Vassar Athletics

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OFFICE ORGANIZATION

Case Study: Vassar College
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Problem: Vassar College had gone through two SIDs in four years. The office was in *organizational disarray* and coaches *were not receptive* to the SID because of poor organizational and professional skills. The physical office was a *mess* and wasn't an *inviting* and *friendly* place for staff to visit either socially or professionally.

SOLVING THE PROBLEM: *Phase 1*

CLEANING THE CLUTTER
- My first two weeks were spent tossing old documents, newspapers, media guides, etc. The office had become a haven for junk and needed to be cleaned up before anything else could take place.
- During this time, old file folders were tossed, new ones created and organized first alphabetically by team with a specific color and then by year.
- File cabinets were trimmed to archive a five-year period for each team. Previous years received new file folders (as necessary) and were archived in storage boxes and placed out of the office but in an accessible area.

PHYSICAL OFFICE SPACE
- Vassar's SI office is large and spacious, I am very lucky. However, what I inherited was awful. The physical layout of the office was tight and cluttered. There were too many desks, narrow paths, no room to move. I removed the office of all unnecessary chairs and desks, filing cabinets, etc. The office was rearranged as well, so that I now have my desk overlooking a portion of our golf course. With creative handy work, the desk was converted into a large U-shape structure with plenty of desk space for the master computer and plenty of organizational areas. Specific work spaces were created for students. Bulletin boards were shifted, file cabinets moved, an entirely new office created.

ORGANIZING THE COMPUTERS
- The office computers were technically neglected and were structurally disorganized.
- The master Mac computer needed its own organization. Floating files/photos were organized into specific categories/teams. Old files were taken off the hard drive, burned to a disc and archived.

- Individual IBM laptops went through a similar process. Statcrew and necessary programs such as Adobe InDesign and Photoshop were placed on all laptops, not just one.
- Laptops were designated for specific sports so as to keep them organized and to reduce daily wear and tear. The CIS Department worked on all computers to get them healthy using defrag, scan disk, antivirus, etc. All the aforementioned enabled me to work confidently and without computer problems that would disrupt my organizational plan

MASTER SCHEDULE
- I had only one month to get organized for a massive Fall season
- I purchased a Dry-Erase Calendar and mapped out our entire athletic season. I kept the colors simple: Home was red, black was away. This was essential in staffing home games and communicating with opposing SIDs. I could plan weeks ahead which **ORGANIZED** my entire world.

SOLVING THE PROBLEM: *Phase 2*

MEETINGS WITH COACHES
- I spent at least one hour getting to know each of our coaches covering 25 different teams.
- This was done very informally, over lunch or a soft drink, in a casual office setting. I had to earn their respect, mend fences, listens to concerns. Many of these meetings took place in the refurbished SI office.
- Most importantly, I had to understand their needs so there wouldn't be any gray areas.
- Conversely, they need to know how I work and what my expectations were. As an example, we set deadlines for rosters, etc. and they became aware of what the Sports Information pre-game, in-game and post-game would be and how they would be implemented.
- We developed mutual communication and respect.

SOLVING THE PROBLEM: *Phase 3*

STUDENT WORKERS
- I met with each student individually to learn more about them. While it was important to access their particular strengths, I wanted to get to know them personally, develop a relationship and a trust since for a few I would be their third SID in a four-year period.
- The right student was slotted to work the right sport and/or handle the right Sorts Information work. I didn't put a student in a position to fail by mandating specific duties without any flexibility. If the student fails, the office fails. In essence, I didn't try to stick a square peg into a round hole.
- We all learned programs like Statcrew together. No one was left alone or felt they had to learn everything on an island.

- Job descriptions and office/game hours were created and posted. Any confusion that existed in the past was eliminated.
- A "team" atmosphere was created. Although the SID was the "boss," I never made the students feel anything but a partner in the success of the office. They were constantly commended for their work, appreciated in the appropriate ways and their efforts made known to the Athletics Director.
- I also actively recruited for the present and future, realizing that graduation causes turnover. I sought out potential workers, visited appropriate classes on campus, and asked a lot of questions to learn the environment. Seniors were asked to mentor underclassmen.

SOLVING THE PROBLEM: *Phase 4*
- Vassar has 25 sports and one fulltime SID. Having good organizational skills would be essential in handling the work load.
- In order to be productive and not live in the office 24/7, three major organizational strategies were implemented.
- **The first was** to house the athletic web site on my home computer so updates didn't require me to be in the office. It goes without saying, but I'd rather be in my home office working late at night and getting ahead of the curve rather than living at Vassar.
- **The second was** to install Statcrew for all sports on my home computer. To transfer files from office to home, I purchased a 1-gig USB drive that would easily store all the Statcrew files plus web photos and other important office documents. When our teams are on the road, game files and cumulative stats are uploaded just as if I were in the office. This way, Web and stat work is done efficiently and quickly. The USB drive hardly ever leaves my pocket, it is that essential to my organization. But the key to using this devise, especially with Statcrew, is to remember where (USB or office computer) the most recent files are located so you'll uploading the most current data.
- **The third was** to create the proper home game coverage that hadn't been done before. When we host a single event, I urge the SI staff to complete our tasks in 59 minutes. With good organization, a cooperative staff, concentration and attention to detail, there's no reason why post game work should take much longer – and in our case, we don't take short cuts or compromise the quality of our work. It work extends to 89 or 99 minutes, so be it. The idea is to work efficiently and with an organizational purpose. To this end, we have an organizational routine and check list of responsibilities – a flow that outlines which tasks should be handled first.
- As an example, one person handles the writing, another handles all web-related updates and file dissemination and if enough workers are available, another handles faxing, copying, necessary phone calls to AP, local paper, etc. Otherwise, those tasks are divided among the working staff.

- On game day, time management and organization are necessary to reduce stress and ensure proper preparation. Below *may* be *one way* to organize your schedule. This is a *sample* time management chart for a day with one home game. You'll want to develop one that meets your particular environment, needs and work flow. On days where lots of teams are playing, this chart may not be appropriate and will need to be revised.

#	Task	Start	Finish
1.	Open and respond to all email	9:00 am	10:00 am
2.	Produce/copy programs*	10:00 am	11:00 am
3.	OPEN 2.5 HOURS**	11:00 am	1:30 pm
4.	Return phone calls or meetings	1:30 pm	2:00 pm
5.	Game Prep***	2:30 pm	3:00 pm
6.	GAME	4:00 pm	5:50 pm
7.	Post Game work	6:00 pm	7:00 pm
8.	Update next day to-do list	7:15 pm	7:30 pm

VC programs are generally completed the day before. Opponent Statcrew files are normally loaded the day before if not earlier
**This time can be spent doing all sorts of work related to the current game or preparing for the next event, sending out rosters/Statcrew data, program/web writing, having lunch (necessary), meetings or other daily SI work.*
***Meeting with students/facility staff to cover assignments, develop post game fax/email lists, and prepare computer*

SOLVING THE PROBLEM: *Phase 5*

HOT TIME, SUMMER IN THE CITY
I am a big proponent of using the summer to take vacation, spend time with family and friends, unwind, read several books and recharge. However, summer can be used to get ahead so that the fall rush doesn't bury you.
- Develop a check list of must-do items.
- Figure out what are the most important tasks that will make your life easier come fall and beyond and complete them. *(I can't tell you what they are; each of us has different job duties and responsibilities).* The idea here is not to stop your daily to-do list just because your work day is less hectic.
- Don't begin huge archival, photo, writing, web projects, etc., that will spill over into the busy athletic season and will likely not be finished. This is a formula for disaster, so don't make promises to your supervisor that you can't accomplish. As an example, don't boast that you'll redesign the entire Web site if you're capable of doing just a few pages.
- Because I also handle marketing and promotions, summer is a time for me to manage those areas, meet with our partners, develop promotional initiatives that make sense and start to map out the upcoming season.

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ORGANIZATIONAL TIPS

There are many ways to get organized. The key is to find a method that works for you, develop a routine and **stick to it.** The following are a few ideas to get you started:

PLAN, PLAN, PLAN
Before you make a single move, sit down with a cup of coffee or a soft drink and plan out your strategy. It makes absolutely no sense – and can actually impede your efforts – if you haven't thought out your plan of action. Professional organizers call this ASA – Analyze, strategize and then attack.

TIME MANAGEMENT
Organizing your office won't happen in one day. It takes time, which depends on your current state of affairs. The organizational process could take three days or three weeks. Make sure you have set aside enough time to **complete** the project. Starting and then stopping the overhaul will leave you frustrated and in perhaps a worse place then when you started.

ONE PLACE AT A TIME
When you start organizing, stick to your central working location, the place where you spend the most time. **Don't** venture to another working spot until you have got your primary house in order.

CLEAN THE CLUTTER
There's no way around this one. You have to get a handle on the mounds of paper, files, books, photos; you name it that engulfs your office. Everything needs a place, and that place is not on your desk, on the floor or any other location that will make your life a total mess. This process is called "Trimming the Fat" or better known as **FILE, ACT, and TOSS.** These are your only choices. Because we now work in an electronic and digital age, more than 80 percent of what we receive in the mail can be tossed.

Ask yourself, *"What is the worst thing that can happen if this got lost?"* This process will help you determine what to do with documents. Many folks create a *tickler file* or an *action file* or an *in-out box.* Those are all well and good, but if items remain in those locations for weeks on end, you're simply adding to your organizational problems. **Set action due dates and stick to them.** *Suggestion:* Place your wastebasket where you open your mail or generally review items. This makes the tossing process easier.

CLUTTER TODAY, GONE TOMMORROW
There are day-long professional seminars on clutter – and the recurring message will always be: *Get rid of it.* The key is always figuring out how? Some ideas:

1. File, Act and Toss. As mentioned before, you have to trim the fat.
2. Archive. Buy storage boxes from Staples, OfficeMax or a like company or check out the wonderful array of products offered from University Products based in Holyoke, MA. In any case, clean up the clutter with proper archival storage. This goes for documents, photos, guides, et al. This will clear up space in your filing cabinets that are properly bulging at the seams. It will also conserve your history in a protective way. Folks in the museum business are pros on archiving.
3. Scan and file. Perhaps you don't want to toss a document away or you don't want to archive it – you're somewhere in the middle. Scan the document, turn it into an accessible digital file and create an area on your computer where it lives, but most importantly in a place where you know how to easily access it. The idea here is not to turn your hard drive into a document or image wasteland. That just complicates matters.

A TIDY OFFICE
You can't organize unless you have the "tools" to do so. In your budget request, unless this falls under the department budget, here's a brief list on some items you may need with prices varying from store to store:

100 manila file folders	*$3.99*
File folder labels	*$1.97*
Plastic filing box (1)	*$9.99 (estimate)*
Highlighers (4)	*$2.39*
Metal two-draw filing cabinet	*$30 and up*
In-out box	*$12.99*
Letter tray	*$9.99*

DAILY VS. LONG-TERM ORGANIZATION
As SIDs, we're in the business or archiving loads of materials. It's extremely important to organize your work place for the present and future and move the past somewhere else. You must constantly ask yourself, "*What do I need today?"* Essentially, you must get your working files in an area where you can easily access them. If you're constantly looking for files and documents, you've placed them in the wrong place.

FILING 101
It might seem elementary, but how you file and label your files goes a long way toward organization and efficiency. Are your files color coded by team? By sport? By year? Alphabetical? In one filing cabinet or two? Take time to analyze your particular working habits and pick a system that works best for you and *saves* you the most time. If you're constantly looking for files or constantly re-inventing your filing system, you're asking for frustration.

TIME WASTERS

Organization isn't only about physical paper clutter – not by any stretch. It may create chaos, clutter and disorganization, but it's only part of what may keep you working deep into the night. The other organization you need to deal with is daily-doings that limit your productivity. The list below identifies "things" that can make getting organized difficult. As SIDs, we're constantly adapting because our working days aren't always the same. But if you've ever wondered why you can't "get out from under," the list below identifies the most common daily situations that make organization a bear. Make a check next to those items that apply. They are not going away, but if you prepare for these time-wasters, you'll be supremely organization and less stressed out.

Paperwork/Administrative tasks	
Non-media/coach requests	
Phone calls/phone interruptions	
Computer/technical problems	
No internal support	
Unspecified interruptions	
Travel/traffic	
Meetings – too many/too long	
Volume of work/not enough time	
Staffing issues/people absent	
Requests from peers/other departments	
Changing priorities/unplanned projects	
Fire fighting/emergencies	
Doing other people's jobs	
Handling unexpected appointments	

DON'T QUIT

Office organization is not fun or enjoyable, but necessary. It's a huge task that takes time and commitment. Don't quit on this task. You will reap the rewards in ways you can't imagine when you are organized. Essentially, this will mean more time to enjoy life and your job.

-- *Prepared by:*

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