect in their eyes and provide even more motivation to do the job right next time.

Don't allow stress and frustration to get in the way of good teaching practices.

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> organization & efficiency

get your ducks in a row

One of the most important things you can do to ensure your book's success (and your sanity) is staying organized. Putting together your yearbook involves innumerable tasks over the year. Without an effective organizational system, the potential for lost time and effort increase dramatically.

There are many different ways to stay organized. It is important, though, that whatever system you devise is thorough, easy to teach and maintain and most of all, makes sense to both you and your staff.

Break down each aspect of production; photography, writing and layout. Write down everything that is involved with each, beginning to end. This will help you to avoid missing a step.

Next, try going through the process of producing a complete spread (document setup, headline, secondary headline, feature copy, alternative coverage, graphics, photos and captions). Not only will it help you feel more knowledgeable and comfortable with the process, but it can give you great insight on how to get organized. Meanwhile, many of the pitfalls involved in making a spread will become evident. You can adjust your system to avoid these bumps in the road.

Keep in mind that this system will change as you gain experience and find better ways of doing things. Even veteran advisers tweak their systems as they grow and as yearbook trends change.

Remember, you have to take time to save time.

what's in a name?

Photography can be a real challenge when it comes to keeping organized, especially if you incorporate digital photography. With digital photos, file saving can be key to your organizational process. It's hard to remember which photo you want when it is named IMG_2435.jpg!

Using prefixes in the file names can help. For example, try corresponding page numbers or an abbreviation for

the name of the spread. These prefixes can also easily be incorporated into the names of other files, especially writing.

How is this helpful? Computers index the files on their drives. When a file is saved in the wrong location, it can be easily found by typing the prefix into the computer's search feature.

making your list, checking it twice

With all of the tasks involved in yearbook, it can be difficult keeping track of what you're doing, what's been done and what needs to be done next. A daily "to do" list can be your most powerful ally in staying on top of things.

This list, which can be made even more effective by breaking it down into specific categories such as writing, photography, layout and business, should detail specifically what needs to be done that day. Go over it at the beginning of class, and as tasks are completed throughout the period, eliminate them from the list. At the end of class, have editors update the list with what needs to be done tomorrow.

Does staying organized take time? Sure, but it's time well spent. Going over a daily "to do" list at the beginning

of the period only takes a few minutes, as does updating it for tomorrow at the end of the period. In doing this, you will maximize the effectiveness of the rest of your time.

Every bit as important as knowing what needs to be done is how to do it. Strongly encourage your staff to take time to devise the best possible approach to a task. Careless mistakes can be avoided when students stop and think how to approach a task before they get started. Efficiency is critical in deadline oriented projects like yearbook. Teach them to see problems before they occur.

It takes less time to think things through before you start than it does to do something twice. It's quite simple: Stop. Think. Go!

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> school relations

administration

As you know, administrators have very chaotic schedules. They also dedicate much of their day to handling problems and putting out fires. Make things easier on yourself by making things easier on them.

Do all you can to avoid situations that would require their attention. This includes handling parent questions or concerns, sales issues, photography scheduling and yearbook content appropriateness.

For example, it's time to schedule the senior portrait

make-ups. Instead of going to an administrator and blindly asking what day you can take it on, research it ahead of time. Check the school calendar and find possible dates and times that create the least amount of scheduling conflicts. By presenting options in advance you have not only saved them time, but made their job easier as well.

This will not go unnoticed and can greatly increase your chances of getting their support and help when you need it most.

faculty

Most teachers do not like having their class interrupted for any reason. Unfortunately, you will have to send staffers out constantly for interviews and photo assignments.

Whenever possible, give advance notice when you need to pull a student out of class. Give that teacher the opportunity to let you know when taking this student is most convenient for them. It can be very frustrating when, in the middle of an important lecture or exam, one of your staff members sticks their head in the door and asks if they can interview one of their students.

If circumstances prevent you from providing advanced notice, stress to your staff the importance of being ex-

tremely polite and professional when asking permission to take one of their students.

Also, express the importance of getting what you need the *first* time. It is almost exclusively better to take longer one time then to have to come back later and ask again.

It may be a good idea to keep a list of names of all the people who have helped you in any way. A thank you card in their mailbox can go a long way in letting them know you appreciate their cooperation.

Remember, teachers don't have to say yes. Keeping our co-workers happy means you'll hear "yes" much more often.

Jostens

Believe it or not, the success of your book is every bit as important to your rep as it is to you, your staff and your school. It's true. They take a great deal of pride in not only getting your book delivered on time, but helping your book be as good as it can be.

Yet their dedication means little to nothing if they are not informed. Never hesitate to call your rep with questions or concerns you are having. The more informed your rep is

of your situation, the better chance he or she has in helping you. That's what they are there for; to help.

The two biggest things you can do for yourself are making deadlines and returning proofs promptly. Late days for either can seriously impact your delivery date. The later you are on deadlines, the less opportunity your rep will have to help you get that book to your school on time.

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> it's all about you!

pass the buck

In a word, *delegate*.

Many advisers and editors feel that the only way the job is going to get done is if they do it themselves. This is a myth and a dangerous trap to fall into.

Your regular staff will perceive this as a lack of faith. The less they do, the lower their interest level. When it finally comes time for you to ask for their help, the less they'll care about what they're doing, or worse, they won't know

what they're doing because you never actually let them do anything. This problem is most common in page layout.

The bottom line is that they all signed up because they want to help. Let them! Get them involved and interested early. When they're interested, they're willing to learn. When they learn, more work gets done. This means you won't have to spend as much time after school and you'll be able to...

get a life!

It takes a special person to advise a yearbook staff. And *you* are that person. You work those extra hours, you go that extra mile. It takes sacrifice to produce a yearbook, but be wary of sacrificing too much.

Take care of yourself and your staff. Make sure you leave time for the things in life that are truly important. Family,

friends, school, work. When these things suffer too much because of yearbook, it is hard to avoid feeling bitter about the job you and your staff are doing.

It goes without saying that when you feel negatively about what you're doing, the quality of work drops dramatically. Attitude counts for a lot in yearbook.

keep your chin up

Perception is a powerful thing. If you are down, discouraged or negative about something happening with your yearbook, your staff will pick up on this very quickly. Never underestimate the impact you have on your staff, positive or negative.

Sometimes it can be hard, especially when that important file corrupts the day before deadline or when that crucial photo assignment comes back bad. Handle the situation with grace. It is okay to acknowledge the setback but don't give it too much credence.

If your staff sees you rattled, they will have less confidence that *they* can overcome the obstacle. It is hard to focus on a problem when you are too worried and stressed about it. Your editors and staff look to you not only for leadership but for strength, confidence and how to handle adversity.

Make your staff aware ahead of time that problems will occur, and probably at the worst possible time. It's the nature of the job. Handle it with poise, stay focused and make the necessary adjustments.

get the good stuff

There are plenty of resources and support out there for you. Take full advantage of them!

Jostens' website "Yearbook Avenue" has a wealth of helpful items to guide you through the year. Check out the "Educate" menu for ideas on everything yearbook, many of which you can even download for use in the classroom.

The Jostens 1, 2, 3, *Yearbook Curriculum* offers an extensive collection of tutorials, lessons, worksheets and tools to use with your staff. It includes two CDs, one with quizzes

and rubrics that coordinate with student workbooks and another with instructional PowerPoints. It's wonderful.

Having your book judged by a journalistic association (like CSPA and NSPA) is invaluable. Put aside personal pride. The detailed criteria will highlight areas for improvement. Keep in mind, this criteria is based on what works and what students want. It might be a blow to the old ego at first, but there are few things that can help your book more. You will also receive helpful resources with your membership.

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you know you are an adviser when...

- you no longer need an explanation for why you are home late
- the guys at the pizza store asks if you want your regular every time you call
- you criticize the menu for bad font selection when you go out to eat
- you save every 5 seconds because the computers have it out for you
- you're the only one in your school that knows what the name of your yearbook means
- you bite the head off anyone who dares to criticize the yearbook
- yearbook distribution day is right up there with Christmas
- you're sick, but you drag yourself out of bed because you're behind in yearbook
- you know the custodians by name
- you feel yearbook is the only explanation you need to explain your moodiness
- pictures in your photo album have captions