

West Virginia

SPORTS NEWS

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Helping Your Staff Grow CoSIDA Table Topics

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Some points to help your workers grow as sports information professionals:

- Stress Time management!!! Hound them on this!!! Beat it into their heads!!! It is the **most** important element of this business.

Staffers will avoid criticism, frustration and nagging from those who need the information if they get in the habit of:

- Updating release and sport files ASAP
- Keeping records updated for their sports (the day you fall behind is the day that record will be broken!)
- Providing information when requested to opponents and conference office (prevents many nasty emails and phone calls).
- Collecting information for assignments as soon as possible - then if you don't get around to finishing the opponents' section or writing that feature story until the day of the deadline, at least you will have the materials you need on hand.

Provide examples of how you like things done. This can include:

- Sample releases and memos as style guides
- List of procedures for publicizing game results
- Fax lists for releases
- Examples for length and content of feature stories

Know **your** pet peeves and make sure your staff knows **exactly** what you expect in those areas. This saves frustration for all involved.

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Encourage questions - and then use those questions as learning opportunities. Ask them what/where they think the answer is to encourage what we call "detective work" instead of just telling them. Give them ideas of research resources instead of looking things up yourself.

- Once the office basics are entrenched, give staffers leeway and creative freedom to work with the coaches and athletes in providing the best coverage for their sport.

Encourage them to get to know your beat media, so they will feel comfortable calling to pitch a story. Give them responsibilities in providing guidance to students and younger workers in your office. Give them the opportunity to represent your office through speaking engagements classes or civic groups.

- Make sure they feel valued as professional representatives of your office and the athletic department.

Give everyone in your office at least a small role in your most important projects. For us, these are items relating to football, including staffing press conferences, issuing credentials and preparing the weekly contributions.

- This gives them a chance to observe the big picture of sports information and shows that you have confidence in their contributions.

While you want and expect staffers to handle what happens in their sports, be sure they are confident and comfortable in coming to you right away when there is a problem or crisis (run-in with a coach, media blowup, etc.).

Because ...

- 1) your staff needs your support and backup when they take a stand for professional reasons and;
- 2) you, as SID, may well end up putting out the fire eventually.

Offer criticism that is project-based, not personal. Give examples of how you would better like to see something handled. Remind them you are requesting changes because you have confidence in their ability as SID professionals, and you want their work to reflect it.

And don't ever hesitate to remind them of the many things they have done well!