Redesigning the Magazine (B2 · English B2)

Tekst / Transcript

The student magazine had looked the same for fifteen years, and almost nobody read it any more. When Marco was elected editor, he promised to change everything by December. His first decision was to alter the format completely, replacing the narrow columns with wide pages and larger photographs. The design team was delighted. The older members of the committee were not.

Before doing anything else, Marco sent every student a short questionnaire asking what they wanted from the magazine. Nearly four hundred people replied. Most of them said the writing was dull and the pictures were worse. Several complained that the coverage of university sport was almost non-existent, while others wanted longer interviews. Marco pinned the results to the wall so that the whole team could see them.

The changes began with the cover. An art student produced a striking illustration of the old library in warm autumn colours, and everyone agreed it was the best cover the magazine had ever had. Marco also asked her to illustrate two feature articles about student housing, since photographs alone could not show the problem clearly. The new graphics inside the magazine were bold and simple, and a computer science student redesigned the logo so that it worked well on phones as well as on paper.

Not everything went smoothly. The new slogan printed under the title, "Loud, Honest, Yours", struck some readers as arrogant. Then Marco published a editorial arguing that the university should sell its shares in an oil company. The article was deliberately controversial, and it started a serious controversy that lasted for weeks. Letters arrived daily. Two professors accused the magazine of clear political bias, claiming that no opposing view had been printed.

Marco decided to answer openly rather than defend himself in silence. He organised a public forum in the main hall, where students and staff could speak for three minutes each. Around a hundred and fifty people came. The discussion was heated but polite, and by the end several critics admitted that the debate had been useful. Marco promised to edit the next issue more carefully and to print the strongest opposing letters in full.

The December edition sold out in two days. On its final page there was a small drawing of the old magazine cover, printed like an icon of a past age, with a single line of thanks underneath. Marco kept a copy on his desk for years afterwards, because it reminded him that honest disagreement had made the work better rather than worse.

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