

Over the course of my time as Art Managing Editor for Lakota East Spark Magazine, I've learned the value of hard work, communication and the pursuit of work that is bigger than myself. Through working with an abundance of different types of people on our staff, I created artwork that carries out the mission of our magazine.

I had been creating artwork for the magazine for two years prior to this past year. Looking back, there were a lot of things that I wanted to change about my work ethic, and my reputation. In the past I had been known to submit work late, much to the dismay of my editors and colleagues. Despite the hours and hours that I had poured into my work, my efforts mostly came up short considering the final product was always a little too late.

Going into my senior year last fall, I had promised myself to deliver. I wanted to deliver quality, and quantity, and do it quickly. Finding a balance between all of those things took effort that doesn't just come naturally like art does. Outside of being an artist, my value on staff has even more abundantly come from that separate effort of striving for a tenure that I am proud of and remembered by.

Learning a new skill like timeliness doesn't come as easily to an artist as one might think. I was conditioned by the hours of zoning into my work, to lose track of time. While hyper-focusing on my artwork has benefited me in many aspects, it has not in others. There's a lot to be said for an artist who not only makes great artwork, but also holds true to their promises, and communicates realistic deadlines and expectations.

I was disillusioned many times during my senior year, because sometimes earning that respect and establishing myself on staff takes more than just a smile. I've had to stand up for my artistic decisions in front of many of our board members. Considering I was one of the only artists in a room full of journalists, business managers, designers, and photographers, there was a different kind of experience that I brought to the table. The most challenging part of any of my work was communicating the "Why". Translating art-speak into a more palpable tongue took lots of frustrating conversations, and misunderstandings to get to where it was at the end of my senior year.

That change in how I approached my artwork changed the trajectory of my art drastically. Once I learned to work with other people on staff, made bonds, and created mutual understanding of our respective expectations, and goals, my artwork flourished. The artwork I created for the magazine didn't flourish from my own skill alone, but from the countless reviews, opinions, suggestions, that I was able to receive from my peers. Without an open door for communication, I wouldn't have created the artwork I created in the magazine.

Looking back on this past year, I feel as though my effort to open constant back and forth communication, my open mind to critiques and inquiries, and ability to communicate my reasonings and choices effectively with my staff was what cemented my artwork, much more than just the skill I had to execute great artwork. The work I did for the magazine made me feel fulfilled, not just because it looked good, but because it was helping to communicate our mission as a magazine.