You've heard it a million times, but it's worth repeating—on-time submission of your pages to the plant best guarantees that your yearbook arrives exactly when you want it. The plant must create and maintain a production schedule that allows each of its departments quality and quantity time with your work to best ensure its completion to your expectations. Therefore, meeting your deadline is critical to plant production success.

For staffs producing spring-delivery yearbooks, approximately 12 to 15 weeks remain to finish the project. That thought can turn even the most experienced adviser’s stomach into knots.

Where deadlines are concerned, no two years are alike. Every staff performs differently under pressure. Scheduled school vacations and test days and unscheduled “snow days” pose added deadline distractions.

Just as a coach reexamines the game plan at halftime, making adjustments based on the reality of the situation also works for the yearbook adviser and editor.

With winter break upon us and at least your first major deadline completed, now is the perfect time to assess your staff’s progress and to make a game plan for meeting deadlines in the critical production weeks ahead.
A dozen deadline tips for completing your 2011 yearbook on time.

1: Submit as many pages as you can before checking-out for the holiday break. Don’t leave pages unfinished that can be completed before the break.

2: Weekly mini-deadlines will make it easier to make your major plant deadlines. Create a weekly production calendar starting next week and finishing with your final deadline week. Indicate vacation and test days and any other events that might disrupt yearbook work. Using your production calendar and your ladder, plan pages that can be submitted for each weekly deadline. Share and post this calendar.

3: Assess the amount of time spent working on the yearbook so far. Will additional outside time be needed? Schedule those work sessions and put them on the production calendar. Shorter and more frequent work sessions are more convenient.

4: If your staff creates its yearbook online, schedule "cyber work sessions." During cyber sessions, key editors and the adviser should be working online and available for consultation by instant messaging or phone. Again, for best time management, schedule your "cyber work sessions" on your weekly production calendar.

5: Multiples matter when producing an all-color yearbook. If you are not clear about printing multiples and signatures, consult your yearbook representative. For your weekly mini-deadlines, multiples won’t always be completed. However, multiples should be completed for each scheduled plant deadline.

6: It is important that every staff member accomplish something each day. During this critical crunch time, advisers and editors need to be more aggressive in checking progress. Budget time at the end of every day to check page progress and leave electronic notes for the next day.

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7. Begin each class or work session with a brief overview of what needs to be accomplished. Take time to praise those students who made significant progress or who produced great work the previous day.

8. By this point, it is becoming obvious which staff members are struggling to manage their time well or complete certain tasks such as designing pages or writing captions, headlines or stories. Assign these students with a more experienced staff member to serve as “deadline buddy.”

9. If your staff is behind, consider an “in school” work day. See if a substitute can be brought in for the yearbook adviser and ask if key editors can be released from class for a day of non-stop yearbook work.

10. Accuracy counts. Inaccurate or incomplete material can not be submitted to meet a deadline. Editors and the adviser must carefully check and proof each page before submission.

11. Stress can rear its ugly head and ruin your teamwork unless you plan some stress-relieving activities. Take a just few minutes each week to celebrate your success and have some fun!

12. Every plant deadline is important; however, the “final” deadline is the most critical of them all. When all of your pages have arrived at the plant, production moves into its final and most critical stages. Bells don’t sound when all of your pages have arrived in the plant, but almost. Meeting the final deadline is that critical.
Margaret Sorrows knows a thing or two about meeting deadlines.

The *Hornet* yearbook Sorrows advises at Bryant High School [AR], sports more than 500 pages.

And, her staff never misses a deadline. Ever.

My staff has to be productive every day. There are no play days in this yearbook room. To keep the staff productive, I have to be super organized and have strong leadership from experienced staff members to help the not-so experienced.

As the adviser, I create a deadline calendar to keep everyone on track. With the master calendar in place, you just have to take it one day at a time and get something accomplished every day.

Deadlines cannot be finished the night before. Plan for lots of mini deadlines to track the pages over several weeks.

As an adviser I am constantly up and moving around the room looking at copy, pictures, captions, headlines and spreads.

Every deadline has obstacles to overcome. When problems arise, address them immediately and get the positive energy flowing toward completing pages. Don’t despair if something goes wrong, because it will. Every problem has a solution. Retake a picture. Figure out how to contact a source. Redesign the spread.

Use every moment to teach one-on-one with each staff member. When a staff member sits with me for a critique of the spread, he or she learns from mistakes and gets better for the next deadline.

Every staff needs a member to provide comic relief. Keep a sense of humor and make yearbook fun.

We all celebrate all our successes. Everyone is important every deadline.