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MAKING PEOPLE FEEL

VALUED

YOU KNOW HOW IMPORTANT IT IS TO MAKE YOUR STAFF MEMBERS WORK AS PART OF A TEAM. YOU NEED TO MAKE THEM FEEL A PART OF THE GROUP. HERE'S SOME ADVICE, TIPS AND TRICKS FOR MEETING THOSE OBJECTIVES.

BY SUSAN FERGUESON AND LOGAN AIMONE

Helping students feel valued may seem like a gargantuan undertaking, especially with the multitude of other responsibilities publications advisers face. Fortunately, there are many quick, easy and inexpensive ways to help make students feel valued and keep staff motivation levels high.

MAKE THEM PART OF THE GROUP

Student publications can often have cliques and hierarchies. As a result, new staff members and those not in leadership positions may feel intimidated. Planning to reinforce the idea of teamwork among the entire staff throughout the year can help younger and

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<< Students at the National Scholastic Press Association workshop in Minneapolis try to float their boats made of only straws and a few feet of masking tape. The exercise was one of teamwork. The group with the boat that stayed afloat with the most coins on it won.



Editor can support efforts to motivate

by Anika Engebretsen

"Attitude reflects leadership." This quote, taken from the movie "Remember the Titans," is very important to me. I believe that the attitude of the team, or in my case, staff, does indeed reflect the quality of the leadership. Without a good leader, a staff cannot perform the simplest of tasks. Therefore, a good leader must possess many qualities that will enable him or her to motivate his or her staff and bring them together as a team as well as a staff.

The key to encouraging your staff to work together to produce a finished project is motivation. Without motivation, nothing gets done. Why should staff members work hard at something if they are not going to enjoy positive reinforcement in return?

Some of our motivational activities are quite simple, but they are important in creating bonds among staff members and in opening them up to one another. Because our staff is diverse and not everyone knows one another, we have several "icebreaker" exercises that we engage in during the beginning months of each semester.

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inexperienced staff members feel part of the group.

- Whenever possible, downplay the staff hierarchy. Yes, it is important to have editors, and it is important to have procedures in place to ensure deadlines are met. But it is just as important to have reporters to write stories and photographers to take pictures. Make sure that message comes across loud and clear.
- Set up a mentoring or big brother/big sister program so more experienced staff members may take responsibility for one new staff member. Mentors can not only show new students the ropes but also give them occasional treats, notes and small gifts.
- Try having Secret Pals. Students draw names in secret and bring a small treat for their pals on distribution day or other times when a little "pick-me-up" is needed. Reveal the pals at the end of the semester.
- Many clubs and organizations award personalized certificates to each member. Consider doing the same for your staff each year.
- Have identical staff shirts, pins or hats. Wear them on distribution days, spirit days or every Friday.
- Have staff ID badges and/or press passes. At many schools, these are practical items – they function as hall passes or entry passes for school events. But if they are personalized with the student's name and picture, they become a membership badge and status symbol as well.
- Plan occasional all-staff outings. They don't have to be elaborate or expensive, simply a time to have fun and get everyone together. Going bowling, taking advantage of 49 cent cheeseburgers at McDonalds, going out for pie after deadline or making a trip to the local ice cream parlor are all great ideas for enjoyable diversions.
- Have an awards banquet at the end of the year. Sports teams at most school have a banquet or awards night at the end of every season – why not do the same? These events give students a chance to share their success with adults and with one another.
- Give everyone an "unofficial" job. Staff members can feel important and special if they know they have a unique role to fill. Every publication needs people to clean up, to check the mail, to bring snacks and to plan events, but these jobs sound much "cooler" when they are given titles such as Grammar Guru, Social Chair, Sanitation Engineer, Mailbox Maven, Birthday Fairy, Snack Queen and Supply Czar.
- A social director is valuable for organizing the staff treats, birthday celebrations, staff shirts and such. This person can also coordinate with parents to assist with these activities.

INSPIRE GREATNESS

Many publications staff members are by nature intrinsically motivated. They thrive on doing their best and putting out a great



product, and their reward is the knowledge that they've met their goals.

Even those students who are not naturally intrinsically motivated can learn the value of a job well done.

There are several easy, quick and inexpensive things advisers can do to establish a culture of intrinsic motivation.

- Hang posters throughout the room that extol the value of hard work. Or put magnets on file cabinets and postcards on bulletin boards. These send a subtle message that some students will internalize after time. Several favorite thoughts include:
 - "Great works are performed not by strength but by perseverance." <Samuel Johnson>
 - "Excellence is not found in being the best, but in doing your best." <Anonymous>
 - "The talent of success is nothing more than what you can do well and doing well whatever you do." <Longfellow>
- Set goals as a staff and individually.

Each year, the staff can decide on three to five goals for the year. Additionally, each student can set personal goals. Make sure the goals are realistic, specific, measurable and written down.

When working toward major goals, it's easy to become frustrated if progress is slow. There are simple things you can do to keep students pointed in the right directions. Send them an encouraging card, or put it in their staff mailbox. Note and praise the specific progress they've already made, and encourage them to keep at it. Verbal praise is good, but written praise is better. Stick a Post-It to their computers saying, "You can do it" or another such message. Bring small treats to "push" them in the right direction (Push Pops, Push-Ups).

CELEBRATE SUCCESS

Once you've set goals, celebrate when the staff meets them.

Some praise should be public. Teens want recognition in front of their peers. Other praise is best left in private. Perhaps after a difficult struggle or overcoming a private challenge, a student needs to know that you value him or her, but it might seem awkward in front of a group. Times like these call for a short note or a quick walk alone.

Many staffs vote on awards after each issue to recognize staff members who made outstanding contributions. Categories to consider include best news story, best feature story, best page design, best headline/caption, most valuable player of the issue and ABCD (Above and Beyond the Call of Duty). Each winner could receive a certificate, a note home detailing the award and a mention in the daily bulletin or announcements.

Awards of the issue could easily be taken one step further into end-of-the-year awards. Each issue's winner would then be nominated to win the best of the entire year. Those selected by the staff

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First, we draw names for a "Secret Pal" and leave something small (a note or a candy bar) in that person's mailbox once a week and something larger every time we put out an issue. The connection makes it easier to get to know someone on a more personal level.

Another activity is to post SIS/SOS sheets around the room. SIS/SOS stands for Stuff I See and Stuff Others See. A piece of paper is divided into thirds. One third is labeled SIS and includes qualities that you see in yourself, and the other two thirds are labeled SOS and are there for other people to write compliments about you.

We also hold "lock-ins" each semester to promote interaction within the staff. These are generally held on a Friday or Saturday and entail staying overnight at school. We order pizza and watch movies with journalism themes and play teamwork-enhancing games such as The Human Knot. Each person huddles in a tight circle and grasps hands with two different people across the circle. The object is to figure out how to get untangled.

But perhaps the most obvious and simple way to motivate a member of your staff is to give a compliment to someone who does something well or who puts extra effort or time into a publishing duty. It is surprising how much even the slightest of compliments may mean to someone, and it is also a confidence booster.

Finding time to incorporate these activities into the stressful, deadline-driven atmosphere of the newspaper class can be a challenge. These activities not only add fun but also relieve some of the stress that accompanies meeting deadlines. Therefore, they are a necessity for any newspaper staff. Setting one day aside for teamwork activities or to play games every month or so will definitely be worth the time. ■

Anika Engebretsen is the editor in chief of *Cat Tales*, the student newspaper at Mount Si High School in Snoqualmie, Wash.



Staff retreats lead to success

From Vince DeMiero,

Whatever success the *Hawkeye* and its student staff have enjoyed during the past dozen years, much of it is owed to two experiences: attending national conventions and participating in staff retreats.

While the national conventions have afforded the organization and individual students the opportunity to learn, network and experience the diverse world of journalism, it has been the staff retreats that have allowed the *Hawkeye* to deepen and solidify its philosophy, identity, mission and sense of organization.

The *Hawkeye* staff members hold two retreats a year: a mid-year retreat for all staff members and a staff leadership retreat in late June.

MID-YEAR RETREAT

At the midyear retreat, staff members refocus their sites on the goals and mission of the *Hawkeye* while also affording an opportunity to build on the camaraderie and teamwork in our organization.

The mid-year retreat usually comes in the middle of what we affectionately call "HMHM" – Hawkeye Mental Health Month. For the past several years, we've designated December as the "HMHM" and have organized several events that are centered on team-building and general journalistic information rather than focusing on putting out issues of the paper.

The central event of "HMHM" is the mid-year retreat. We usually get all student staff out of school for one day and gather at a local meeting space where we can work uninterrupted. The leadership staff organizes the agenda and activities for the day, and I usually serve as the facilitator. Frequently, guest presenters will join us. Because our time together is limited, the majority of the day is dedicated to work that is practical while at the same time builds teamwork and staff unity.

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as the year's best could have their names on a plaque in addition to receiving a certificate and letter home.

While these awards recognize excellent contributions by individual staff members, not every outstanding member of a publications staff fits easily into these "best of" categories. To recognize staff members who always seem to save the day, consider the following categories:

- Firefighter (for the staffer who put out a proverbial fire)
- Knight in shining armor (rode out of the blue and rescued the paper)
- Angel (performed a miracle)
- Mr. or Ms. Fixit (fixed a problem that wasn't his/hers)
- Story/Design Doctor (took a sick story or page and "cured what ailed" it)
- Superhero (flew in and saved the day)
- Cheerleader (kept everyone cheerful and positive)
- Police Officer (kept the peace)

For these awards, give certificates or prizes that match the category. Scrapbook and craft stores are great places to stock up on themed paper, stickers and die cuts for these awards. Props like plastic stethoscopes, firefighters' hats and pompoms are also good fits for these categories.

Some schools have certain requirements that will lead to a school letter award similar to athletic participation. Some of these letters are for journalism or may be part of a letter in activities. Make sure that the goals are clearly specified. The letter should be among the highest honors available.

Also, remember that not every success is large. Simply getting a story in the paper is a major accomplishment for some students. For others, it might be exciting to write a story that doesn't require major revision, laying out a page without assistance, selling an ad or surviving a tough interview. These goals are worthy of celebrating, too.

Encourage your editors to help you recognize the everyday accomplishments of the staff. Put little "well done" notes in staff mailboxes. Treat a staff member to a pop or candy bar. Keep a stock of cool gel ink pens and pencils to give out as rewards. Send a postcard home. Just say "great job." There are hundreds of little ways to recognize these accomplishments, and it doesn't matter which one or ones you pick.

ENCOURAGE POLITE DISCOURSE

Basically, it boils down to the golden rule. To have a pleasant work environment, all members of a publication staff need to treat others the way they want to be treated.

Perhaps the biggest area for improvement is in the way staff

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Banquets serve as reward

by Katie Myers

One of the best ways to motivate students and to interest students in being on staff is to host an end-of-the-year awards ceremony for staff and parents and even administrators.

The event can honor a variety of talents: top ad sales, Quill and Scroll inductees, Columbia Gold Circle award winners, JEA convention winners, Gold Key winners, local and state journalist of the year and other local or state honorees.

The primary reason for hosting such a banquet is obvious: Students appreciate being recognized for all the hard work they put in during the year. In addition, parents will enjoy seeing their students honored or recognized locally for state and national awards they may have accepted elsewhere.

Students are well aware of the ceremony, often checking with the adviser to make sure they qualify for the school's Quill and Scroll guidelines as well as maintaining a GPA within the top third of their class, an association requirement. Seniors especially want a pin, a graduation cord and a diploma seal from Quill and Scroll. A candlelight ceremony to honor the inductees may be appropriate.

Some tips:

- Make certificates for each winner and perhaps order a plaque or check for the top winners, such as journalist of the year.
- Have the editor keep track of winners of the month for each category such as news writer, photographer and ad designer, so choosing the overall winners at the end of the year is not too difficult.
- Get staff members to enlist the aid of a few parents to decorate the cafeteria, make invitations and create a program.
- Editors should invite administrators and school board members. It is great public relations to have top administrators see all the awards the students have won.
- Display any plaques, certificates or trophies the publication won during the year, and set out copies of back newspaper issues and/or yearbooks/magazines for everyone to take and/or buy.

Make sure parents and students know about all requirements at the beginning of the year so there are no misunderstandings and so everyone can enjoy the extra recognition. ■

Katie Myers, a Dow Jones Newspaper Fund Special Recognition Adviser has advised the Stampede newspaper for 10 years and the literary-arts magazine for five years at Charles M. Russell High School in Great Falls, Mont. She is the assessment specialist for the Great Falls Public School District but continues to support and judge journalism at the local, state and national levels.



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LEADERSHIP STAFF RETREAT

The leadership staff retreat is incredibly complex. However, it is at this retreat where all planning takes place for every aspect of the publication for the following year. That's an exceedingly large task, but the students have always managed to accomplish this task. Additionally, there is usually a focus to each retreat that reflects the needs of that particular staff and the challenges that they are likely to face in the coming year. For example, the retreat for the 2001-2002 *Hawkeye* staff members focused on publication redesign, fine-tuning a new organizational structure and developing new staff members. However, a great deal of energy at each leadership retreat is directed at redefining and furthering the philosophy and mission of the organization.

The leadership retreat usually starts on the last day of school and lasts three or four days. We have always been fortunate to be able to hold our retreat at incredible locations – usually a cabin or vacation home that a parent or alumni has donated. Location is incredibly important. The retreat must be held at a place where a group can reside comfortably for three or four days, but it must also be inspirational.

I have each retreat programmed down to the minute. The first couple of retreats I used an outline, but as I continue to grow as a facilitator and gain confidence in my ability to assess a group and its needs, I trust my outline and try to stick to it as closely as possible. I guess you could say that I envision the entire retreat weeks before we go so that I am as prepared as possible.

Deciding who attends is critical, too. We limit the leadership retreat to the executive council and section editors of the *Hawkeye*. However, we also have at least one chaperon (in addition to me) along, and we've been fortunate to have our FANs (Family Alumni Network) coordinator serve as the chaperon for most of these retreats. ■

Vince DeMiero is the adviser at Mountlake Terrace (Wash.) High School



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members speak to one another. Encourage students to use courtesy in all dealings with one another. Students, as well as adults, are more willing to do things when they are asked politely. A simple "please" may be enough to get someone to go the extra mile. And a "thank you" may have them ready to go the extra mile next time.

It is also important to remember to stress that working on a publication staff is a learning experience. Making mistakes is part of the process. Encourage staff members to be as understanding and supportive as possible when a mistake is made – after all, the next mistake could be theirs.

Most importantly, encourage your students to thank one another for hard work and to praise one another for success. Praise from adults is meaningful to students, but praise from their peers is often worth even more. If your students like a story, a photo or a page layout, make sure they tell the person responsible for it. It will probably make his or her day.

Sometimes an adviser needs to build in the recognition with a structured activity. Try one of these:

Pay Envelopes

Cut up enough small slips of paper (no larger than 1/4 sheet) for each person to have enough to write a short positive note to others on the staff. Decorate an envelope with each staff member's name. Make one for yourself, too. Sit in a circle and write for about a minute on each note, placing the note – a "paycheck" in the person's "pay envelope." Then pass the envelopes. You will need to have written your notes in advance so that you can keep track of time. Stick to the time limit so that the praise is quick. When the activity is done, each person then has a note from everyone else and can look back on these later.

Pat on the Back

This is similar to a pay envelope, but it is anonymous. Trace a large hand on a sheet of paper and duplicate one for each staff member. Tape the paper to each person's back. Everyone then circulates around the room writing a short message of praise – a "pat on the back" on each person's sheet.

Gold Stars

This one takes longer and is probably most appropriate when the staff members know one another well, and it is pretty high risk. It might be good for an end-of-the-year activity or for a smaller group, such as the editors. The group sits in a circle. One person gets in the middle and crouches under a blanket. The adviser might have a prompt, such as, "What



word would you use to describe this person's contributions to the staff?" Each person should take a turn briefly praising the individual in the middle. That individual is showered with "gold stars" of praise. Students may recognize voices, but there is a certain anonymity and immediacy as well. The situation can become emotional if the students choose to go beyond the usual superficial praise to recognize meaningful but less tangible contributions.

DON'T FORGET TO HAVE FUN

Even the most intrinsically motivated student is not going to want to keep devoting time and effort to an activity that is not fun in some way.

Publications are serious endeavors, with serious stress and serious responsibilities. But that doesn't mean there's not room for fun. If anything, it should mean there's more room for fun.

Give your students permission to get "wild" every once in a while – maybe as an occasional tension breaker. You can:

- Have a paper wad fight. Even if it only lasts five minutes, they'll have a blast.
- Have crazy hats for the kids to wear. Burger King crowns, headbands that look like flowers and tiaras are all readily available. It's amazing how a little headwear can dramatically change someone's attitude.
- If you don't mind, let them play music of their choice while they work, especially on design days.
- Invest in a Polaroid camera. Ask a photographer to take pictures of students while they are working (or not working).
- Have a bag of little candy bars or other treats in your desk at all times. Sometimes a snack provides a spark of inspiration or energy.

Will they fight? Yes. Will things always go as planned? No. Will it still be stressful? Yes. But if your students feel part of a team, have fun and feel valued, they will be more willing to work through the challenges and to discover the reward of a job well done. ■

THE END

Favorite icebreakers

by Ronnie Campagna

- **CIRCLE:** Have everyone move the chairs into a circle and sit in the circle without any empty seats. The teacher or editor stands in the middle and says, "I like everyone in this circle, especially those who" (insert something such as wears yellow or has blue eyes) Everyone who fits the qualification has to then switch seats. The leader takes one of the seats. Whoever is left without a seat is in the middle and continues the game.
- **TWO TRUTHS AND A LIE:** Each person thinks of two truths about themselves and makes up one lie. Encourage them to be as tricky as possible. They should then go around the circle and say all three. The other people in the circle guess which was the lie.
- **M&M'S:** Pass around a bowl of M&M's (or Skittles or toilet paper), and tell students to take some. After all have taken some, tell them for each M&M, they have to say something interesting about themselves. You can vary the activity by requiring that students connect the detail to the candy's color (i.e., red requires an embarrassing moment, green requires a time they felt jealous, etc.)
- **NAME GAME:** Everyone sits in a circle. One person starts by using an adjective starting with the same letter as his/her first name, followed by his/her first name (i.e., Naughty Niki, Silly Sean). The next person has to repeat the first person's adjective and name and add his/her own. Continue around the circle. The last person has to repeat all other names in order and end with his/her own.
- **INTERVIEW:** Each student is assigned another student to interview. For this it's best to pair a new member with a returning member of the class. In 2-3 minutes, the pair should find out as much as possible about one another: name, family members, hobbies, favorite food, etc. (Variation: Time students for first interview, and then have them switch partners.) Then have them introduce their partners to the rest of the class.
- **BINGO:** Make a grid, like a bingo grid (any size from 5x5 to 15x15). Write "FREE" in the center space. In all the other spaces, write epitaphs such as "Born in another state," "Is the youngest child in family," or "Plays soccer." Fill in all the grids with items of interest to the students. Run off a copy for each person. The students are to get the signature of a person who meets the criteria for each section. A person can only sign another person's paper in one or two spots (depending on the number of students in the class). The first person with a completed card wins a prize.

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