



MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Real Guide  
to Growth



# *Mission Statement*

Sweet Adelines International is a  
worldwide organization of women singers  
committed to advancing the  
musical art form of barbershop harmony through  
education and performance.



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*We truly appreciate every one of you who has shared your valuable experiences, knowledge and insights so that we can provide a new comprehensive, compelling handbook for all members to utilize as they take on the challenges of strengthening our membership.*



# Introduction

Membership is the lifeblood of Sweet Adelines International. Every chapter needs a well-crafted membership action plan to stay dynamic and effective. As such, the Real Guide to Growth was developed in a format that sequentially builds the action steps required to produce a purpose-driven plan.

Each section identifies and explains the concepts within each action item with examples, suggestions and ideas. Sections conclude with action plan templates that take planners through exercises relevant to the section's content. As planners progress through the guide, section-by-section, they will achieve the process of linking the chorus' main membership strategies into one cohesive and achievable action plan.

The completed membership action plan will outline the specific actions the chapter intends to implement. It builds the roadmap that's going to persuade nonmembers to form an interest in the chorus, and ideally, turn those prospects into loyal members.

It also serves as a blueprint for improving the annual retention rate which is at the very core of what must be done to ensure the organization's long-term viability.

The membership action plan may be developed as a standalone document or as part of a strategic plan. Either way, the approach taken here accomplishes the following essential objectives:

- Encourages the chapter to look internally in order to fully understand the results of past decisions.
- Encourages the chapter to look externally in order to fully understand the landscape of the current market.
- Sets future goals and provides direction for membership efforts that everyone within the chorus should understand and support.
- Is a key component in determining funding to pursue new initiatives.

Recognizing that membership recruitment and retention strategies may vary from one part of the world to another, there are several ways to develop and format the action plan templates. Even with customization, the templates will still serve as definitive guidelines for communicating the value of the chapter to its intended audience.

Here's to sparking soaring membership growth and to generating action plans that result in thriving chapters worldwide.





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**SECTION 1:**

*Vision and Value*





## The Membership Planning Team

Begin building the membership action plan by forming a task force that works together as the Membership Planning team. The team's primary responsibility is to develop the action plan for membership growth and retention. For purposes of planning, a team of five to seven people is best, including:

- Membership Coordinator (or chair)
- Past Membership Coordinator (or chair)
- Membership Committee representative
- PR/Marketing Coordinator (or chair)
- PR/Marketing Committee representative
- Music Staff representative
- Chorus Board/Team representative

**The planning team is expected to achieve the following objectives:**

- Builds the Membership Action Plan based on the membership goals of the chorus.
- Builds external Marketing and Public Relations strategies for attracting members.
- Outlines the type of internal recruitment strategy the chorus will use, for example, Vocal Lesson Plan Approach, Performance Opportunity, Guest Nights, etc.
- Presents the membership plans in print and verbally to the chorus.
- Prepares members for recruitment efforts by providing training and educational materials.
- Schedules events and membership activities in coordination with the chapter board or management team.
- Makes assignments to other chorus personnel and committees as necessary.

## Prepare for Membership Growth by Defining the Chorus Culture

Before the chorus can potentially change and grow, the membership planning team must first understand the current culture, or the way things are now. In many ways, culture is like personality. In a person, the personality is made up of the values, beliefs, interests, and habits that create a person's behavior. Culture is made up of these attributes and behaviors, but is shared by a group of people.

While there are many definitions of organizational culture, most of them focus on similar points: collective experience, routine, beliefs, values, goals, and system. These are learned and re-learned, passed on to new members, and continue on as part of a chapter's core identity.

Define the chorus culture by answering four core questions: Where are we now (our **framework**)? What do we believe in (our **values**)? Where are we going (our **vision**)? Who are we (our **personality**)? The answers to these basic issues are the fabric with which planners will weave the chapter's vision, values and purpose into the membership action plan.

When attempting to potentially change the membership, answers to these questions will ultimately define the culture. When existing members realize that their current culture needs to transform to support the chapter's success and progress, positive change can occur.

### FRAMEWORK OF THE CHAPTER (Action Plan Template 1.1)

Look at every aspect of the chorus' framework for membership recruitment, orientation and retention. Identifying and strengthening that framework in terms of chorus membership is the purpose of this exercise. The answers will identify priority improvement areas so that action can be taken to close the gaps and improve performance in areas with the greatest need.

## WHERE ARE WE NOW?

**Examine the framework of the chapter by answering:**

- 1. At what level is the musical product we offer?**  
Remember, we want to attract singers, and singers come to those who have a product they cannot wait to buy.
- 2. How strong is the administration of the chapter?**  
The musical product is often a direct by-product of administration. The music program needs administrative strength and leadership to enable it to move forward.
- 3. Is the director willing and able to be a major contributor to the membership program?** The director's enthusiastic involvement, support, and willingness to cooperate are vital to the overall success of the program.
- 4. How is the health of the chapter?** Are the interpersonal relations among the members positive, or does irrelevant bickering creep into chorus life? Do the administrative and musical leaders effectively communicate together regularly? Many times we fool ourselves into thinking that if we just had more members these issues would be solved. Larger numbers mean that even more attention must be paid to good communication. Work on any issues at hand before inviting new members into the chorus. Remember, they will learn by the way they see you treating others.
- 5. Do we all really want to grow? Why? If so, how much?** Each member in the chorus needs to understand and be committed to the advantages of having more members. Even choruses that want to stay the same size need to recruit new members due to attrition.

Put these concepts into words as succinctly and clearly as possible, and use them as a resource in subsequent planning.

## IDENTIFY SHARED VALUES (Action Plan Template 1.2)

Shared values define how members want to interact with each other in the chorus, with potential members and the internal community. Common values translate into the guidelines or expectations that prescribe appropriate kinds of behavior by members in particular situations and control the behavior of members towards one another.

## WHAT DO WE BELIEVE IN?

**Decipher core values:**

- Identify the chorus' primary values by listing the specific ones that serve as guiding principles.
- Decipher the expected behavior traits exhibited toward one another and toward prospective members.
- Uncover any potential value issues with the intention of finding solutions.
- Establish value statements that are grounded in the identified shared values. Examples include:
  - Integrity: We exhibit credibility by ensuring that our actions always match our words.
  - Respect: We respect each member's level of participation, to the greatest extent possible or desired.
  - Friendly: We model accepting and friendly behaviors when meeting potential members.
  - Optimism: We maintain optimism in all chorus activities.
  - Service: We positively contribute to the community by delivering musical excellence to the public, as well as educational resources to the community's youth.
  - Musical Excellence: We strive to improve in a never-ending quest to perform at the highest levels of expectation.
  - Additional values may be: ambition, competency, accuracy, dedication, diversity, enjoyment/fun, loyalty, teamwork, excellence, accountability, empowerment, quality, efficiency, dignity, collaboration, challenge, influence.

Once defined, communicate and discuss the core values frequently with members. Model personal behaviors, decision-making, contribution and interpersonal interaction that reflect the values.

## DEFINE THE MEMBER VISION STATEMENT (Action Plan Template 1.3)

An effective vision statement conveys a conceptual image of the desired future for the chorus. It provides inspiration and challenge to all members towards an ideal of what the chorus can become. It should be purposefully articulated to bridge the present framework (Where Are We Today?) with the core values (What Do We Believe In?), plus serve as a critical impetus for change. It should be brief enough to be memorable and complete enough to direct effort. Writing a vision statement can help to keep your chorus focused, inspired and committed to the future.

### WHERE ARE WE GOING?

#### *Develop an inspiring membership vision statement:*

- Focus on the basics of the chorus' mission statement and predict; where is the chorus going to be five years from now? What will it have accomplished?
- Identify aspects that leaders feel will be important for the future of the chorus. Look for themes and common traits among the participants. If there are many ideas, prioritize similarities before ruling any out.
- Craft a vision that is achievable yet inspires members to strive for more. Review the list of important traits and add any notable achievements. Transpose the clips into a usable statement. Use the following formula to shape it:  
Five years from now, (my chorus name) will

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For instance, here is a sample vision statement:

“Five years from now, the (chorus) will be recognized in the Tri-State area as the leading resource for vocal education and performance.”

- The statement should resonate with all members of the chorus and help them feel inspired and a part of something much bigger than themselves.

Commit to the member vision statement. Communicate it to the chorus on a consistent basis. The more you talk about the statement, the easier it is to implement. A vision statement lives on in your chorus' culture if it is talked about on a regular basis.

## DEFINE THE PERSONALITY OF THE CHORUS (Action Plan Template 1.4)

The personality of the chorus is an extension of the chorus culture, core values and vision. For instance, the chorus' personality may include other descriptors surrounding style or attitude and might even reflect some of the traits of key chorus leaders (e.g., ambitious, friendly, fun, sophisticated, bold, or humorous). Defining the personality is important because it unifies the membership – and helps it connect with its intended audience. If a prospect finds the chorus personality to be appealing, she is likely to be attracted to it and even more likely to be aligned with its goals and culture.

### WHO ARE WE?

#### *Define the personality of the chorus:*

1. List positive adjectives that describe any chorus' personality. For example: classy, sassy, confident, elegant, high-achieving, funny, vibrant, caring, cutting-edge, conservative, fiery, trendy, etc.
2. Ask each member to rate each adjective on a scale of 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest). Identify the personality traits that were rated the highest.
3. Select a wide range of pictures from magazines, newspapers or Web sites that evoke an emotion or make a statement – a photo of girlfriends laughing together, an athlete winning a race, puppies, a mountain top, a luxury car, a girl with purple hair, an exquisite gown, an oak tree, fireworks, a cartoon, diamonds, pearls, a party, a clock, a jet, a mother and daughter in a warm embrace, etc.
4. Ask chorus members to each select five images that best reflect an aspect of the chorus' personality – and why. The “why” is particularly important because members will interpret the images differently; for example, the picture of puppies might be selected by one member because it connotes “energetic” and by another because it represents “unconditional love.”
5. Cluster pictures with similar meanings together and create collages. Select the clusters that resonate most strongly with the chorus. Use adjectives that describe the clusters to define the chorus' personality.

Once clearly defined, the chorus' personality should be consistently expressed and portrayed in everything: costumes, repertoire, performance style and the attitudes of members.

# Section One **ACTION STEPS**

## Action Plan Template Defining the Chorus Culture

### 1.1 Where Are We Now? Examine the Framework of the Chapter

	Where was the chorus a year ago?	Where is the chorus now?
Education		
Music		
Performance		
Administration		
Membership		
Marketing		

# Section One **ACTION STEPS**

## **1.1 Examine the Framework of the Chapter, continued**

**At what level is the musical product we offer?**

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**How strong is the administration of the chapter?**

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**Is the director willing and able to be a major contributor to the membership program?**

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**How is the health of the chapter?**

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**Do we all really want to grow? Why? If so, how much?**

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# Section One ACTION STEPS

## Action Plan Template Defining the Chorus Culture

### 1.2 What Do We Believe In? Identify Core Values

Values may be: ambition, competency, equality, responsibility, accuracy, respect, dedication, diversity, improvement, enjoyment/fun, loyalty, teamwork, excellence, accountability, empowerment, quality, efficiency, dignity, collaboration, empathy, accomplishment, courage, wisdom, challenge, influence, learning, compassion, friendliness, generosity, dependability and flexibility.

**Identify the chorus' primary values by listing the specific ones that serve as guiding principles.**

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**Identify what benefits each member values most.**

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**Decipher the expected behavior traits exhibited toward one another and toward prospective members.**

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**Uncover any potential issues. List solutions.**

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**Establish value statements that are grounded in the identified shared values.**

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# Section One ACTION STEPS

## Action Plan Template Defining the Chorus Culture

### 1.3 Where Are We Going? Craft the Member Vision Statement

Where is the chorus going to be five years from now? What will it have accomplished?

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Identify aspects that leaders feel will be important for the future of the chorus. List themes and common traits among the participants. If there are many ideas, prioritize similarities before ruling any out.

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Craft a vision that is achievable yet inspires members to strive for more. Review the list of important traits and add any notable achievements.

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Transpose the clips into a usable statement consisting of a short paragraph that identifies the long-run vision of the chorus.

**Member Vision Statement:**

Five years from now, (my chorus name) will \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

# Section One **ACTION STEPS**

## 1.3 Craft the Member Vision Statement, continued

List five key strategies that need to be accomplished within the next six months to make the vision a reality.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

Commence the process of integrating the established framework, values and member vision statement into your Membership Marketing Plans.



# Section One

## ACTION STEPS

### Action Plan Template Defining the Chorus Culture

#### 1.4 Who Are We? Identify the Personality of the Chorus

Personality may be: classy, sassy, confident, elegant, high-achieving, funny, vibrant, caring, cutting-edge, conservative, fiery, trendy, friendly, contemporary, upbeat, risk-takers, refreshing, fun, expressive, energetic, spunky, full of life, refreshing, dynamic, colorful and polished.

**Brainstorm a list of positive adjectives that could describe any chorus' personality.**

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**Ask each member to rate each adjective on a scale of 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest). Identify the personality traits that were rated the highest.**

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**Select a wide range of pictures from magazines, newspapers or Web sites that evoke an emotion or make a statement. Ask chorus members to each select five images that best reflect an aspect of the chorus' personality – and why.**

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**Cluster pictures with similar meanings together and create collages. Select the clusters that resonate most strongly with the chorus. Use adjectives that describe the clusters to define the chorus' personality.**

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**SECTION 2:**

*Membership Recruitment*



## Membership Recruitment Plan

This section lays the groundwork for developing a membership recruitment plan by providing a close look at marketing's key concepts. In essence, marketing consists of the tactics used to identify, create and maintain satisfying relationships with potential members that result in value for both the prospect and the organization.

**Successful marketing** encompasses an interlocking, step-by-step process with seven key principles:

<b>Principle One:</b>	Situation Analysis
<b>Principle Two:</b>	Marketing Objectives
<b>Principle Three:</b>	Target Audience
<b>Principle Four:</b>	Marketing Mix
<b>Principle Five:</b>	Budgets
<b>Principle Six:</b>	Execution and Schedules
<b>Principle Seven:</b>	Evaluation and Adjustment

### Principle One: Situation Analysis

**(Action Plan Templates 2.1, 2.2, 2.3)**

Situation analysis examines the factors that will influence the chapters' ability to attract new members. It will help it determine how to focus and how to maximize its marketing efforts. Planners have done some situation analysis already, when answering the question "Where are we today?"

In marketing for new members, the key challenges are generating **awareness**, **trial** and **continuity**—in that order. First, people need to know about the chorus (awareness). Some of those people will be intrigued enough to make that first chorus visit (trial). And some of those guests will have the desire to come back and ultimately join the chorus (continuity).

Which stage represents your chorus' biggest opportunity? For example, many Sweet Adeline choruses are virtually invisible in their communities. They need to focus on generating positive **awareness** by spreading interesting news about the chorus.

Other choruses are well known but not particularly successful in getting prospects to come to a rehearsal. An example would be a chorus that performs frequently in

its community and generates good local press. However, the chorus is not attracting guests. Perhaps they're not projecting an inspirational image—or perhaps they are so dazzling, they are intimidating to potential newcomers. In either case, these choruses need to focus on generating **trial**.

Still, other choruses may get plenty of guests, but relatively few of them join. An example would be a regional champion chorus that draws interest because of its musical excellence and the credentials of the director. Perhaps guests don't feel welcome because chorus members give the impression of being so close-knit and exclusive. Or perhaps the guests are overwhelmed with too much music or too much information. Choruses like these should focus on getting visitors back the second and third time, therefore generating **continuity**.

Of course, you must generate all three to attract new members – awareness, trial and continuity – they are a continuum. That's one reason that The Group Vocal Lessons Program is so successful—it lends itself well to all three stages. Free vocal lessons are a newsworthy topic that's likely to generate media interest and consequently, awareness. Offering lessons in vocal production motivates trial, especially among women who might not otherwise feel capable of joining a singing group. Finally, the series of classes, which builds from week to week, fosters continuity. It's an excellent package from a marketing perspective. (See The Vocal Lesson Plan Section)

### DETERMINE YOUR CHORUS' BEST OPPORTUNITIES TO RECRUIT

There are numerous ways to recruit new members. For starters, there's the Group Vocal Lesson Plans, the Performance Opportunity Plan or a Saturday Barbershop Workshop. Whichever vehicle you choose, you can maximize your marketing efforts by focusing on your biggest opportunity to attract new members.

**You could:** Focus on increasing awareness among new audiences. Although your chorus may get only a small percentage of those passing through to join, the larger pool will result in more new members. This is the route most choruses choose, and it's perfectly appropriate if your awareness level is relatively low. However, if your awareness level is already high in your area—as is the case with some choruses in small communities—just "getting the word out" yields diminishing returns.

**Or you could:** Focus on increasing trial. Find creative ways to give women a taste of singing barbershop (e.g., a “hobby swap” night with another women’s organization). Or concentrate on the women who already know about your chorus, such as the ones in the audiences of your community performances and shows, family, friends, and co-workers. Focus on getting these women to try singing with you once and to come to that first rehearsal. Inevitably, some of them will get hooked.

**Or you could:** Focus on increasing continuity among the guests who show up at your door. Actually, when you compare the relative financial and time expenditures involved in generating awareness and trial, this route can be your most productive. Often, choruses let guests slip through their fingers because they don’t think past that first visit. Conjure up ideas to sustain guests’ interest and continuity.

Any route you choose, the net result is more new members: (See chart below.)

APPROACHES TO INCREASING MEMBERSHIP				
	Base	Increase Awareness	Increase Trial	Increase Continuity
<b>Number Aware</b>	1000	2000	1000	1000
<b>% Trial</b>	2%	2%	4%	2%
<b>Number Trying</b>	20	40	40	20
<b>% Joining</b>	30%	30%	30%	60%
<b>Number of New Members</b>	+6	+12	+12	+12

## IDENTIFY YOUR CHORUS' BIGGEST OPPORTUNITY BY SURVEYING WOMEN IN YOUR COMMUNITY

To help determine your chorus' biggest marketing opportunity, gather some facts and figures. Poll a random sample of women in your community. What percent know about your chorus or Sweet Adelines? What's their impression? Would they ever consider coming to a guest night? Look through your Membership Chair's records. How many guests have you had in the past year? How many of those guests came back a second time? How many actually joined? How do your current-year figures compare to previous years and to other choruses in your region? Start collecting data so you can utilize and establish benchmarks for the future.

You will also want to survey one-time guests, other vocalists in your community, the media, etc. In marketing to attract new members, outsiders' perceptions are more important than insiders' viewpoints. What do they see as your chorus' strengths and weaknesses? Their perception is their reality. For example, you may know that deep down your director is a warm and loving individual, but if first-time guests perceive your director as unapproachable, that's reality to them...and a chorus liability. Some of the findings from these surveys may help not only with new member recruitment, but also with member retention.

### Principle Two: Marketing Objectives (Action Plan Template 2.4)

It's important that marketing objectives are stated in specific and measurable terms. For example, "the chorus will gain 10 new members this fiscal year," or "the chorus will have 75 members by May 1." Of significance, the second statement factors in the retention of current members.

Once you've established a measurable objective, calculate how many guests you need to come through your door. For example, if your chorus currently has 65 members and you desire a total of 75 members by May 1:

Current number of members	65
Attrition rate	15%
Estimated number of resignations (65 x 15%)	10
Number of current members remaining (65 - 10)	55
Target number of total members by May 1	75
Number of new members needed (75 - 55)	20
Conversion rate for your chorus	30%
Number of guests needed to come through your door (20/30%)	67

In this example, to increase the chorus' size by a net of 10 members, the chorus needs to have 67 guests. Adding 10 members may not sound like a lot, but once you factor in attrition and conversion rates, you can see you have to attract a lot more guests. Many choruses fall short of achieving their membership objectives because they don't take attrition and conversion rates into account. Plan for new members. Even choruses that want to remain the same size need to bring in new members to offset attrition.

Of course, you can reduce the number of guests needed by decreasing your attrition rate or increasing your conversion rate. Happily, a number of chapters in our organization have very low attrition rates; they do an excellent job of retaining 90 percent or more of their members year to year. In the example above, if the chorus had a five percent attrition rate (95 percent retention), they would need only 44 guests to achieve the same membership objective.

### Principle Three: Target Audience (Action Plan Template 2.5)

After the marketing objectives are established, determine the target audience that can positively impact the goals. Because market conditions and potential member profiles vary, the more you know about your target audience, the better you can design a structure and select incentives to motivate them and ultimately meet your specific objectives.

Define the target audience in such a way that it provides useful information. In that way, planners ensure that the chorus' target audiences are specific enough to be effectively reached. A clear and accurate understanding of prospective members fosters better marketing strategies and better communications. In fact, good target audience information extends beyond marketing into virtually every functional area of your chorus.

## TARGETING THE AUDIENCE

This can be a broad or narrow segment. For example:

- All women
- All capable female singers
- Ethnically diverse women
- Young women (e.g. 16 to 25-years-old)
- Women with low-pitched voices
- Busy women who want to devote some time for themselves
- Women who live within 40 minutes of your rehearsal site

As you can see, your target audience can be segmented by demographics, psychographics, or geographics. Demographics are the external attributes of your target audience such as age, marital status, household income, education level and ethnicity. Psychographics are the attitudes, beliefs, personality, lifestyle and mindsets of your target. Examples are women that enjoy performing in public or women who feel it's important to have a creative outlet. From a geographic standpoint, you may want to focus on women who live or work within a reasonable commuting distance to your rehearsal hall. If there are two Sweet Adeline choruses in your city, you may want to focus on "the east side," for example.

It's acceptable to have more than one target audience. However, the more audiences you are striving to reach, the more fragmented the marketing efforts become. As such, ensure that the chorus' targeted audiences are specific enough to be effectively reached.

## TARGETING DIVERSE AUDIENCES

Ideally, Sweet Adelines choruses represent the demographics of the communities that they serve. However, choruses may need to diversify their membership to include more women.

The population looks considerably different today than it did a century (or even a decade) ago, because of social, economic, and technological advances. Currently, approximately 29 percent of the U.S. female population is non-white. Demographers project that this percentage will increase to 40 percent in 20 years.

Ensure that your chorus includes and embraces all women who can sing, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, lifestyle, education, physical ability, etc. Recruiting and retaining a diverse membership offers many benefits to the chorus:

- Increased chorus size
- Enhanced appeal to younger women and broader audiences
- More opportunities to perform
- Broader exposure to new music
- Endless opportunities for fresh ideas, talents and skills
- Greater credibility within the community

Younger members are another underrepresented group in Sweet Adelines International. According to recent statistics, only 17 percent of members worldwide are under the age of 45. It is also important to note that 81 percent of our members are over the age of 45, and 91 percent of our members are over the age of 35.

There are a number of benefits to incorporating younger members into your chorus. They bring fresh ideas to weekly rehearsals, events and projects. They also provide a continuous source of energetic, enthusiastic members who can enhance the chorus' longevity.

## POINTS TO CONSIDER

If you want to reach out to a new audience to broaden your chorus' composition, keep in mind that in general, people associate with people they like and who are like them. While the love of barbershop harmony can become a common bond, initially you may need to develop a bridge.

## Here are some points to consider:

- Be aware that, initially, a minority guest may be uncomfortable in your chorus, whether she shows it or not.
- Put yourself in a guest's shoes. How would you feel as a 21-year-old walking into a room of women in their 50s? Or as an African American walking into a room of white women? Or as a wheelchair-confined woman entering a room of dancing performers? How would you like to be approached and treated? Be sensitive.
- Avoid potentially offensive jokes and lyrics in songs.
- Be respectful of all major religious holidays, not just your own.
- Broaden your repertoire to include ethnic songs or songs by ethnic artists arranged in the barbershop style. Learn a Hanukkah song along with the Christmas carols. Sing some popular tunes that teens and young women would find appealing.
- Be flexible with some of the traditional standards of uniformity (e.g., makeup).
- Make an effort to understand different ages, cultures, religions and lifestyles.
- Make special provisions for younger members that may be facing financial limitations or time pressures:
  - Waive or reduce membership fees for a period of time.
  - Reduce chorus expenses.
  - Create chorus activities that are convenient for younger members.
  - Invite a small group of younger individuals to join at the same time so that they feel more comfortable. As a first step, you may want to encourage members to bring their daughters and granddaughters to rehearsal and create some special "Mother-Daughter" events. As soon as one or two young women join, it will be easier to attract more.
  - Highlight alternative rehearsal arrangements that can help young members meet the membership obligations (such as through Webinars, e-meetings or online coaching).

## TONALITY

The tonality of your marketing materials should appeal to your target audience. For example, if you're going after young women to add some youth and liveliness to your chorus, the tonality of your materials might be "fun and contemporary." If you're pursuing experienced quality singers because you want to build an A-level chorus, your tonality might be "professional and dynamic."

The tonality is reflected in the words and the style used in the targeted communications. For example, "announcing auditions" would be a turn-off for inexperienced singers but would be a draw for seasoned performers. The style comes through in the graphic design, type fonts and colors of the materials.

Although the tonality of marketing efforts may vary to appeal to different target audiences, it should always remain consistent with the personality of the chorus.

## CHORUS PERSONALITY

As explained in Section One, defining the chorus' personality is important because it helps it connect with its target audience. If a prospect finds the chorus personality to be appealing, she is likely to be attracted to it and even more likely to be aligned with its culture.

Once defined, the chorus' personality should be consistently portrayed in all marketing materials, graphics, photos, logo, Web site and public relations efforts. For instance, if it is a bold, cutting-edge chorus, this personality should come across in all promotional materials, chorus logo, Web site, and in the way it uses technology for communicating with prospective members.

## Principle Four: Marketing Tactics (Action Plan Templates 2.6)

Marketing tactics are the specific vehicles used to communicate the chorus' membership messages. There are four major methods that the chorus can utilize to reach its target audience. Taken together these comprise the promotional mix.

- Method One:** Incentives and Promotions
- Method Two:** Advertising
- Method Three:** Public Relations (PR)
- Method Four:** Word of Mouth Marketing

Of importance, the defined target audience will guide the promotional mix in the next planning stage. Review the definitions of each method and determine the best one, or ones, to use. For instance, broad segments (like "all women") are best reached by mass media. Narrow segments (such as "young women") are reached most efficiently through targeted media and marketing efforts.

## METHOD ONE: INCENTIVES AND PROMOTIONS (Action Plan Template 2.7)

This method involves the use of special short-term techniques, often in the form of incentives, to encourage prospects to respond or participate in an activity. For instance, the use of free chorus guest passes with an expiration date requires prospects to visit the chorus while the incentive is still valid.

### Generate Interest

The practice of creating incentives that convince customers that a need exists has been the hallmark of marketing for a long time with promotional appeals targeted at basic human characteristics such as emotions, fears and humor. Trigger potential desires by thinking about why you joined your chorus and what keeps you coming back. What are the benefits of belonging to the chorus?

Generally, Sweet Adelines choruses can provide: singing, entertainment, performance, membership, education, leadership opportunities, community service, travel, personal growth opportunities, competition, physically active pastime, healthy and stress-relieving activity, enjoyable pursuit for women, networking possibilities and more.

The benefits you offer have to strike your target as so compelling that it's worth her investment of time, energy and money.

### SELL INSTEAD OF TELL

#### TELLING

**The Joyful Sounds Chorus is looking for new members.**

**The Joyful Sounds Chorus is having a show.**

**Joyful Sounds Chorus is offering free vocal lessons.**

#### SELLING

**You'll make great music and great friends by joining the Joyful Sounds Chorus.**

**Discover the unique thrill of barbershop harmony at the Joyful Sounds Chorus show.**

**Learn how to sing in six easy lessons with the Joyful Sounds Chorus.**

*\*The mock chorus name Joyful Sounds Chorus is used for sample purposes.*



## Position and Sell the Benefits

Promotions should be designed to assist customers in the search stage of the purchasing process. Give them compelling and motivational reasons for gaining an interest in the chorus. Position your chorus by carefully crafting your message, and use “selling” words – instead of just “telling.” For example, The Joyful Sounds Chorus\* is having a guest rehearsal; that’s telling. “Learn the art of singing barbershop harmony with the award-winning Joyful Sounds Chorus;” that’s selling. It provides the information about the chorus and also gives prospects a reason to “buy.”

## Stimulate Demand

The right promotion can drive prospects to your chorus. Promotional efforts may be directed at getting the prospect to try your chorus. This is often seen on the Internet where software companies offer free demonstrations or even free downloadable trials of their products. For example, a pre-holiday newspaper advertisement may invite interested singers to try the chorus by singing at various holiday performances. Or, offer a one-month free trial membership, with messages that stimulate interest. Place an expiration date on the offer so that an immediate call to action sparks trial.

## Craft the Key Messages with Potential Selling Propositions

Marketing is “selling,” so craft the key messages by answering the prospect’s questions:

1. What’s in it for me and what benefits will I receive? (**Generate Interest**)
2. Why should I be interested? (**Position and Sell**)
3. Why should I try what the chorus is offering? (**Stimulate Demand**)

Here are a variety of **potential selling propositions**. See how each offers different incentives and appeal to different audiences:

- Free Pass to Fun! The Joyful Sounds Chorus invites you to join in the fun, the music and the friendship.
- Free Guest Pass! Radiate your passion for singing with the Joyful Sounds Chorus.
- If you love to sing, we’ve got a place for you. Joyful Sounds Chorus is offering free singing lessons.

- The Joyful Sounds Chorus is holding FREE AUDITIONS this Tuesday for interested female a cappella singers.
- Free Vocal Lessons! Learn to sing in six easy lessons with the Joyful Sounds Chorus.
- Love to Sing? Join the fun, the music and the friendship with a one-month FREE trial membership.
- If you love to sing, we’ve got a place for you. Joyful Sounds Chorus is offering free singing lessons and the first month of membership is free!
- Visit the Joyful Sounds Chorus in January and earn a free Singing Valentine.

## Reinforce the Chorus’ Brand

When guests visit a chorus, their overall first impression of the organization and its members is very important. However, it’s the music that influences them and keeps them coming back. The best way to generate continuity is to make the guest aspire to be part of your chorus.

## METHOD TWO: ADVERTISING (Action Plan Template 2.8)

Advertising involves placing paid marketing messages in media outlets. Historically, advertising involved a push-media approach (one-way communication) that offered limited opportunities for the customer experiencing the advertisement to provide feedback. Currently, with the advent of the Internet, the pull-media approach (two-way communication) to advertising has increased the options that allow customers to provide instant feedback, reviews and testimonials. For example, technologies are available to enable a television viewer to click a button to request more details on a product seen on a TV program. In fact, it is expected that over the next 10 years advertising will move completely away from a push-media model and become one that is highly interactive. Imagine the future possibilities that your chorus will have to form instant connections with prospective singers by virtually interacting with them through various advertising mediums.

## TARGETED VS. MASS PROMOTION

Advertising is traditionally considered a method of mass promotion in that a single message has the potential to reach a large audience. However, this mass promotion approach presents challenges since a broad public is exposed to a marketing message that may not be within the profile of the target audience. As a rule, the broader the reach of the vehicle, the more expensive the ad space will be (in other words, an ad in your city newspaper will cost more than an ad in your local neighborhood paper).

Most Sweet Adelines choruses have already found that target marketing is their most cost-effective and efficient tool, with a reasonable expenditure into mass marketing and media. With the current influx of new advertising technologies and the emergence of new media outlets there are even more opportunities for choruses to participate in targeted advertising.

For example, **Search Engine Marketing** through Google, Yahoo, MSN and other Internet properties employs

methods for delivering targeted ads to prospects that are actively looking for information through keyword searches. By contextually targeting keywords such as sing, auditions, a cappella, barbershop singers, women singers, etc., choruses are much more likely to have their ads displayed to prospects within their target market and, thus, receive a higher return on investment. To learn more about this new advertising option, visit Google AdWords.

Arbitron technology is another tool that marketers use to understand, target and reach prospects. Find out the stations that your target audience listens to on the radio and watches on broadcast TV, cable and satellite TV by reviewing Arbitron's station ratings. For instance, if the chorus plans to target women aged 18-34, you can pull a local Arbitron report to see what the primary stations are that this demographic listens to throughout the day. To learn more about Arbitron reporting, visit [www.arbitron.com](http://www.arbitron.com).

The chart below summarizes the primary target and mass market advertising opportunities.

Target Markets	Mass Markets
Brochures	Billboards
Bulletin Boards	Business Marquees
Business Cards	Car Signs/Bumper Stickers
Buttons	Chamber of Commerce
Community Newsletters	City Bus Ads
Contacting Previous Guests	City Welcome Signs
Direct Mail	Classified Ads
Employee Publications	Displays at Trade Fairs
Flyers	Grocery Bag Inserts
Letters to Music Teachers	Magazine Ads
Phone Calls	Media Sponsorship
Posters	Metropolitan Newspaper Ads
Telling Your Own Story	Movie/TV Section Ads
Community Newspapers that distribute to target geographic areas	Newspaper Arts Calendar
Radio Ads that target specific gender and age demographics	Placemats in Restaurants
Magazines with targeted subjects and specific ethnicity	Radio Spots
Web sites with targeted subject topics and key words	Time and Temperature Ads
Search Engine Marketing through targeted keywords	TV Spots
	Utility Statement Inserts
	Web Sites
	Yard Signs

## GENERATE ADVERTISING FREQUENCY WITH MEDIA SPONSORSHIPS

It is important to consider the frequency of your advertising. The industry rule-of-thumb is that a message must touch someone at least seven times before it sinks in. The message can come from multiple sources, but one exposure is not enough.

Most choruses simply cannot afford to purchase frequent commercial airtime or advertising space. An alternative method of successfully advertising your chorus and attracting new members is to solicit media sponsorships. This is a unique method because the primary goal of obtaining media sponsorships is to get the commercial airtime or advertising space donated. The media will work with you because of the visibility you can provide them as a sponsor as well as the opportunity to partner with an important community resource—your chorus. Most media general managers are interested in making a contribution to organizations in the community. Furthermore, to the media, unsold airtime or advertising space has the same value as an empty seat at one of your shows—after a certain time it becomes worthless. By working together, you both can achieve your own objectives.

### Guidelines for Media Sponsorships

Identify potential media partners. Look for a media partner that reaches your target audience and has a commitment to supporting local organizations. New radio stations or possibly the cable television group are good initial targets because they are interested in penetrating the market and developing new business.

Identify the key decision-maker. Rarely will this be an account representative. Ask for an appointment with the General Manager, President, Public Service Director or Publisher. It would be best if you have a chorus member who is a principal or a key decision-maker at a local media outlet.

Approach the media for a sponsorship at least one year out from your campaign. The media budgets time or space for donations in advance of their fiscal year.

Depending on the time of year, you may have better success.

When securing a media sponsorship, the most advantageous

time of the year for media availability is first quarter (January, February and March). The second best time of the year is third quarter (July, August and September). Media is usually tightly booked during the fourth quarter (October, November and December).

Develop a media sponsorship proposal. The proposal is a written document that outlines what the chorus will receive - usually expressed in terms of a dollar amount of airtime or advertising space—and what benefits the chorus will provide the media sponsor. Obtain advertising rates from the media outlet prior to writing the proposal.

For example: the following advertising rates will differ significantly per market, choose one below:

### REQUESTED MEDIA SPONSORSHIP:

#### *Newspaper/Magazine:*

56 column inches	24 column inches
\$55.00 = \$3,080 value	\$74.00 = \$1,776 value
Monday – Saturday	Sunday

All ads placed in the entertainment, living, or main sections. Top right corner placement preferred.

#### *Radio*

5 :60 radio advertisements per day. Monday – Sunday, 6 a.m. – midnight

Total value: \$8,000

Airdates: July 1 - 24

#### *Television Cable:*

10 :30 television advertisements per day. Monday – Sunday, 6 a.m. – midnight. Commercials air on channels: Women 35+

Total value: \$6,000

Airdates: July 1 - 24

### **Television Broadcast:**

4 :30 television advertisements per day. Monday – Sunday, 6 a.m. – midnight.

Total value: \$10,000

Air Dates: July 1 - 24

### **Web site**

2 banner advertisements with links placed in high-traffic areas of the Web site.

2 text ads with links placed in targeted areas of the Web site.

Total value: \$4,000

Run dates: July 1 - September 30

In return, the (Chorus Name) will provide the following benefits to (Media Name):

- will be mentioned as a sponsor in all press releases about the chorus.
- will be mentioned as a sponsor in all public service announcements about the chorus.
- will receive logo recognition on all the chorus' print advertisements.
- will be recognized as a sponsor in the chorus' quarterly newsletter.
- will receive banner signage and program ads at all concerts and special appearances.
- will be listed on the chorus' Web site.
- will receive one complimentary quartet appearance (10 minutes in length) for employees.

At the end of the agreement, always include a blank line (as usual on a contract) for both you and the media decision-maker to sign, making the agreement binding.

### **METHOD THREE: PUBLIC RELATIONS (PR) (Action Plan Template 2.9)**

The goal of public relations is to increase the chorus' exposure through favorable, non-paid media coverage (publicity) and to enhance the chorus' image.

Publicity is considered ten times more credible than advertising. With advertising, a tightly controlled message is purchased and placed. Advertisers know exactly what the advertisement will say. But with publicity, the publisher crafts the message that will be conveyed to the public. This unbiased, media-generated coverage makes it more credible and influential than a paid advertisement because audiences view many media outlets as independent-party sources. The decision to include the name of the chorus and the views expressed about the chorus is not based on payment but on the media outlet's judgment of what is important. For example, a positive story about a new membership drive in the lifestyle section of a local newspaper may have greater impact on readers than a full-page advertisement for the campaign since readers perceive the news media as presenting an impartial perspective of the activity.

### **PUBLIC RELATIONS TOOLS**

Tools used to accomplish PR efforts include press releases, public service announcements, newsletters, displays and online outreach. This next part provides a close look at the primary tools used in public relations.

### **PRESS RELEASES**

Press releases are short news stories or announcements detailing what's new, different or exciting about your chorus. Press releases make it simple for journalists to understand how their audience might benefit by learning more. A press release that captures the most newsworthy information about your chorus can persuade key media contacts to write a story and mention your chorus favorably.

## Press Release Standards

The headline should summarize the main news content of the release. A headline should be no longer than 78 characters. Many newsrooms have a limit as to how many characters they can receive in a headline and their systems are programmed to “bounce” releases that exceed this limit. Remember to always include your chorus’ name and Sweet Adelines International in the headline.

- The lead (first paragraph) should contain the essential details so that editors have something to report. Incorporate the who, what, where, when, why and how of your topic.
- The body of the release should provide the details and expand on the headline. Use short, concise sentences and paragraphs that further explain the newsworthy announcement. Use action verbs to make the message clear to the reader.
- Always add a boiler plate to the end of the press release—a standard descriptive paragraph about Sweet Adelines International and your chapter. (Example: Sweet Adelines International is a worldwide organization of women singers committed to advancing the musical art form of barbershop harmony through education and performance. Its international headquarters is in Tulsa, Okla. The (Name) Chorus is a (name of city) chapter whose 77 members perform locally and regionally, attend regional/national education events and compete with other Sweet Adelines International choruses regionally and internationally.
- Use the inverted pyramid style of writing, giving the most significant details first, moving to less important details.
- Be precise. (77 members is better than many members.) Carefully read your release for sense, accuracy, spelling, punctuation and grammar. Ask someone to proofread your release.
- Type -30- or -###- at the end of your press release.

## Online Press Release Standards

Distributing press information via the Internet provides a cost-effective way to reach key journalists. Begin cultivating online relationships with reporters by calling a targeted journalist in the morning (deadline pressure tends to

increase by the afternoon), and inviting the press contact to join your e-mail list. Don’t add e-mail addresses without permission. Send e-mails to each media contact on your list at least once a quarter.

A new method to distributing press releases is by using a media release distribution service such as e-releases.com, rapidpressrelease.com or prnewswire.com. Distribution services send news releases to media outlets, reporters, journalists, editors, online news outlets and trade groups. Targeted media contacts typically include both traditional (TV, radio, print) and online contacts (Search Engines, News Blogs, Social Media, Media Blogs, RSS News). A big advantage to using a distribution service is the guarantee that releases will get picked up by one of the top news distribution sources in the world like Google News, MSN-Live News or Yahoo News. These sites receive a high level of traffic.

## E-release Format

Adjust the format of your e-release using similar guidelines as a traditional press release but with the following additions:

- Send the e-release directly to the journalists’ e-mail addresses.
- In 50 characters or less, enter the headline of the press release in the Subject Line.
- Remember to always include Sweet Adelines International in the subject line.
- Use plain text rather than HTML or other markup language.
- Enter your press release into the message of the e-mail using the following format:
  - Begin with the words *For Immediate Release*
  - Double space and include the dateline by entering the city name and state abbreviation where the news originates, followed by the date of the press release.
  - Place a dash after the dateline and follow the dash with the body of the e-release. Single-space the text and double space between paragraphs.
  - Limit the e-release length to 250-500 words.
  - End the e-release with a boiler plate – a standard

descriptive paragraph about Sweet Adelines International and your chorus/region.

- Follow the e-release with instructions for obtaining additional information, beginning with a phrase such as “For More Information, “To schedule interviews,” or “To obtain photos and artwork” with links to Web pages with this information.
- Close with contact information in this order:
  - Contact person’s name
  - Chorus/Region name
  - Contact person’s phone number including area code
  - Contact person’s e-mail address
  - Chorus/Region Web site address
- In order to distribute media information to journalists on-site, prepare a traditional printed version of the e-release to include in media kits.

## Online Pressroom

Increasingly, journalists interested in finding out more about your chorus/region will turn to online pressrooms for information, including current and past press releases, designated public relations contacts, downloadable images, special announcements and organizational background.

The online pressroom is an integrated section within your already existing chorus Web site. Provide a direct link to the online pressroom from the Web site’s home page, and include the link within the sub-navigation menu as well. To keep your pressroom a useful tool to journalists, make the section easy to navigate and quick to access. Include the following contents:

- Post current press releases immediately upon distribution.
- Post a searchable archive of past press releases in date order with short summaries of content for quick scanning.
- Post a calendar of upcoming events.
- Post reprints, clips or links to recent media coverage. This is an important section for building credibility. It shows that your subject is newsworthy and of public interest.

- Include the names and contact information for chorus-approved media spokespeople.
- Summarize background information about your chorus with links to more expansive information.
- Provide downloadable photos and artwork authorized for media use. This section is valuable for those media contacts that do not want to accept attachments. You can embed a link to this downloadable graphic area in the e-release and direct the journalist to this link.
- Prepare your downloadable graphics with appropriate digital resolution. In general your image will need a resolution of 250-300 DPI (dots per inch) for print, and 72 DPI for digital use. JPEG files are usually universally accepted.
- Label the graphics/photos in your downloadable section with clearly labeled captions and cutlines. The caption is the title of the photo. The cutline is the photo description that is required by nearly all media outlets.
- Make it easy for journalists to find a graphic file by referencing the e-release that the artwork accompanies.
- Provide references to any other resources that you feel are pertinent, such as barbershop history, barbershop style, membership information, etc.
- Maintain your online pressroom to serve as an up-to-date, 24-hour media resource that provides an informative overview of your chorus.

## PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

Public service announcements are educational messages designed to focus public attention on issues of community interest. Media donate airtime and advertising space to nonprofit organizations for this purpose. PSAs must be for the betterment of the viewer, listener, reader and the community. Prior to a membership drive, show the media that the message addresses the community’s interests.

## PSA Production

- Radio stations use 15-second, 30-second and 60-second messages recorded digitally on compact disc, MP3, or live-announcer copy. Time your copy before you send it.
- PSAs should be an average of 75 words.

- Submit radio PSAs at least three weeks in advance.
- Obtain talent release forms from all individuals who appear in your public service announcement.

## NEWSLETTERS

Newsletters contain short articles and practical information about your chorus that is of interest to a target audience. Your newsletter projects the chorus' image. Be cognizant of selecting the appropriate writing style and graphic format.

### *Five Types of Newsletter Writing:*

- Straight news
- Feature stories
- Editorials and opinion pieces
- Promotional items
- Biographical features on chorus members

### *Successful Newsletter Guidelines:*

- Keep articles short
- Use only a few type styles
- Have short, attention-grabbing headlines
- Create regular columns such as a Directors Feature, Quartet Talk, Chorus Beat, and Q & A
- Encourage your readers to write, comment and suggest future content
- Distribute the newsletter quarterly
- Via your newsletter, provide compelling and catchy information to prospective members and journalists. Update them on your chorus' activities while you provide them with useful facts that they'll enjoy.

## *E-Newsletters*

When writing e-newsletters for promotional purposes, similar basic principles apply. Here are some helpful tips to follow:

- The "subject" field should always invite your recipient to open the e-mail. Unless your subject line interests your readers, they'll often hit delete without even opening it

-- even if they know you. Try to include information in the subject line that will benefit your recipient. Give your readers a motivating reason to open it. They want to know "What's in it for Me?"

- The "from" field is the next most important item in your e-mail. If your recipient doesn't recognize the address, or who the sender of the e-mail is, they will most likely delete the e-mail without reading further.
- Stay away from using long lines of text. E-newsletter readers, especially, are more likely to read content that is in shorter lines of text rather than longer lines that extend across the width of the page. Columns work best for e-newsletter readers.
- Use a readable size font for e-mails and e-newsletters. Make sure your type size is at least 10 point for readability.
- Although pattern backgrounds are fun and attract attention, they take away from your content and make reading more difficult. Try using solid backgrounds in both e-mails and e-newsletters to ensure that your message is actually being read. Definitely add design flair by including colors and graphics in side columns, below or above your copy, as long as it does not interfere with your copy.
- Include the most interesting information at the top of your e-newsletter. Lure readers in by displaying exciting messages and relevant topics at the beginning, so they are encouraged to move into the e-newsletter and continue to scroll down for more details.
- Personalize your e-newsletters to directly address the person you are sending it to. Addressing members and prospective members by their first names creates a sense of friendliness.
- Feature photos of the people behind the e-newsletter, members, director, chorus leaders, etc. People connect with faces. When they match names with faces and can picture chorus members, it builds a sense of personal recognition that strengthens the relationship.

## DISPLAYS

Displays provide an excellent vehicle for delivering your chorus' attributes and membership benefits. Scout your community for display opportunities that will reach potential members and expose your chorus to others whom you want to reach.

### *Display Tips:*

- To maximize your exposure, choose a location that is guaranteed to have heavy "foot traffic."
- Choose display items that reflect positively on your chorus.
- Spread your chorus' message by introducing yourself to individuals passing by your display. Staff any display with enthusiastic singers who enjoy sharing their barbershop experiences.
- Narrow your display focus to one main point. Think of the display as a 10-second commercial for your chorus.

## ONLINE OUTREACH

Until recently, most public relations activity involved person-to-person contact between PR chairs and members of the media, such as journalists and television news reporters. However, several trends are developing that alter the tasks performed by PR people. In most cases these changes are the result of new Internet technologies that are quickly gaining widespread acceptance among Internet users and are becoming new media outlets in their own right.

### *Web site*

A good Web site has many benefits. It can help you market your chorus for membership and performance opportunities, it can help you disseminate materials to chorus members cost-effectively (e.g. a monthly chorus newsletter), it can help you transact business (e.g. sell show tickets) and it can be a source of pride for members by showcasing chorus accomplishments and photos.

Tips for using a Web site as a tool for attracting new members:

- Keep in mind your target audience, the key benefit you're promising and the tonality of your communication.

- Make the site, especially the home page, easy and quick to read. Your own chorus members and other barbershop enthusiasts may be willing to wait for long downloads. However, outsiders are going to want instant gratification. You have about six seconds to make a good first impression with your home page and keep newcomers engaged. Save the large photos, animation, and audio/video files for subsequent pages.
- Ensure that it's easy to navigate among the pages on your Web site. Include a consistent navigation bar on each page.
- Have a page for visitors and ask them to register. This way, you can get contact information — and follow up with women who are viable prospects later. You might give visitors an enticement to register, such as sending them a coupon redeemable for a ticket to your annual show.
- Invite relevant visitors to your next chorus rehearsal. Provide rehearsal information and include a map — or a link to a map locator site — so the visitor can easily find your rehearsal hall.
- Give the visitor an incentive to go to a rehearsal (trial), such as a code word that is being disclosed only to Web site visitors. When presented to the Membership Chair, the code earns the visitor a prize. Make the prize a free PVI (private vocal instruction) to be conducted a half-hour before the next week's rehearsal (continuity).
- Offer downloadable visitor incentives such as guest passes, free month of membership coupons, free singing lessons certificates or a discount off the price of materials for the singing lessons.
- Make sure your chorus has a Web master, who is responsible for updating the site frequently and keeping it fresh.

### *Search Engine Optimization (SEO): Optimize Your Web site*

Once you have a good Web site, you need to drive traffic to it. Find related Web sites and ask for reciprocal links so you can reach prospective members. Get a link to and from the Sweet Adelines International Web site.

Submit your site to the major search engines and directories (e.g., Google, Excite, InfoSeek, HotBot, Lycos, and Yahoo!).



Don't wait for them to discover you. Bear in mind that search engines look at what's at the top of a page and they cannot read graphics. Put text at the top, especially your chorus name and keywords such as Sweet Adelines International, barbershop, singing, harmony, music and women.

Those who frequently use the Internet find subjects of interest through search engines such as Google, Yahoo or MSN. For instance, if you are a woman living close to Anaheim, California, and would like to find a women's chorus in your area, you may consider going to Google.com and entering the words "women's chorus in Anaheim" in the search field. The more familiar Google is with your chorus' Web site the higher your chorus' name will appear in the search pages.

Fortunately for Harborlites Chorus, Region 21, a link to their Web site appears on the first page of search results when this particular search is made. This is most likely not a coincidence. In order to receive a high ranking in search engine returns there is strategy involved and that is called Search Engine Optimization (SEO).

By utilizing SEO tactics you can increase Web site traffic and in turn reach a larger targeted audience of people who are interested in exactly what you have to offer. SEO improves your online presence and helps to increase your chorus' reputation. The better your reputation the more confidence and loyalty prospective members and members will have in your chorus. The basic premise behind SEO techniques is to get top placement because your site is relevant to a particular search term.

### **Basic SEO tips:**

- SEO relies heavily on keywords and key phrases that describe your Web site's content; therefore, the most important keywords and key phrases should be used liberally in the first two paragraphs of each page of your Web site.
  - Research shows that the top-ranking search phrases for Sweet Adelines International are:
    - free singing lessons
    - singing technique
    - improve singing voice
    - vocal coaching
    - singing help
    - singing choirs
    - singing competition
    - singing auditions
    - singing sheet music
    - learn to sing
    - choral music
- These popular keywords and phrases should be scattered throughout the rest of your Web site.
- The title of every page should be keyword rich.
- Consider using bold and/or italics on some of your keywords and phrases (not all of them).
- Link other trustworthy Web sites to yours. It becomes easier for search engines to find your site when other trusted links are attached to it.
- Cross-link your Web site with any of your chorus' social media pages such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.
- The more trusted links you build within your Web site the more trust search engines will have in your site and the higher rank it will receive.

### **Blogs and Message Boards**

Many Web sites serve as a venue for people to voice opinions. There are two key applications that fall into this category – blogs and message boards.

Wikipedia defines a blog (a contraction of the term "weblog") as a type of Web site, usually maintained by an individual with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or video. Entries are commonly displayed in reverse-chronological order. "Blog" can also be used as a verb, meaning to maintain or add content to a blog.

Many blogs provide commentary or news on a particular subject; others function as more personal online diaries. A typical blog combines text, images, and links to other blogs, Web pages, and other media related to its topic. The ability for readers to leave comments in an interactive format is an important part of many blogs. These ever-changing

constructions represent the new way of communicating for people who like to express their activities and share their common interests. You can participate in these conversations by searching for blog postings and Web sites that focus on singing, music, a cappella, etc. Lend your expertise to these discussions and connect with people that participate in similar musical activities.

Message boards are electronic bulletin boards where people of similar interests post and read messages. The worldwide system of organizing these groups on the Internet is called the Usenet. While it's not appropriate to advertise on these newsgroups, you can participate in topical discussions and share information. When you post messages, you might stimulate intrigue and curiosity, and it's acceptable to suggest interested readers go to your Web site for more details.

### **Wikies**

Wikies are Web sites that allow visitors to add, delete and edit content, and offer an effective tool for mass collaborative authoring. Encyclopedia sites like Wikipedia.com are a good example. Wikies in general make basic assumption of the honesty of the people using the sites.

Wikies usually utilize hyperlinks, which are references or citations embedded in a document. For instance, if every bolded word in this section were hyperlinked on a Web site, clicking it would take you to another page to read the definition or explanation of that term.

### **Opt-in E-mail Blasts**

Building a permission-based opt-in e-mail list is one of the most powerful communications tools you can create. The reason an opt in e-mail list carries so much influence is that information is delivered to people who've opted into your list. To build a list, start by collecting e-mails of all guests. Also, place a form on the home page of your Web site that collects e-mail addresses for those wishing to obtain more information and place a chorus e-mail subscription link on your Web site. Consistently send pertinent and interesting information to your e-mail list. Topics of interest include shows, special educational events, social activities, guest nights, member news, Young Women in Harmony events, quartet appearances and community events.

### **Opt-in Text Messaging**

Developing an opt-in mobile list of contacts further increases your ability to quickly and effectively deliver promotional messages. Once people have opted-in to your e-mail program, ask them if they'd like to opt-in for future text messages. Boost text message participation with incentives, such as text to win offers, coupons, surveys and polls.

Text messaging can be used effectively in chorus-to-member communications as well. Consider adding mobile alerts for notices about rehearsals, upcoming events and special announcements.

## **GENERATE PUBLICITY WITH EVENTS AND PERFORMANCES**

Many choruses have found success with events around "Share a Song Week" or the Group Vocal Lessons.

Others have been able to draw attention and prospects by holding singing classes at a local university or community recreation center, or by forming a special Holiday Chorus or Summertime Chorus.

### **Publicity Event**

What kind of event or promotion would get the media and your target audience to take notice of the chorus? For example, if your chorus needs more basses and you've decided to target women with low-pitched voices, hold a radio contest with a cash prize for the listener who can sing the lowest note. If you're looking for young women, stage a singing festival at a local mall.

### **Performances**

These can be paid performances, grant performances, chorus shows, or "recruiting performances" for target groups. As a recruiting tool, ask area high schools, universities, or businesses if you may perform at their place during lunch or right after school/work to create awareness among the girls and women there. Ask theaters if your chorus may warm up the audience with a few songs before the play or movie starts. Swap performances with the community orchestra, the dance studio, or the local playhouse to entertain each other – and possibly stimulate interest in your chorus.

Many large choruses use smaller groups within to perform for such opportunities. Sometimes these groups are composed of women who are able to perform during the workday. Sometimes, they're select singers or simply members who are willing to give more time to the chorus. Good chapter quartets or double quartets can also be sent out to perform and generate interest in membership.

Often, the chorus may be permitted to leave behind business cards, brochures and other promotional materials. Importantly, create tactics to collect the audience's contact information, such as encouraging the audience to register for free music or passing out free guest passes and coupons for free singing lessons or free trial memberships.

### **Competitions**

Leverage media coverage by publicizing participation in either quartet or chorus competitions. What competition experiences will entice an interested singer to notice the chorus? Is it the quality of singing, the credentials of the director or a uniquely choreographed performance package? Highlight these interesting features in the press information.

### **METHOD FOUR: WORD OF MOUTH MARKETING (Action Plan Template 2.10)**

Word of Mouth Marketing is the art and science of building active, mutually beneficial consumer-to-consumer and consumer-to-marketer communication. (Visit the Word of Mouth Marketing Association Web site, [www.womma.org](http://www.womma.org) for Webinars and tutorials on developing successful word of mouth marketing initiatives.)

As the name implies, this form of promotion involves personal contact between chorus representatives and your target audience. Often this occurs face-to-face or via telephone, though newer technologies allow this to occur online via e-mail or text chat.

Chorus members can be one of the best marketing weapons in your arsenal because they represent the organization to nonmembers every day in situations at work, home and play. Although the reach of your message by word-of-mouth will be extremely low compared to mass media, members' enthusiasm for your chorus can be contagious—and yield

relatively high trial rates. Moreover, the price is right.

Word-of-mouth marketing should supplement all your other marketing efforts. You can even challenge each member to bring at least one guest via word-of-mouth marketing. However, it's not prudent to rely on it as your only marketing tool.

To launch an effective word-of-mouth campaign, it's important that members are well versed in the benefit message and the facts about the chorus and organization. Also, they should know how to introduce the subject and talk to people about the chorus in a comfortable, positive manner. As with any performance, rehearse and polish the package before taking it out in public. Give members a number of reasons to talk about your chorus so that it is easier for conversations to take place. (See Section Three for a list of prospective member conversation points.)

Sweet Adelines everywhere agree that our most effective public relations tool is to talk about us! No one can sell the Sweet Adelines story like the people who are committed to the organization.

### **SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKS (Action Plan Template 2.11)**

Today, the world is socially connected through online networks. The chance of reaching prospects and actually getting your message across to them has increased significantly. In essence, social media is the ultimate in word-of-mouth marketing, or peer marketing. People are much more likely to try a product or service that is recommended by a friend they trust. Due to this factor, social media is growing at an extraordinary rate. If your chorus is not involved, you are missing out on a virtually cost-free and promising means of marketing and promoting.

### **SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY**

Creating a social media strategy is really no different than building a traditional public relations strategy. However, social media allows direct interaction between your chorus and prospects. It is no longer a push of information, but a conversation.

## **Step One: Take Time to Monitor Channels Prior to Jumping In**

Social Media is the great equalizer because it offers the flexibility to let your personality shine through. However, rather than trying to participate in all of the social networks, begin with one or two that seem to fit your chorus.

Spend some time monitoring a variety of channels. This will help you to not only understand which platforms are the most important for your chorus, but also the style and tone of the discussions. All social media platforms are different. While some lend themselves to a more formal tone, such as LinkedIn, others are about more informal conversations, such as Twitter. Both may be equally valuable, but require different approaches. By listening to the discussions on each you will understand how to best approach the different audiences. Some may be used as a way to promote chorus activities and others may be more useful in interacting with members and potential members.

## **Step Two: Identify Spokespeople**

Take the information you have gathered from monitoring social media and determine your ideal spokespeople. As with traditional media strategies, you wouldn't pull just any chorus member to speak to your TV, radio or newspapers, and social media should be no different. Despite the informal nature of the conversations, the person responding is still a chorus representative and the image of the chorus is reflected in those discussions. Unlike traditional media, social media puts you in direct communication with the public and different chorus representatives may be better for those audiences.

## **Step Three: Establish an Editorial Calendar and Train Spokespeople**

Once you determine who will represent the chorus, come up with a plan to effectively respond. Create an editorial calendar that includes engaging set comments and interesting angles. Remember that social media is about contributing to the conversation, not just marketing or selling. The key is to provide content that people will want to subscribe to, talk about and share with friends.

It is acceptable to tout chorus announcements and activities, but participation means going beyond promotions. For instance, share singing resources with your followers, fans and network. Offer them educational articles and opportunities that will help them better understand the organization and see the value your chorus can provide. The more valuable the content is, the more your audience will grow.

Spend time training your spokespeople so that they know and can communicate your chorus' message consistently across all platforms. Encourage them to be flexible and responsive, to spark conversations with prospects, form relationships and make friends for the chorus.

## **Step Four: Communicate Your Social Media Presence With Your Chorus**

While you have created a strategy and identified the spokespeople who will officially participate in online conversations, if you do not share that strategy with the rest of the chorus it may lead to confusion. Social media turns everyone associated with your chorus into a potential representative. Just as you would communicate guidelines for media calls or media activities, share guidelines on what is and is not appropriate.

## **Step Five – Participate in Social Media**

Now that you've identified spokespeople, created an editorial plan, established guidelines and formed an understanding of the social media landscape, you are ready to actively participate. Following are some great (and free) ways to start establishing a social media presence:

### **facebook**

Create a **Facebook page** and use it to connect with members, meet new friends and fans, share information about upcoming events and post relevant links. It is interesting to note that the fastest growing demographic on Facebook is women aged 25-39.



Create a **YouTube channel** and use video to gain visibility and reach. Research shows that Youtube videos are beginning to reach critical mass – the viewing audience is becoming as large as a television audience – and it is more measurable and targeted. A major benefit is the interactive form that YouTube offers. Users can view, comment and repost your video on other sites, blogs or Facebook pages.



Start a **Twitter account**. Allow users to follow your chorus through a stream of short messages about news, promotions, humor, replies and retweets.



Create a **MySpace Music Page**. MySpace is still the number one social network in the world. Your chorus can express itself with music and visuals.



Create your own social network at **Ning**. You can create a community for your members, or for your prospects.



Get your chorus leaders and director on **LinkedIn**. LinkedIn profiles receive a fairly high PageRank in Google, so this is a good way to influence what people see when they search for information about your chorus.

Comment on **Blogs**. Increase your chorus' visibility by sharing valuable comments with the online community.



Get on **Yahoo Answers**. Again, show your expertise, and the prospects will eventually follow.



Learn more on **Mashable**. There is an unending wealth of further social media resources on Mashable.com.

## Step Six: Go Offline

There is really no replacement for face-to-face interaction. Use shows and other events as opportunities to build even stronger relationships with the members of your online community. This could be in the form of an exclusive online members only coaching session, an informal meet and greet between online members and chorus members, or even a special guest night for online members. This personal interaction will solidify relationships and may turn an online friend or fan into a chorus member.

## Step Seven: Evaluate the Impact of Your Social Media Strategy

While it is important to generate online buzz, the quality of the postings and impact on the chorus is still the ultimate judge. Unlike other PR campaigns, measuring social media success begins by asking questions:

- Did we learn something about our members and prospective members that we didn't know before?
- Did our members and prospective members learn something about us?
- Were we able to engage our members in new conversations?
- Did we reach a new audience and did we make new friends/fans?

There are numerous free applications to help sort and monitor social media conversations including Trendpedia, Google Alerts, Tweetdeck, TweetBeep and more.

Promotion is key to building your network. While not every campaign may result in high traffic or far reach, the potential is there. Make sure you share your Twitter, Facebook page or LinkedIn profile with chorus contacts. Also, add it to all publications and promotional collateral, include it in members' e-mail signatures and post links on your Web site.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, keep in mind that the more you share, the more you get back. Sharing what you know not only helps others learn, but most importantly helps them learn about your chorus - who it is and what value it offers to them. It

helps build integrity by validating it and also gives people an opportunity to determine what your chorus is like, whether they can trust you and feel secure in their findings. Social media should be high on your list for means of marketing and promoting your chorus.

## Principle Five: Budgets

### *(Action Plan Template 2.12)*

Research the costs for the materials and services that will be required to develop the membership budget. Talk to suppliers and service providers in your area (e.g. designers, photographers, printers). Many will donate materials or services to Sweet Adelines choruses, given our status as a non-profit organization. Others may be willing to provide pro bono services for goodwill/publicity. Still, others may want to barter with you (e.g. provide the entertainment at their corporate holiday party).

Present your anticipated request for funds with the rationale for each expense. Show the estimated number of new members as the benefit that outweighs the expenses. Create the budget in a format that tracks and records all of your financial transactions.

If the funds are not available in the chorus budget, it is better to cut back and implement the priority projects you can afford to do well. If you scale back your marketing efforts, most likely, you'll need to scale back your membership expectations, too. Don't walk away from the full-fledged budget, however. Continue planning and line up resources so that you can execute the full marketing efforts properly next year.

## Principle Six: Execution and Schedules

### *(Action Plan Template 2.13)*

Plot out all of the marketing tactics you plan to employ to attract new members on a 12-month planning calendar. Overlay this with other major activities, such as a chorus retreat before regional competition, regional weekends, International convention and educational events, etc.

Perform a reality check – will your chorus be able to execute the calendar well? You don't want to burn members out, nor do you want to launch efforts that are doomed for lack of time or energy. It's better to do a few things well than lots of things poorly.

Prior to executing marketing tactics, check that the communication pieces have the same key message and the same overall look and feel. Since you will want to reach your target with multiple exposures, consistency will make your pieces more memorable and maximize your marketing impact. Effective marketing:

- Attracts your target audience. It is intrusive and breaks through the clutter. Except for radio, the most important element in advertising and promotional matter is the key visual (photo, illustration or graphic), so be sure it is relevant to your target and has stopping power. In print, on average, 65 percent of viewing time is spent on the visual, 30 percent on the headline and 5 percent on the body copy, so pay proportionate attention to those elements. For broadcast media (radio and television), catchy copy or the artful use of sound in the opening can attract the listener's attention. Remember the tonality of the communication needs to appeal to your target.
- Creates interest and desire in the reader/viewer/listener. Effective marketing communicates a clear and compelling message. This should be a translation of the benefit message. Remember, it must answer the prospect's question, "What's in it for me?"
- Closes the sale. Effective marketing stimulates the desired response: "I think I'll check out the Joyful Sounds Chorus next Monday night."

## Principle Seven: Evaluation and Adjustment

### *(Action Plan Template 2.14)*

It's vital to evaluate the results of your marketing efforts. On a quarterly basis, assess your results to determine the degree to which objectives were achieved. How many guests did you get through the door? How many new members did you get this period? How do these figures compare to your

objectives?

What specific marketing tactics really worked? Which were ineffective? How can a new marketing plan be improved or modified? Be candid in your assessment. Learn from every effort so you can make improvements for next time.

Finally, keep comprehensive records and files for your successor so she doesn't have to re-invent the wheel. Truly successful marketing campaigns are ongoing, not one-time shots. Consequently, they need to transition smoothly and build from year-to-year.

# Section Two **ACTION STEPS**

## Action Plan Template Situation Analysis

### 2.1 Sample Awareness Survey

Poll a random sample of women in your community (defined as the area from which you can reasonably expect to draw new members) to determine the general public's awareness level of your chorus. You are going to need at least 100 responses, so make this a chorus project.

Hello, I'm \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm conducting a survey on one of our local arts groups. May I ask you a few quick questions?

1. Have you heard of the (Chorus Name)? (Stop here if the answer is no)
2. If yes, ask, "Who are they?" and "Do you know what kind of group is it?" to confirm related recall. (If the respondent says, "They're the young boys' choir that sings down at St. Luke's on Sundays," that's not related recall.)

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3. What are your impressions of the chorus?

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4. How did you first hear about the chorus?

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5. Is there anything that you particularly like or dislike about the chorus?

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# Section Two **ACTION STEPS**

## 2.1 Sample Awareness Survey, continued

6. Would you consider attending a rehearsal? If no, Why not?

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7. Would you recommend the chorus to a friend? If no, Why not?

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Compile the results:

- A. Number of interviews \_\_\_\_\_
- B. Number who are aware of your chorus \_\_\_\_\_
- C. Awareness level (B divided by A) \_\_\_\_\_%

If your awareness level among women (or a specific target audience) is:

- Less than 30%, focus on increasing awareness.
- 30-60%, continue to generate awareness, but also invest energy in ways to create trial.
- More than 60%, focus on gaining trial.

# Section Two **ACTION STEPS**

## Action Plan Template Situation Analysis

### 2.2 Calculate Trial and Continuity Levels

In the chart below, fill in **membership figures**.

	Current Year	1 Year Ago
A. Number of chorus members at the start of the year.		
B. Number of members who resigned during the year.		
C. Number of new members during the year.		
D. Number of first-time guests.		
E. Conversion rate. (C divided by D)		

## Section Two **ACTION STEPS**

### 2.2 Calculate Trial and Continuity Levels, continued

#### **What can you learn from studying these figures?**

If C is greater than B, your chorus is growing in size. If C is less than B, work on increasing the number of guests (trial) and conversion rate (continuity). You may also want to look at improving member retention.

Let's say your conversion rate is 30 percent. That means on average, one out of every three to four guests becomes a member. In general, the better you target your prospects and the more aspiring your chorus is, the higher the conversion rate. In other words, the more likely guests are going to want to join your chorus.

If your conversion rate is significantly lower than the 30 percent range, don't worry. If you are focusing on new audiences (say, ethnically diverse groups or women under 25-years-old) or if you are attracting non-singers to your door with introductory-level vocal lessons, you should expect a lower conversion rate. On the other hand, a low conversion rate might signal a need to enhance your musical product or improve your nurturing of guests. Each chorus will be different. The important point is to understand your chorus' membership performance, your trends and opportunity areas for improvement.

# Section Two **ACTION STEPS**

## **Action Plan Template Situation Analysis**

### **2.3 Evaluate Awareness Survey Results and Trial and Continuity Levels**

Which stage represents your chorus' biggest opportunity? (Awareness, Trial, Continuity)

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Describe the chorus' best opportunity to recruit. (Awareness, Trial, Continuity)

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What is the main public impression of the chorus?

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What are the main strengths and benefits of the chorus?

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What factors were identified as potential barriers to success?

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What internal improvements need to be made to address the barriers?

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# Section Two ACTION STEPS

## Action Plan Template Marketing Objectives

### 2.4 Calculate the Membership Base

**First**, calculate the membership base by using typical attrition and conversion rates for your chorus. (Refer to data in the Membership Figures Chart, action plan template 2.2)

Calculate the Membership Base			
	Base Scenario	Scenario 2	Scenario 3
A) Current number of members			
B) Attrition rate for your chorus (%) (Look at your membership trends to estimate this; on average, choruses lose 15 percent of their members annually)			
C) Estimated number of resignations this year (A x B)			
D) Number of current members left (A-C)			
E) Target number of total members by (Goal Date)			
F) Number of new members needed to meet the target number (E-D)			
G) Conversion rate for your chorus (%) (Refer to your Situation Analysis Membership Figures Chart for your chorus' rate)			
H) Number of guests required (F/G) (Divide the number of new members needed by conversion rate)			

## Section Two ACTION STEPS

### 2.4 Calculate the Membership Base, continued

**Second**, do a couple “what if” scenarios: if you had lower attrition or higher conversion rates.

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**Third**, decide on a realistic and achievable objective:

1. The chorus will gain \_\_\_ new members this fiscal year.
2. Or: The chorus will have \_\_\_ members by May 1.
3. Or: The chorus will gain \_\_\_ new members and retain \_\_\_\_ percentage of members, for a total of \_\_\_\_ by the end of this fiscal year.

Of significance, the second and third statements factor in the retention of current members. (see Retention Analysis, Section Four)

Once you have determined your membership objectives and how many guests you’ll have to attract, everything that follows in the membership recruitment strategy is designed to meet those objectives.

# Section Two ACTION STEPS

## Action Plan Template Target Audience

### 2.5 Determine Target Audiences

**First**, determine the profile of the intended target audiences by answering target market questions. Profile criteria may include: gender, income, age, occupation, education, family life cycle, geographic region, lifestyle, attitudes, interests, characteristics, etc. Note: The more audiences you are striving to reach, the more fragmented your marketing efforts may become. As such, ensure that the chorus' targeted audiences are specific enough to be effectively reached.

Who is your target audience?

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Where is your target audience located?

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What is the age range and median age?

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What do they do for a living?

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# Section Two ACTION STEPS

## 2.5 Determine Target Audiences, continued

What level of education do they have?

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How do they spend their disposable income?

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Are they married, single, or divorced?

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How much prior singing experience do they have, if any?

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**Second**, after reviewing your target audience questions, write short descriptions of women in the primary target profiles.

Sample Audience Profile:

1. All capable female singers
2. Ethnically-diverse women
3. Young women (e.g. 21 to 35-years-old)
4. Women with low-pitched voices
5. Women who live within 40 minutes of the rehearsal site

Target Audience profile. (Demographic, Psychographic or Geographic factors)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



# Section Two ACTION STEPS

## Action Plan Template Marketing Tactics

### 2.6 Determine the best way to reach target audiences

Determine the best way to reach the chorus' target audiences and develop promotional methods accordingly. The more that you know about your target audience, the better you can design a structure and select incentives to motivate them, and ultimately meet your specific objectives.

#### How will prospects find out about the chorus?

What Web sites do prospects regularly visit?

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What types of newspapers, magazines and newsletters do prospects read? What TV and radio stations do they watch and listen to?

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Where do prospects regularly shop?

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Where do prospects go for education?

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Where do prospects go for recreation and entertainment?

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## Section Two **ACTION STEPS**

### **2.6 Determine the best way to reach target audiences, continued**

Chorus members are also representatives of your target markets. The collective opinion of members is an ideal place to start in determining the best promotional mix method to attract your target audience. The following marketing questionnaire, completed by all of your chorus members, will provide you with valuable information.

<b>How did you first learn about the chorus?</b>
<b>What types of newspapers, magazines and newsletters do you read?</b>
<b>What section of the newspaper do you read most thoroughly?</b>
<b>What Web sites, blogs, social media sites, etc. do you visit regularly?</b>
<b>What TV and radio stations do you watch and listen to? What time of day?</b>
<b>What announcers do you enjoy most?</b>
<b>How do you typically learn about what's going on in the community?</b>

# Section Two **ACTION STEPS**

## **Action Plan Template Marketing Tactics**

### **2.7 Promotion and Incentive Strategy and Execution**

Develop incentives and promotional strategies to increase awareness, trial and continuity. Some choruses may wish to extend the time period for the promotional strategy into an annual execution, broken down by quarters. Thus, each quarter would have a targeted membership strategy that drives prospects to the door.

#### **Promotional Strategy and Execution.\* Brainstorm Ways To:**

Generate Interest. (List Incentives and Chorus Benefits)

Position and Sell the Benefits. (List Selling points instead of Telling points)

Stimulate Demand. (List promotions that Stimulate Demand)

Craft key messages with selling propositions.

Reinforce brand. (Deliver quality music and positive experiences. List ways the chorus can make this happen.)

#### **Other details:**

<b>Resources required</b>	<b>Budget allocation</b>

\*Or, build the strategies by quarters: First Quarter Promotional Execution and Strategy, Second Quarter Promotional Strategy and Execution, Third Quarter Promotional Strategy and Execution, Fourth Quarter Promotional Strategy and Execution

# Section Two ACTION STEPS

## Action Plan Template Marketing Tactics

### 2.8 Advertising Strategy and Execution

Combine targeted and mass advertising options to generate awareness, encourage trial, increase inquiries, etc. If you choose to break the promotional strategies down by quarters, build the advertising strategy accordingly. Strive to build an advertising plan that will generate the number of guests needed to meet the marketing objective. (refer to Action Plan Template 2.4)

**Mass Market** – sell to a large, broad market.

Advertising Objective (i.e. newspapers, media sponsorship, billboards, radio, Internet) List advertising options below.

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List Projected Costs below.

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# Section Two ACTION STEPS

## 2.8 Advertising Strategy and Execution, continued

**Target Market** – selectively target one (niche) or more markets.

Advertising Objective (i.e. search engine marketing, brochures, posters, e-mails) List advertising options below.

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List Projected Costs below.

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# Section Two ACTION STEPS

## Action Plan Template Marketing Tactics

### 2.9 Public Relations Strategy and Execution

Combine public relations tools to generate awareness, encourage trial, increase inquiries, enhance image and build credibility. If you choose to break the advertising and promotional strategies down by quarters, build the public relations strategy accordingly.

**Public Relations Tools.** Decide which public relations tools will work best for your advertising and promotional strategies. (e.g. press releases, radio interviews, articles in professional newsletters, quartet appearance at women’s club meetings, online outreach, etc.) List PR tools below.

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#### PR Message

The PR message achieves consistency and ensures that all spokespeople and chorus members stay “on message” when interacting with journalists. Ask, what do you want your audience to conclude from this point about membership in your chorus?

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Identify chorus spokespeople to officially represent the chorus and officially speak to the media. Note: Train the identified spokespeople to deliver the determined PR messages. List potential spokespeople below.

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Create newsworthy events that will enhance awareness and trial. (Publicity, Performances or Competitions) List event opportunities below.

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# Section Two ACTION STEPS

## Action Plan Template Word of Mouth Marketing

### 2.10 Benefit Messages

When members talk to prospects, what should they say about the chorus and the organization?  
List all of the benefits offered to members below.

International Benefits Offered:	Chorus Benefits Offered:	Compelling Reasons to Join: Craft Benefit Messages
		<p><b>Examples:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* That singing is a healthy, active hobby.</li> <li>* That we are friendly, caring and supportive of one another.</li> <li>* That we love to perform.</li> <li>* That we are entertaining.</li> <li>* That we are competitive.</li> <li>* That we are constantly learning, improving and growing.</li> <li>* That we are affiliated with a 25,000-strong international women's singing organization.</li> </ul>

# Section Two ACTION STEPS

## Action Plan Template Word of Mouth Marketing

### 2.11 Social Media Networks

Connect with potential members through social media networks.

**Step One: Take Time to Monitor Channels Prior to Jumping In.** Begin by selecting one or two that seem to fit your chorus.

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**Step Two – Identify Spokespeople.** Take the information you have gathered from monitoring social media and list your ideal spokespeople.

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**Step Three: Establish an Editorial Calendar and Train Spokespeople.** Create an editorial calendar that includes engaging set comments and interesting angles.

**Step Four: Communicate Your Social Media Presence With Your Chorus.** Social media turns everyone associated with your chorus into a potential representative. Just as you would communicate guidelines for media calls or media activities, share guidelines on what is and is not appropriate.

**Step Five – Participate in Social Media.** Actively participate in social media.

**Step Six: Go Offline.** Use shows and other special events as opportunities to build even stronger relationships with the members of your online community.

**Step Seven: Evaluate the Impact of Your Social Media Strategy.** Measuring social media success begins by asking questions:

Did we learn something about our members and prospective members that we didn't know before?

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# Section Two **ACTION STEPS**

## 2.11 Social Media Networks, continued

Did our members and prospective members learn something about us?

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Were we able to engage our members in new conversations?

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Did we reach a new audience and did we make new friends/fans?

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# Section Two **ACTION STEPS**

## Action Plan Template Budgets

### 2.12 Produce Marketing Budget

This is the area that will ultimately “sell” the plan to those who have the power to grant final financial approval. The marketing budget should present a clear picture of the financial implications of the member recruitment plan. (e.g. costs of materials and services, advertising, promotion, public relations and online outreach)

<b>Marketing Mix Communications [Example Budget]</b>	
Advertising	\$0.00
Web sites	\$0.00
Direct marketing	\$0.00
Internet marketing	\$0.00
Collateral	\$0.00
Public Relations	\$0.00
Incentives and Promotions	\$0.00
<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>

# Section Two **ACTION STEPS**

## 2.12 Produce Marketing Budget, continued

<b>Membership Events [Example Budget]</b>	
Chorus Collateral	\$0.00
Food and Beverage	\$0.00
Audio/Visual	\$0.00
Incentives and Promotions (giveaways)	\$0.00
Direct mail (invitations, follow- up notes, etc.)	\$0.00
<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>

# Section Two **ACTION STEPS**

## Action Plan Template Execution and Schedules

### 2.13 Produce the Implementation Schedule

Build a planning calendar and assign specific tasks.

### *Sample Chorus Marketing Calendar*

### *FOURTH QUARTER OF FISCAL YEAR 2010*

Month	Day(s)	Task	Assigned To	Budget	Results
February		New Officer Elections			
March		Send Press Release/Invitations announcing Dress Rehearsal/Family & Friends Night for Regional Competition			
April		2009-2010 Budget Finalize			
April		Set Marketing & Membership Goals for new FY (Strategic Planning Retreat)			
April		Send Press Release announcing Regional Competition results			

## Section Two **ACTION STEPS**

### 2.13 Produce the Implementation Schedule, continued

#### *Sample Chorus Marketing Calendar*

#### *FIRST QUARTER OF FISCAL YEAR 2011*

Month	Day(s)	Task	Assigned To	Budget	Results
May		Send Press Release Announcing New Officers and Start Date for Free Vocal Lessons			
June	12-13	Attend Regional Leadership Retreat			
June		Start 4 weeks of Free Vocal Lessons			
July	22-25	Side-by-Side Director/Judge School in Detroit			
July		Free Vocal Lessons Ends			
July		Plan Performance Opportunity for 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter			

## Section Two **ACTION STEPS**

### 2.13 Produce the Implementation Schedule, continued

#### *Sample Chorus Marketing Calendar*

#### *SECOND and THIRD QUARTERS OF FISCAL YEAR 2011*

Month	Day(s)	Task	Assigned To	Budget	Results
<b>August</b>		Free Trial Membership (with Performance Opportunity Plan - POP)			
<b>September</b>	25-26	Attend Regional Workshop			
<b>October</b>	19-24	International Convention			
<b>November</b>	13-14	Quartet Retreat			
<b>December</b>		End free membership and complete POP			
<b>January</b>	29-30	Attend Regional Workshop			
<b>January</b>		Implement Free Guest Passes with invitation to Winter Regional Educational Workshop			

## Section Two **ACTION STEPS**

### 2.13 Produce the Implementation Schedule, continued

#### *Sample Chorus Marketing Calendar*

#### *FOURTH QUARTER OF FISCAL YEAR 2011*

Month	Day(s)	Task	Assigned To	Budget	Results
<b>February</b>		Start Date for Free Vocal lessons			
<b>March</b>		Send Press Release announcing Dress Rehearsal/Friends and Family Night for Regional Performance			
<b>April</b>	29-May 2	Regional Competition  Send Press Release Announcing New Officers			

# Section Two **ACTION STEPS**

## **Action Plan Template Evaluation and Adjustment**

### **2.14 Assess Results**

Ensure that marketing decisions flow from one to the other. Of importance, check that strategies and tactics match the desired number of guests and members. Trial rates will vary from chorus to chorus – and will depend on existing awareness levels, the selected strategies and tactics, and how successfully the chorus implements them.

On a quarterly basis, assess results to determine the degree to which objectives were achieved. For example, if there was a shortfall of guests, typically, this is because the chorus didn't get as much coverage or visibility as hoped. (Focus more efforts on building awareness.) Or, perhaps the promotional offer was not persuasive enough to influence nonmembers to visit the chorus. (Strengthen the trial offer.) Or, maybe nonmembers visited once but did not return. (Enhance the promotion, such as instead of one vocal lesson guest night, increase it to a series thus increasing continuity.) After looking at the big picture, make adjustments accordingly. Much of this information will be derived from Guest Surveys. (*See Section Three*)



# Section Two **ACTION STEPS**

## 2.14 Assess Results, continued

### Responses

List how the target audience responded to the marketing campaign. Did they make a phone call, visit the Web site, or see a news article? Keep a count of the types of responses that the chorus received.

[Example]

Response	Count
[Telephone inquiry]	
[E-mail inquiry]	
[Interest from print article or advertisement]	
[Interest from radio ad or news feature]	
[Interest from television ad or news story]	
[Interest from Web site]	
[Interest from Word of Mouth]	
[Interest from other, yard signs, flyers, brochures, guest passes, etc.]	

# Section Two **ACTION STEPS**

## 2.14 Assess Results, continued

Suggested Response Tracking Ideas:

- Track interest by counting the women who visit the chorus each quarter. Don't forget to monitor traffic before you start the campaign, so you'll have a basis for comparison.
- Compare visits and new member numbers before, during and after each quarterly campaign.
- In print ads, include the special offer that guests can redeem when visiting the chorus. Code the offer so you can determine which ad or publication generates the best results.
- Offer an incentive for guests to tell you why they're responding to an ad: "Mention this ad and get a free gift."
- Compare pre- and post-advertising traffic on your Web site. Your Web host logs the hits on your site and should be able to provide daily, weekly or monthly reports.
- If you advertise online, track the click through rate — the percentage of viewers who click on your banner or text ad. Most sites that sell ad space track click through rates and can provide you with performance reports. Alternately, you could create a Web page that is only linked to your Internet ads and then monitor the traffic on that Web page.
- Don't overlook the tried-and-true approach: Ask all new guests how they heard about your chorus.

# Section Two **ACTION STEPS**

## 2.14 Assess Results, continued

### Percentage of Responses

List the total number of responses and the number of each type of response. Next, determine how many women in your target market inquired about your chorus and attended a guest night; what percentage attended and returned; what percentage attended and did not return; and what percentage inquired, visited, returned and joined.

[Example]

Response	Count	Percentage %
[How many total inquiries?]	[]	
[How many guest visits?]	[]	[]
[How many return visits?]	[]	[]
[How many did not return?]	[]	[]
[How many joined the chorus?]	[]	[]

**How do these figures compare to your objectives?**

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# Section Two **ACTION STEPS**

## 2.14 Assess Results, continued

### Value of the campaign message

Evaluate if the marketing message is the right message. If not, identify where it went wrong. For example, did your message target the wrong audience, or was it the wrong message to the right audience?

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### Review

Review all of the steps. Describe what worked well. Identify any improvements that can be made. For example, do you want to create a better message, add a new target audience, or determine how or where to cut costs?

[Example]

	What worked	Improvement
[Message]	[The message increased the number of guests.]	[Convert more guests to repeat visitors/members]
[Costs]	[The brochure gets positive feedback.]	[Find a printer who can deliver the same product for less.]
[Audience]	[Great response from our target audience.]	[Expand our target market to include women 21-30.]



**SECTION 3:**

*Prepare the Chorus for  
Active Recruiting*



## Membership Committee

Once the membership planning team has determined the direction and approach toward membership growth and developed the membership recruitment plan, the Membership Committee will take a major role in organizing and implementing subsequent steps in the action plan.

The Membership Committee is responsible for fulfilling the following objectives:

- Organizing the administrative aspects of membership recruitment.
- Educating and involving chorus members in membership recruitment.
- Developing a team of greeters to welcome prospective members.
- Providing educational materials for prospective members.
- Determining voice placement for prospective members in collaboration with music personnel.
- Coordinating the procedural steps of inducting new members into the chorus, orienting them to the chorus' practices and procedures and implementing retention programs to encourage membership longevity.
- Communicating with the chorus director regarding prospective members preparing for membership.

## Prospective Member Service

The responsibility of every member, whether from a large, midsize or small chorus, is to serve, satisfy and delight prospective members. A strong marketing campaign can interest the public with promotional offers that bring in potential members, but unless the membership entices some of those guests to come back, the chorus will neglect to grow.

The essence of good service is to form a friendly relationship with potential members – a relationship that the prospect would like to pursue. Good service is also about sending guests away happy – happy enough to pass along positive feedback about the chorus to others and in turn become repeat guests.

So, how can you provide member service that shines? Follow this plan to create a “member friendly” experience

that will impress, and even exceed, your prospective members' expectations.

### CREATE A MEMBER SERVICE “CULTURE” IN THE CHORUS

#### (Action Plan Template 3.1)

Everyone needs to be completely committed to the membership plan, and most importantly, to providing outstanding prospective member service. Members should understand that serving prospects' needs and surpassing their expectations is the top priority. An upbeat, friendly and helpful member can do wonders for a guest's perception of the chorus; one who is the opposite can create problems where none previously existed. A few minutes of rehearsal time spent preparing the membership for guests will reap tremendous benefits.

Begin by outlining the type of recruitment program the chorus will use, for example, The Vocal Lesson Plan Approach, Performance Opportunity, Guest Night, etc. Present the plan in print and verbally; repeat it often.

Remind members:

- Of the chorus' Member Vision Statement (*Reference Section One*)
- To have a general working knowledge of the chorus, the region and the international organization
- To exhibit a strong musical product
- To know the benefits of membership including education, fun and friendship
- To talk positively to each other
- To welcome guests and new members enthusiastically
- To make a great first impression
- To show pride when speaking about the chorus and the organization
- To actively participate in the membership program and to take on some responsibility for member recruitment

**CARE FOR GUESTS****(Action Plan Template 3.2, 3.3, 3.4)**

Most guests will not know what to expect when they arrive at the chorus for the first time. To ease confusion, establish a team of competent and friendly greeters to welcome guests and usher them to the proper places throughout the rehearsal. This will help guests feel comfortable and part of the group.

Greeters should care for guests upon arrival as follows:

- As guests are greeted, ask them to sign in and to fill out a Guest Profile form. It is important to accurately collect contact information for later follow-up.
- Talk with them for a moment to find out how they learned about the chorus, whether or not they have sung in a choral group and if they know anything about the organization.
- Explain that the chorus will help them determine the appropriate voice part.
- Distribute First Visit Guest Packets with Prospective Member Information. Include an assortment of materials about the chorus and the international organization:
  - *Prospective Member* brochure available through international sales or the Marketing Center.
  - A handout with a brief description of the chorus—when it was founded, where it meets, annual events, information about the director, names and contact information of membership committee members.
  - Chapter newsletter or past show program.
  - *Harmonize the World* sheet music.
  - Novelty such as a bookmark, decal or magnet with chorus information imprinted on the product.
  - Nametag.
- Familiarize guests with the rehearsal space, where to hang coats, location of the restrooms, etc.
- Encourage guests to join the chorus on the risers. The director usually finds them a place to sing, but until this happens, have them stand at the end of the risers either with other guests, or if she is the only guest, ask some friendly members to stay with her.

- Introduce guests when the director is ready.
- After rehearsal, remain with the guest and be sure the director, section leaders, and membership chair are available to talk with guests and answer any questions. It's a good idea to publish these leaders' phone numbers and e-mail addresses for guests in case they have follow-up questions.
- End on an upbeat note so that guests leave happy and enthusiastic.

**PREPARE MEMBERS TO TALK TO GUESTS****(Action Plan Template 3.5)**

Trained greeters will be the primary contacts, but guests will inevitably speak with general members and those conversations also become an integral part of the overall chorus experience. Here are a few ideas that will help members spark memorable relationships with guests:

- Use the guest's name throughout the conversation. This tactic will help you remember her face and connect it with her name. Also, try to remember at least one small detail of the initial conversation so that it gives you a place to start a conversation the following week.
- Avoid offering too much information about the chorus, unless it is specifically asked. Even then, be sparse. A little information is helpful but too much at one time is overwhelming. Elaborate a bit if the guest asks you to tell her more, but be careful not to make it sound negative. For instance, guests often express concern about learning all the songs and choreography. Assure them that they'll be given help and that they'll have time to learn everything at a reasonable pace.
- If the subject of competition comes up, discuss it as one of the major events for the year. You might mention that although it's not a mandatory activity for every member, most members choose to participate because it's fun. The work put into competition each year helps the chorus continue to improve. Mention other events and emphasize the chorus' shows, community performances, regional classes and events.
- Some guests may be concerned about the time commitment. If that concern is expressed, acknowledge it. Each individual needs to examine the organization

with her schedule in mind. You might explain that many of the activities are optional and that although regular attendance at rehearsals is expected, individuals may participate at a level that best fits their schedules.

- Do a lot of listening. It's much more important to stay near the guest, and not to leave her alone, than it is to talk. All you have to do, really, is say, "Hello," and introduce yourself. Ask a question or two about how she happened to learn about the chorus, and listen carefully to the answer. Then just be near to offer support and encouragement.

### OFFER VISITOR INCENTIVES

#### *(Action Plan Template 3.6)*

Primarily, success in getting guests back will hinge on the impression that the chorus makes at their first rehearsal. However, adding incentives will help motivate repeat visits. Here are a few ideas for starters:

- Construct rehearsals so there's a cliffhanger, something that needs to be carried over into the next rehearsal. For example, introduce an entertaining two-part exercise that wraps up next week, or hold off on teaching the juicy tag of a new song until the next rehearsal.
- Make it easy for guests to keep up and to keep that first rehearsal top of mind. As they leave for the evening, give them an audio recording of the evening's rehearsal as recorded by their Section Leader. (Be prepared to make multiple copies.) Or give guests a learning track of the songs that were being taught. (Be sure to check out copyright laws for producing quantities of learning tracks.)
- Give visitors a "frequent guest" card, much like a frequent buyer card. For every rehearsal attended, the guest earns points that are redeemable for barbershop items—or dollars off dues when she joins. Earn more points for rehearsals that are attended consecutively. Of course, set a limit (e.g. up to seven rehearsals).
- Involve the guests in a light, fun project that will develop over several weeks. For example, assign each guest to a lip-sync or karaoke quartet that will perform for the chorus in a month.
- Ask guests to "Book" a space on the risers. Send a follow-up "Booking Confirmation" e-mail listing relevant information and requesting their reply to lock in the space.

### LEARN FROM GUESTS

#### *(Action Plan Template 3.7)*

At the end of the guest's first visit, ask her to complete a guest survey. Gathering constructive feedback from prospective members will help the chorus continually improve its recruitment efforts. Also, if the guest doesn't visit again, the survey may identify issues or concerns that she may have. If applicable, leaders may be able to quickly correct the issues and possibly get her back for another rehearsal.

A written survey is likely to derive a more candid response than a conversation. It's best to ask the guest to take a moment to fill the survey out before she leaves the rehearsal—while her impressions are fresh.

### FOLLOW UP

#### *(Action Plan Template 3.8)*

After the first visit, distribute a note from the director. For added impact, personalize and customize the notes by using the guest's name throughout and by highlighting memorable moments from the event. Following the next visit, follow up with a brief note from the greeter. Include contact information so that the guest can easily contact the greeter with any questions or concerns. Respond to any of her needs in a timely manner. For example, if she is feeling anxious about her upcoming audition, suggest a practice audition and offer to set it up.

Keep in touch with guests that miss visits. If a caller learns that a guest will not be returning, keep the call on a positive note – remember, the chorus has still made a friend. Feeling good about the chorus and its membership may entice her to join at a later time.

## The Director's Role in Recruitment

#### *(Action Plan Template 3.9)*

The director plays a pivotal role in membership recruitment. No matter how hard the membership teams work to arrange publicity and marketing, meet and greet prospective members, and hand out attractive guest packets – the



director's personal connection with each prospect is the most critical.

In order for the membership plan to succeed the director's enthusiastic involvement, support and willingness to cooperate are vital to the plan. The director is in the primary position of leadership, which ultimately sets the overall tone of the chorus. Tone means not just the sound of the chorus but the mood they exude. Chorus members and visitors rely on the director to motivate and uplift them, so that they yearn to come back for more. Each director's positive influence creates the unique dynamic that makes Sweet Adelines choruses fun and attractive to members.

The director influences the bulk of the guest's experience. After all, the chorus' musical product is largely a reflection of the director's skills and style. Ultimately, it's the music that grabs a prospect's attention and keeps her coming back.

Although chorus members have a duty here, it's primarily up to the director to provide exciting and energizing musical experiences for potential members. The director's awareness of what's going to appeal to the target prospects should be reflected in the rehearsal plan. Consequently, guests will connect with the chorus and the music if they are noticed and validated by the director. Eye contact and a smile will suffice if it's not possible to talk to each individual. Personal words of encouragement and appreciation are even better.

In the end, people flock to organizations where the leaders have charisma, talent and the ability to develop skills. Sweet Adelines choruses are no different. Good directors are magnets for members.

## Turn Guests into Members

Continue on the path of delivering excellent prospective member service. On return visits, guests still need to be greeted, welcomed warmly and nurtured — especially by the director and other visible chorus leaders. Once again, they'll need name tags and music, and to be introduced at each rehearsal. The rehearsals still need to be organized, disciplined, productive and fun. The chorus needs to continue making a favorable impression.

Prepare the chorus and plan for guests' subsequent visits. This seems easier to remember to do when there is a group of guests that come through at the same time (e.g., with the Vocal Lesson Plans), but it's always important—especially for the lone guest.

## PROSPECTIVE MEMBER INFORMATION DISSEMINATION AND ORIENTATION

### *(Action Plan Template 3.10)*

Depending on the number of returning guests — either hold orientation meetings for them at the start or end of each rehearsal or handle information dissemination on an individual basis, pacing the material with the needs and interests of each guest. In either case, to make an informed decision about joining, prospective members need information about the chorus and the international organization, along with realistic expectations about the benefits and obligations of membership. Members who join without prior knowledge of the membership requirements are more likely to leave the chorus within a year or two.

Distribute information each week in bite size pieces, so that guests do not become overwhelmed by expectations. Adding a personal note is an excellent way to give special attention to each guest. Be knowledgeable and prepared with written materials on the following topics:

- Educational information about barbershop harmony/voice parts
- Audition and application process
- Financial and time requirements
- Costuming and makeup
- Chorus administration
- Chorus standing rules
- The regional and international organization
- Calendar of key events for the coming year
- Educational opportunities
- Chorus history and goals
- International, region and chorus Web addresses
- Benefits of Membership in the chorus, region and international organization

## CHORUS MEMBER EXPECTATIONS

### *(Action Plan Template 3.11)*

If your chorus has any other expectations of its members, it's only fair to let the guest know before she gets too invested in the audition and membership application process. Share the standards of member expectations early

on, so the guest can make a completely informed decision before joining.

On the flip side, carefully selecting members that can successfully fill the expectations will increase the chorus' retention rate and reinforce positive attitudes toward new member orientation. Generally, it is expected that she:

- Makes every effort to attend rehearsals, coaching sessions and performances.
- Is on time and ready to work when rehearsal begins.
- Gives undivided attention to the person in front of the chorus (e.g., director, choreographer, president/team manager).
- Refrains from talking on the risers or providing unsolicited comments.
- Learns new music and choreography by the designated date.
- Works on improving her vocal and performance skills.
- Takes advantage of as many educational opportunities as possible, including regional and international events.
- Always gives her personal best.
- Contacts her section leader or director ahead of time if she must miss a rehearsal.
- Assumes responsibility for catching up on material on her own, if she misses a rehearsal.
- Is well groomed for performances and wears the proper costume and makeup.
- Pays her dues and other financial obligations promptly.
- Helps strengthen the chorus in any way she can, as time permits.
- Maintains a positive attitude and stifles negativity.
- Strives to resolve any issues/problems with the appropriate person in private.
- Is friendly to and respectful of all chorus members.
- Represents the chorus and Sweet Adelines International in a positive, admirable way.

## GROWING TOGETHER

### *(Action Plan Template 3.12)*

By reviewing the individual member expectations, the chorus may find that some prospects do not exactly meet the requirements and would not fit into the chorus' culture. It is best to find this out early so that arrangements can be made to help the prospect visit another Sweet Adelines chorus.

Other ones in the community might match the needs and goals of potential qualified members better. If no other choruses currently exist in the community – and the demand is sufficient – alert regional leaders to the need of forming a new chorus.

## AUDITIONING

### *(Action Plan Template 3.13)*

Typically, on the second or third visit, guests are informed about the chorus' audition and membership application procedures. Recognize that some women will be eager to hear about auditions, while others may be struggling with their part and feel it's too much too soon. Some guests will be apprehensive about having to audition. Reassure them that it is not a daunting ordeal and that you will help them through the process. Point out that all the current members auditioned and survived. If the guest is interested, give her the music and an accurate learning track of the audition song. Make sure she understands how she'll be evaluated, and offer to set up practice sessions with a designated quartet that's available before or after rehearsals. This allows the guest to get comfortable singing with three other voice parts before the audition. Or, consider having a two-step audition process that includes a practice run where there's no pressure.

Here are a few additional points to keep in mind:

- When a guest indicates she's ready to audition, it's important that the audition committee/music staff is available to accommodate her during that rehearsal. Don't make her wait until next week; she may lose her nerve or enthusiasm if she is made to wait.
- It's highly recommended that the guest be told whether she passed on the spot. If it's necessary to re-audition, make sure the guest understands exactly why, and offer to help her correct errors and prepare for the next round.

- If the auditioning guest passes, give her the membership application papers and any other relevant information promptly. She is excited and eager to get on with the process. Keep the momentum going.
- It is also highly recommended that the director be present during the audition.

### EMBRACE YOUR NEW MEMBERS

#### *(Action Plan Template 3.14)*

Once a guest passes her audition and is accepted for membership into the chorus, welcome her into the fold with enthusiasm. Many choruses have a ceremony for each new member. They may serenade her with a welcoming song such as *Consider Yourself* or *You're the Flower of My Heart*, *Sweet Adeline* and give her an official spot on the risers.

Help the new member get to know her fellow chorus members. On your chorus Web site, have a page for new members, which posts answers to Frequently Asked Questions. Remind chorus members to always wear their nametags. Designate an hour each week for a new member chat room where new members can raise concerns, seek information, and get to know each other.

At the same time, help chorus members get to know the new member. Publish a picture of her and short bio in the next chorus newsletter or on the chorus' Web site. List some of her hobbies and talents. This will help her get assimilated into the group more quickly.

This personal involvement is an important first step toward establishing a strong relationship and retaining the member for years to come.

# Section Three **ACTION STEPS**

## **Action Plan Template Prospective Member Service**

### **3.1 Create a Member Service Culture**

**Recruiting Strategy:** What do we need to do to ensure that our Prospective Member Service standards are the best?

#### **Action Plan**

**1. List ways to improve and/or enhance Prospective Member Service.**

**2. List ways to create a Member Service Culture in the chorus.**

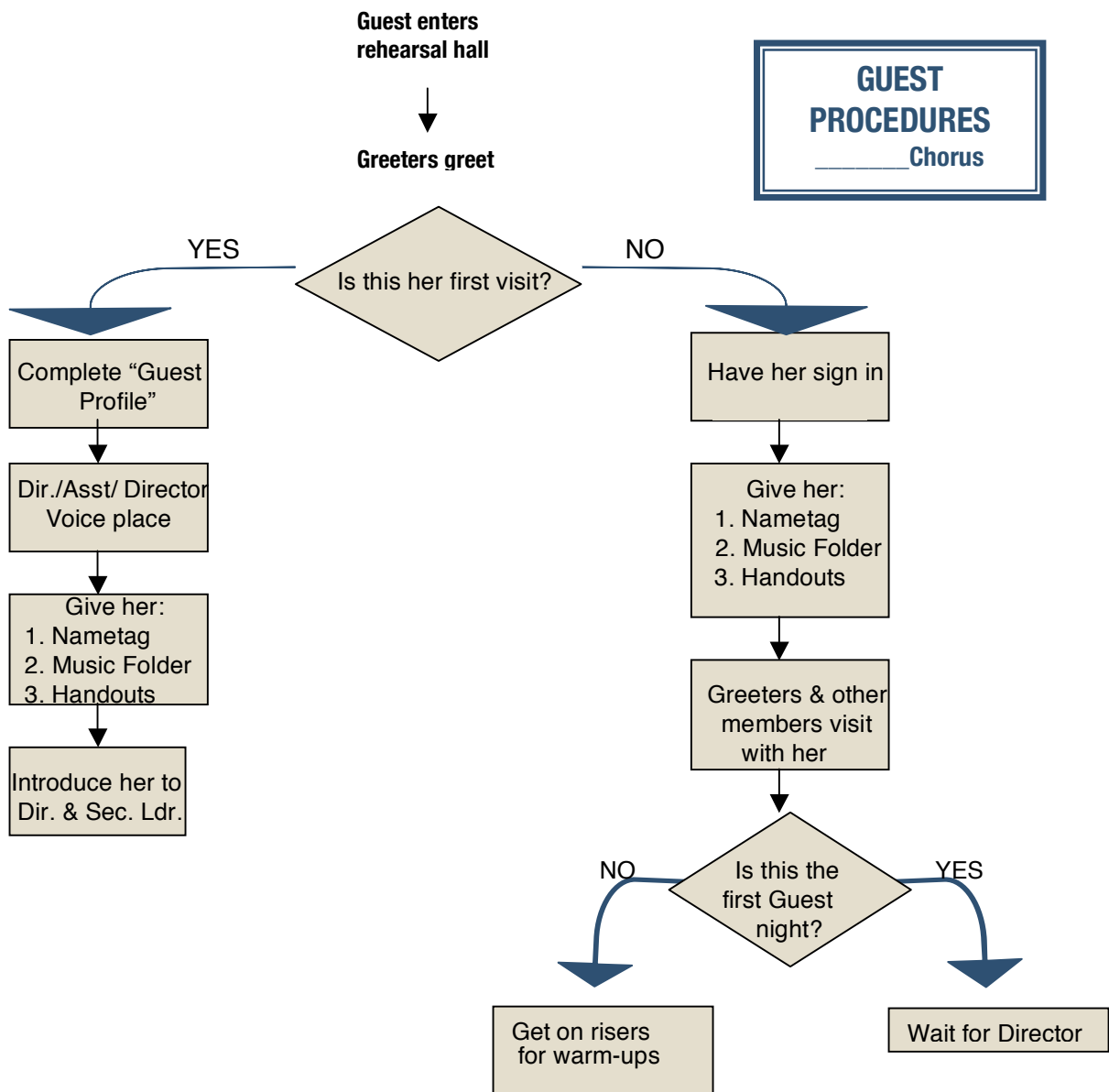
**3. List any Additional Ideas:**

# Section Three ACTION STEPS

## Action Plan Template Prospective Member Service

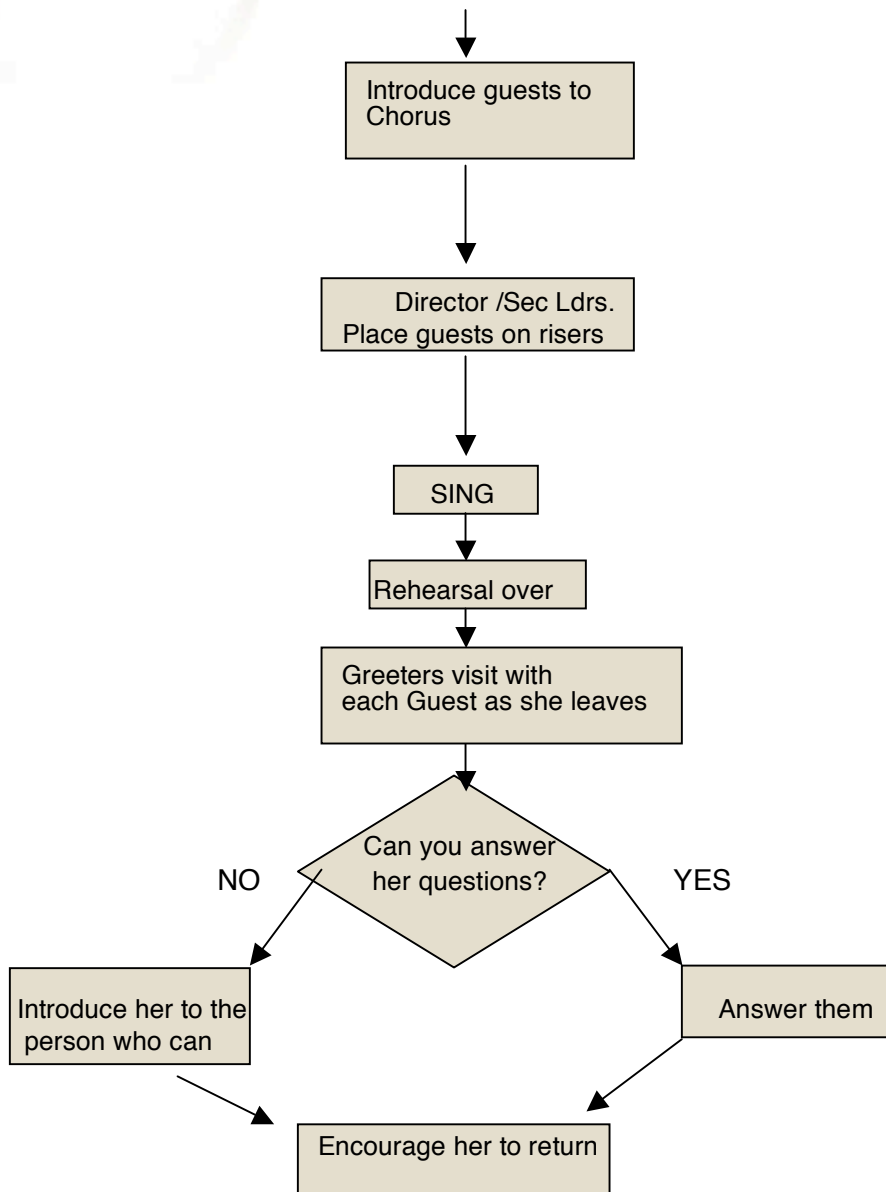
### 3.2 Care for Guests

This Guest Procedures chart serves as a standard guideline for a guest night. Use the chart to create a customized procedures plan for the chorus' membership activities.



# Section Three ACTION STEPS

## 3.2 Care for Guests, continued



# Section Three ACTION STEPS

## Action Plan Template Prospective Member Service

### 3.3 Guest Packets

Distribute First Visit Guest Packets with Prospective Member Information. Include an assortment of materials about the chorus and the international organization. Assign a member to manage the guest packet compilation and distribution. Packets should include:

- *Prospective Member* brochure available through international sales or the Marketing Center.
- A handout with a brief description of the chorus—when it was founded, where it meets, annual events, information about the director, names and contact information of membership committee members.
- Chapter newsletter or past show program.
- *Harmonize the World* sheet music.
- Novelty such as a bookmark, decal or magnet with chorus information imprinted on the product.
- Nametag
- Miscellaneous materials: \_\_\_\_\_

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# Section Three ACTION STEPS

## Action Plan Template Prospective Member Service

### 3.4 Sample Guest Profile

<b>CHORUS</b>									
<b>GUEST PROFILE</b>									
Name: _____					Date: _____				
Street: _____									
City: _____			State: _____			Zip: _____			
Home Phone: _____					Work Phone: _____				
E-mail: _____			Birthday (mm/dd): _____			Spouse: _____			
How did you hear about the chorus?									
Previous singing experience?									
Previous Sweet Adeline experience?									
If currently a Sweet Adeline, of what chorus are you a member?									
(Do not complete below this line.)									
Voice Part: _____					Voiced By: _____				
Audition Passed: _____ (Date)					_____ (Director's Signature)				
					_____ (Section Leader's Signature)				
<b>Attendance Record</b>									
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>



# Section Three ACTION STEPS

## Action Plan Template Prospective Member Service

### 3.5 Prepare Members to Talk to Guests

When chorus members talk with guests, they leave an indelible impression. The following skit is designed to help members understand that they play an important part in membership recruitment.

The skit involves three characters: a guest, a membership committee person, and an enthusiastic (but less than tactful) chorus member. The guest asks a series of questions. Enthusiastic Edna answers her readily before Margie Membership has a chance to field the question. Margie demonstrates a more appropriate response after each of Edna's ready responses. To help your skit performers, put each character's lines onto a series of 3- x 5-inch file cards. Choose an exuberant personality to play the part of Edna.

Guest: Do you have more than one costume?

Edna: Yes, we have lots of them! There's the one we wore for contest two years ago – the gaudy red thing with tons of sequins. It was so heavy and hot! And there's the one we wear to regional events – everyone has to wear it so we look alike – and then we had a new one this year for contest. I paid \$185 for the thing to be made – can you believe it? And we didn't even win!

Margie: Yes, we have two performing costumes and an outfit we call our travel costumes. We wear it for informal performances, and for times when we are assisting at an event in the region.

Guest: How can I ever learn all these songs and choreography before the November show?

Edna: Gosh, I don't know. It took me forever to get off the paper on *This Joint is Jumpin'*, and that choreography is really gruesome! You'll need to record the other ten songs by September 30. I guess you've got your work cut out for you. Are you good at dancing?

Margie: You know, our director usually arranges for new people to sing in part of the show the first time. That way, you don't have to worry about learning the complete repertoire immediately. Let's talk with her about it, and see which songs she'd like to have you work on first.

## Section Three ACTION STEPS

### 3.5 Prepare Members to Talk to Guests, continued

Guest: Does everyone here know how to read music?

Edna: Hey, we've got some great musicians in this group. Gloria has her Master's degree in music education, and Gayle was a child performer. She's been on the stage since she was five! Julie writes and arranges songs. Five of our members direct other choruses, and Donna and Maggie perform in a nightclub sometimes. If you don't read music, you'll have a really hard time keeping up, I guess.

Margie: Most of our members do read music, but a number of them learned how after they'd been in the chorus awhile. We learn our music in lots of ways. Many of us learn it mostly by listening to tapes. Reading music isn't a requirement, but it's helpful.

Guest: How much will this chorus cost me?

Edna: Get your bank account ready! I've spent so much money since I joined the chorus! There are international per capita fees, regional assessments, and chapter dues – not to mention the costumes and make-up! Then we have to pay for an All-Events ticket just to sing in contest, plus food and hotel bills. It's really an expensive hobby!

Margie: The membership chair will be giving you an information sheet with a breakdown of all the expenses involved. It shows how much dues cost, and different options for paying them so it will be most convenient for you. It also tells you about other expenses, such as costumes and make-up, which are paid for in part by the chorus. Some of the expenses are optional. Let's go ask the membership chair for the information sheet.

# Section Three **ACTION STEPS**

## **Action Plan Template Prospective Member Service**

### **3.6 Offer Visitor Incentives**

**Recruiting Strategy:** List incentives that will encourage repeat guest visits.

**Action Plan (list as many as required)**

# Section Three ACTION STEPS

## Action Plan Template Prospective Member Service

### 3.7 Sample Guest Survey

## GUEST SURVEY

Dear Singer,

Thank you for visiting the (Chorus Name) this evening. We want to make our guests' visits as positive as possible, and we'd like to learn from your experience. Please take a few moments to let us know your impressions of the rehearsal.

1. On a scale of 1-5, please rate the following. Circling a "1" indicates a strong dislike/negative feeling; "5" indicates a strong liking/positive feeling.

	Strong Dislike/ Negative	OK	Strong Liking/ Positive		
<b>Overall impression</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>The types of songs the chorus sings</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Chorus personality/attitude/spirit</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>How I was welcomed by the chorus</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>How I feel I might fit into the chorus</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Music education received</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Amount of organizational info received</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>The way rehearsal was conducted</b>	1	2	3	4	5

2. Do you intend to come back  Yes  No  Don't Know

If you answered "No" or "Don't Know," what concerns or issues do you have that would keep you from coming back?

# Section Three **ACTION STEPS**

## 3.7 Sample Guest Survey, continued

3. What is attractive to you about Sweet Adelines International and (Chorus Name)?  
Check all that apply.

1. Performances
2. Friendships
3. Educational opportunities
4. Community Service
5. Barbershop Music
6. Contest/Competitions
7. Singing
8. Other, Please Specify

4. Indicate your previous chorus experience by checking all that apply:

1. Young Women in Harmony chorus
2. Youth chorus
3. High school chorus
4. College chorus
5. Church chorus
6. Community chorus
7. This is my first chorus experience
8. Other, Please specify

5. How did you first hear about (Chorus Name)? Choose one answer only.

1. Chorus Member (friend/business associate)
2. Chorus Member (relative)
3. Chorus show or appearance
4. Newspaper article or advertisement
5. Television
6. Radio
7. Billboard
8. Internet
9. Other, Please Specify

# Section Three **ACTION STEPS**

## 3.7 Sample Guest Survey, continued

6. What enticed you the most to attend the guest night?
  1. Free Guest Pass
  2. Opportunity to learn to sing
  3. Opportunity to perform
  4. Opportunity to sing with my friend/family member/business associate
  5. Other, Please Specify
  
7. Please give us any suggestions that you may have about the chorus, music, organization, etc.

Name : \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for your time and help. Please return this survey to the membership chair.

# Section Three ACTION STEPS

## Action Plan Template Prospective Member Service

### 3.8 Follow-Up

Based on survey comments, follow-up with prospects that indicate they **will not return or were unsure** of a return visit as follows:

**Ask:** We would like to stay in touch. May we contact you periodically with information about our upcoming events and activities? What is the best way to reach you?

**Record:** Enter the prospect's information into the prospect database, with the visit date, the membership interest level and greeter comments about the guest and the visit.

**If applicable:** Closely review the surveys and determine whether a guest indicated issues or concerns that leaders may be able to quickly correct. If so, communicate the improvement and invite her back for another visit.

**Letter:** Even though a guest indicated that she will not be returning or is unsure of her return, keep the relationship on a positive note. Send a thank you letter with information that may entice a trial visit at a later time.

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Based on survey comments, follow-up with prospects that indicate they **will** return as follows:

### Thank you Letter or Postcard Sample Letter

Dear [personalized],

On behalf of the (Chorus Name), I would like to personally thank you for visiting.

- Include memorable moments from the visit.
- Include some exciting chorus information, such as "We are proud of ...."
- Include some benefits of membership, such as "We not only have a great atmosphere, members also enjoy ..."
- Remind them of any incentives offered for subsequent visits.

# Section Three ACTION STEPS

## 3.8 Follow-Up, continued

### Thank you Letter or Postcard Sample Letter, continued

Our next Guest night is scheduled for (date) beginning at (time). Please let us know either by phone \_\_\_\_\_ or e-mail \_\_\_\_\_ if you are planning to attend.

(Guest Name), if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me (include contact info) or the Membership Committee Chair, (include name, contact info).

Regards,  
(Greeter or Director)

### Sample Postcard

A hand-written postcard from the director with a chorus photo is very effective.

Dear (guest). Thank you for visiting the (chorus name) this week and singing (part) with us. We believe we have an exciting musical future and would love to share it with you. We look forward to seeing you next week.

Signed by the director - or her designee who fills out and mails the cards for her.

**Note:** If you haven't heard from a guest, she could be called to confirm attendance or to see if she has a conflict with the night and would like to attend on an alternate day.

If a caller learns that a guest will not be returning, keep the call on a positive note – remember, the chorus has still made a friend. Feeling good about the chorus and its membership may entice them to join at a later time.



# Section Three **ACTION STEPS**

## **Action Plan Template The Director's Role in Recruitment**

### **3.9 Director's Influence on Guests**

**Recruitment Strategy:** How can the Director play a critical role in membership recruitment?

**List educational opportunities that would enhance the director's skills. i.e. people skills, greeter training, marketing and public relations training.**

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**What changes could the director make to improve "guest night" rehearsals? Also, list ways that the director can provide exciting and energizing musical experiences for potential members.**

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**List additional ideas for the director's role in recruitment.**

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# Section Three **ACTION STEPS**

## **Action Plan Template Turn Guests Into Members**

### **3.10 Prospective Member Information**

Distribute information each week in bite size pieces. Include realistic expectations about the benefits and obligations of membership.

#### **Sample Prospective Member Information Plan:**

##### **Second Visit**

- *Barbershop Basics* series available through the International Web site
- Chapter bulletin
- Additional information: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

##### **Third Visit**

- Expense sheet provided by the chapter treasurer. Include dues information, estimate of costume expenses, any regular expenses members are expected to pay and a note to the effect that there are some optional expenses along the way.
- Auditioning information and the membership application process
- Additional information: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

##### **Fourth Visit**

- A copy of the chorus standing rules
- Performance repertoire list
- Suggestions for becoming performance ready
- Information about time requirements and chorus member expectations
- Additional information: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Section Three ACTION STEPS

## 3.10 Prospective Member Information, continued

### Fifth Visit

- Copies of *The Pitch Pipe* and *The Pitch Pipe Lite*
- Regional information and publications
- Calendar of key events for the coming year
- Additional information: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Note:** Among the biggest benefits of membership are the educational opportunities at the chapter, regional and international levels. Help guests understand the wealth of musical, administrative and personal development training that will be available to her as a member.

# Section Three **ACTION STEPS**

## **Action Plan Template Turn Guests Into Members**

### **3.11 Chorus Member Expectations**

**If applicable, list the standards for member expectations.**

# Section Three **ACTION STEPS**

## **Action Plan Template Turn Guests Into Members**

### **3.12 Growing Together**

**If applicable, list ways to encourage prospective members to try another Sweet Adelines chorus if they do not fit the member requirements.**

# Section Three **ACTION STEPS**

## **Action Plan Template Turn Guests Into Members**

### **3.13 Auditioning**

**If applicable, list the auditioning process.**

# Section Three **ACTION STEPS**

## **Action Plan Template Turn Guests Into Members**

### **3.14 Embrace New Members**

**List ways that the chorus will welcome new members and specify tactics to successfully assimilate new members into the chorus.**



**SECTION 4:**

*Membership Retention*





## Membership Retention

Retaining good members is as crucial to long-term growth and sustainability as the recruitment of new members. Improving the annual retention rate is at the very core of what must be done to ensure the organization's long-term viability. Leaders should pay as much attention to membership retention as they do to membership growth.

## Retention Analysis

### **(Action Plan Template 4.1)**

In the situation analysis exercise in Section Two, leaders examined the factors that influence the chorus' ability to attract guests and calculated the conversion rates for turning the guests into members. Also in Section Two, a measurable Membership Objective was determined that factored in the average attrition rate, conversion rate and estimated resignations of current members.

Look at more than just these figures now though. Track how many members are leaving the chorus each year and uncover the main reason why. Choruses may have significant retention problems even if the number of members stays constant from year to year. When choruses continually gain and lose members, a revolving-door effect is created, making it unstable and challenging to attract new members.

Establish short and long-term objectives for membership retention. Initially, set goals of 12 – 24 months. Quantify retention by a percentage goal, such as we want to retain 90 percent of our members, or by specific number of members, such as we want to retain 30 of our current membership base of 37. Once on track, develop a five-year Master Plan.

Discuss the results of the retention analysis with the entire chorus. Involving the membership more closely in the strategies is an effective way to make member retention a top priority.

## Resigning Member Exit Surveys

### **(Action Plan Template 4.2)**

Approximately four to six months after a member resigns encourage her to complete a short exit survey about the chorus, organization, education and more. Waiting several months derives more candid and helpful responses. Typically, right after a resignation, members will say that time and money were the only factors involved.

Survey responses will uncover the “true retention rate,” which is the chorus' drops minus those drops that have relocated, passed away, have budget problems or other issues that cannot be controlled.

Ask resigning members what they liked best about the chorus and what areas could be improved. Most importantly, find out the main circumstances that are preventing them from continuing membership. Use this information to ascertain why members either stay in or leave the chorus. Take all suggestions for improvement seriously, and work to implement them as appropriate.

## RESIGNING MEMBER LONGEVITY GROUPS

A two-fold reason to consistently implement exit surveys is to determine the reasons that members leave per longevity group. Upon completion of the survey, place resigning members into appropriate longevity groups according to how long they remained in the chorus. Identify how many members are falling within each longevity group and the main reasons why. These groups will uncover the point at which the majority of resignations are occurring.

The primary reasons members leave the organization, based on each longevity group, are listed below, as well as some retention strategies to consider as your chorus addresses each longevity group: (Information was gathered from International exit surveys.)

## **1 year Longevity**

**{Also see “The All Important First Year” in this section}**

Most members who leave within the first year say they do so because of dissatisfaction. This is a broad reason, but dissatisfaction is usually due to miscommunication, unrealistic expectations, disagreements, etc. New members that are not fully informed about the responsibilities and expectations of membership before joining or fully educated about the organization after joining will have a higher tendency of becoming dissatisfied. Many have trouble meeting the requirements, particularly in regard to financial expectations. Still others feel disconnected to the music.

If a chorus sees a big loss in first-year members, increase education efforts by implementing a Rookie Program and enhancing new member orientation materials. Form close connections by establishing a Big Sister Program. Make sure that Big Sisters, Membership Committee members and chorus leaders fully inform new members about the responsibilities and expectations of membership. Encourage new members to become involved in chorus activities, events and performances. Strengthen music education by offering “extra” coaching, vocal production classes, PVIs, etc.

## **2-5 year Longevity**

Historically, this is the tenure group with the greatest loss of members annually. Members that leave within this timeframe say it is because of the difficulty in meeting attendance requirements due to outside obligations. These members may be feeling disconnected to the chorus’ goals and activities, and may be missing the social outlets that they enjoyed in the past. A few mentioned dissatisfaction with chorus leadership, in particular, with the director, and with the negative attitudes expressed by fellow members.

Most likely, the members in this tenure group recently completed an intensive new member program, and are now left to make it on their own. Re-energize these members by encouraging them to join committees and pursue leadership opportunities. This involvement will spark a feeling of control over improving the atmosphere. They may also have fresh ideas for rejuvenating social activities, events, fundraisers, etc. Consider involving this group in youth programs or serving as Young Women in Harmony liaisons to the Young Women in Harmony Regional Coordinator.

Strengthen continuing education so that members remain challenged and engaged in the chorus and enthusiastic about attending each week.

## **6-10 year Longevity**

The reason that members leave at the 6-10 year mark is primarily because of relocation and retirement. Members in this category also indicated that they left to spend more time with family, most likely due to the life changes of retirement, and perhaps relocating to be closer to family. The survey comments expressed a strong desire to network and socialize with other chorus members, and many that resigned felt that these needs were not being met.

Encourage members in this longevity group to become more involved in regional activities, conventions and educational events. Regional involvement gives them an opportunity to meet Sweet Adelines International members beyond the chorus level. International involvement broadens the opportunity to meet additional members even more. Suggest attendance at the international convention and international education events. For members leaving due to retirement, suggest that they remain affiliated with Sweet Adelines International by retaining membership through Chapter-at-Large or Member-at-Large options. Assist members that are relocating with the transfer paperwork, and forward their contact information to a chorus in the new area.

## **10+ year Longevity**

Indicating dissatisfaction as a reason to leave makes a positive shift in this longevity group, from 42.9 percent dissatisfaction in the 2-5 year group to just 8.2 percent in the 10+ year group. Therefore, most members that remain for more than 10 years are happy with the chorus, but say that they have to resign for health reasons and because of financial constraints.

Consider easing some of the financial demands for the members in this longevity group who may be under financial strain because of retirement and other factors. Establish an angel fund and implement a special fundraiser for this purpose. Or, find ways to help them “earn” their dues by allowing them to work for the chorus. If members are leaving because of health problems, consider focusing

recruitment efforts on younger members to keep the chorus active. Also, implement health programs and education for all members and teach the health benefits of singing.

## PUT RESIGNING MEMBER EXIT SURVEY RESULTS TO WORK:

- Develop an improvement plan in areas where deficiencies or problems have been identified.
- Review the reasons why members of each longevity group are leaving and consider strategies to better retain members in all groups, especially those with the highest turnover.
- Consider retraining leaders in problem areas.
- Take survey results as a wake-up call for future directions.
- Based on results, re-focus objectives/strategies/action plans to improve member retention.

## The All Important First Year

The high turnover rate of new members is one of the most pressing membership issues that Sweet Adelines faces today. In fact, international statistics show that more than 50 percent of new members leave within the first five years and the greatest loss is in the 20-39 age ranges. Therefore, properly educating and caring for our newest members should be a top priority for every chorus.

## EVALUATION OF THE POTENTIALLY SUCCESSFUL NEW MEMBER

### (Action Plan Template 4.3)

Chorus leaders can determine each new member's individual strengths and weaknesses by examining their musical influences, needs, habits and competitive spirit. Based on the assessment results, give new members appropriate singing opportunities and involve them in projects and activities that match their strengths. Providing new members with an active role in the chorus makes them realize an immediate connection.

## NEW MEMBER ORIENTATION - ROOKIE PROGRAM

### (Action Plan Template 4.4)

New members bring energy, excitement and renewed joy into the chorus; however, many times they become confused, frustrated, or lonely when so many of their questions remain unanswered and they don't know where to turn. Instituting a follow-up "Rookie Program" will help them feel accepted, comfortable and connected.

To prepare, spend time with members that have joined in the last year or two – What questions did they have when they joined? What has helped them most to assimilate into the chorus? What "terms" and expectations have been confusing to them? What has helped put them at ease? After doing some research, prepare your "rookie" classes around the areas that concerned them most.

Following are suggested class subjects to aid in the integration of new members:

### *Face the Music*

- Show new members how to exude and experience facial energy and its application to the musical product.

### *And Eyelashes Too!?!*

- Teach new members the process of applying chorus makeup with practice time given.

### *The Dollars and Cents of it All*

- Define where the money comes from and where it goes. What responsibility does each member have beyond dues and ways and means?

### *And in Your Free Time...*

- Explain how new members can get involved in committees, quartets, board of directors/management teams and music teams.

## Happy Hoofers

- Devote extra rehearsals to teaching new members existing chorus choreography. Visual team could be involved to assist with faces, physical energy, etc.

## Where Does Your Part Fit In?

- Teach new members how to sing their part smart. This class is also a great opportunity to demonstrate the uniqueness of the barbershop craft.

Make sure you're ready to deliver efficiently all the information needed to answer questions, calm fears and fuel hopes and aspirations. Plan each class carefully and distribute outlines of what each class will cover. Bring informative people in weekly: costume, makeup, finance, section leaders, tape listeners, etc. Teach proven methods of successfully qualifying on songs. With humor and clarity, explain confusing words, phrases and finally the entire contest or show experience.

Encourage new members to find and experience weekly the joy of singing while urging them to dream big dreams and be the best that they can be. Here are additional ideas that will help them navigate that first year with ease.

- Assign a primary contact (such as a Riser Buddy or Big Sister), so that new members have someone to frequently communicate with throughout the first year.
- Have a special recognition for new members at each membership "milestone"—receiving a membership card from International Headquarters, getting a chorus name tag, receiving a costume, etc.
- Make a point to invite new members to attend the next regional music event with other members of the chorus, so they can also get exposed to the "bigger picture" of Sweet Adelines International.
- Recognize new members at chorus events in the first year—first competition, first show, first chorus installation dinner, etc.
- Set up some sort of musical follow-up (or PVI) with the new member's section leader or director so that they can get one-on-one feedback regarding all the areas in which they've improved and also the areas that need some work.

- Have a special competition class with the director, competition chair, costume and makeup chair two months or so before competition.
- Have a three-month or six-month "follow-up session" with the membership chair/committee to answer any questions and to obtain feedback.
- Have an annual new members luncheon with the membership committee. Include a "getting to know you" activity, time for questions and answers, and a "Who's Who in the Chorus" game.
- Prior to the first required "taping," schedule a section leader get-together so that they can explain the expectations and reduce any fears.
- Specifically invite new members to quartet promotions and events, especially if they have expressed an interest in joining or establishing a quartet.
- Offer to help new members set up a car pool to and from rehearsal.
- Remind them to be patient as they learn this new craft of singing barbershop music.

## BIG SISTER RETENTION PROGRAM (Action Plan Template 4.5)

Another successful retention program involves pairing Big Sisters (existing members) with Little Sisters (new members). This mentoring program addresses the challenges that new members may face. Big Sisters can also be one of the most important influences in shaping the development of a new member.

However, the mere existence of Big Sisters does not automatically guarantee that new members or the chorus will benefit. To thrive, a Big Sister Program requires thorough planning, organization, clear goals and follow-through.

Start by selecting a Big Sister Chair to oversee this important retention program. As chair, the main responsibilities are to:

- Recruit Big Sisters and provide Big Sister applications to members wishing to play a vital role in developing new members.
- Work with the Membership Committee in selecting Big

Sisters. Care should be taken to identify members that are capable of being involved and engaged in the Big Sister commitment.

- Make an effort to become acquainted with prospective members as they visit. Use this personal knowledge and work with the Membership Committee to appropriately match Big and Little Sisters. Consider the personalities and backgrounds of the new members so that matching Big Sisters and Little Sisters may lead to close relationships between similar individuals.
- Introduce the matched sisters to one another at the appropriate time. (Usually following the audition and/or membership application process.)
- Hold scheduled meetings with Big Sisters to discuss new member education and orientation, plus the responsibilities of a Big Sister and the expected progress of Little Sisters.
- Distribute frequent bulletins to Big Sisters, highlighting specific information for them to disseminate to Little Sisters.
- Work with Big Sisters to organize social activities that develop friendships and close connections with the chorus.
- Conduct periodic reviews with each Big Sister about the involvement with, and evaluation of, her Little Sister. If a problem is identified with the relationship, or when there is a Big Sister who is not fulfilling her responsibility, discuss the situation with the Big Sister in private. If the situation can be remedied easily, and put back on track, do so. If the Big Sister is unable or unwilling to fulfill the responsibilities, give her an honorable way out. Then, working with the Little Sister, quickly find a new Big Sister to continue the mentoring relationship.

The Big Sister should encourage and guide her Little Sister through the first year of membership. The following are some actions that the Big Sister should fulfill:

- Express genuine interest in supporting her Little Sister by making a total commitment to ensuring that she reaches her fullest potential.
- Be able to fully explain the chorus, region and international organization. In addition, explain the history and mission.

- Meet weekly, or more often, with the Little Sister to discuss chorus life, including the activities, rehearsals, music, events, etc. Build a strong relationship of trust and understanding necessary for a close friendship.
- Ensure her Little Sister fulfills the requirements and expectations of membership.
- Celebrate her Little Sister's milestones and accomplishments.
- Offer musical assistance.
- Work closely with the Membership Committee and Big Sister Chair in accomplishing the goals of the Big Sister Program.

Upon the new member's one-year anniversary, the chorus should recognize the Big and Little Sisters in front of the chorus. A smart retention tactic is to encourage the graduating Little Sisters to apply to become Big Sisters soon after entering their second year of membership. Serving as Big Sisters offers an additional opportunity to make one more good friend and close contact in the chorus. This, in itself, is an excellent retention strategy.

## MEMBERSHIP HANDBOOK TEMPLATE

The Membership Handbook template was designed several years ago by members of the International Membership Committee to help chorus leaders easily develop a compilation of organizational information for new chorus members. While leaders will customize the material and add sections to meet specific needs, the key information every member should have about membership in Sweet Adelines International is on the template. The information can also be used for continuing member education.

The handbook is available for free download in the Marketing Center. Topics include:

### *People in Our Chapter*

- Roster
- Telephone Tree
- Chapter Structure
- About Our Director

## ***Nuts and Bolts***

- Financial Information
- Bylaws and Standing Rules
- Policies
- Job Descriptions
- Protocol
- Terminology

## ***Sweet Adelines Family***

- International Organization
- Regional Organization
- Regional Activities
- Chapter Activities

## ***Performance Readiness***

- Learning Music
- Learning to Perform
- Attendance Guidelines
- Costuming
- Makeup
- Chapter Show
- Regional Conventions
- International Conventions

## ***Membership Information***

- Membership Requirements
- Leave Request

## **New Member Survey**

### ***(Action Plan Template 4.6)***

As new members reach the one-year anniversary mark, ask them to complete a membership survey. Gathering information and listening to each new member's unique

perspective can be very valuable in helping the chorus improve its new member integration efforts in the future.

## **PUT NEW MEMBER SURVEY RESULTS TO WORK:**

- Develop an improvement plan in areas where deficiencies or problems have been identified.
- Consider retraining leaders in problem areas.
- Consider discussing any issues or concerns with the new member's section leader, riser buddy, big sister, etc. and soliciting their additional support and attention.
- Based on results, re-focus action plans to improve new member retention.

## **Satisfying Existing Members**

Members join for many different reasons: they perceive the chorus as fulfilling a personal need or providing opportunities to use certain talents in meeting personal goals.

Members want to feel appreciated and accepted for who they are and recognized for what they contribute. The rewards of belonging to a chorus must be greater than the personal and financial costs, or members will not stay. By combining compassionate people skills and appropriate member recognition, leaders can reward and nurture existing members so that all aspects of membership are successfully fulfilled.

## **PEOPLE SKILLS**

### ***(Action Plan Template 4.7)***

In order to have a sense of belonging (or bonding) in a chorus, there must be strong communication with guests, new members and veteran members. Successful choruses have communication that is open and feedback that is clear and valued.

Encourage members to stay positive, not only in what is said but in how it is said. From rehearsals to social gatherings, to performances, shows and contests, a positive outlook increases energy and guarantees a more upbeat experience.

Request member input on chorus issues. Listen and act for the highest good of the membership. Let the board of

directors (or management team) conduct chorus business, but keep members informed. Provide each member with a copy of the board of directors' (or management team) minutes or at least a résumé that summarizes all decisions made by the board. (Rumors start with uninformed members.)

Encourage attendance at conventions, seminars, music schools and other regional and international events so members more fully appreciate that they are a part of a thriving, recognized international organization.

Additional Ideas for Improving People Skills:

- Distribute a frequently updated chorus roster with phone numbers and e-mail addresses. Develop a picture directory of members, including occupations and hobbies.
- Send cards and flowers to those who are ill, have had recent deaths in the family or have something to celebrate such as a marriage, a new baby or some other special occasion.
- Encourage periodic spouse activities to help ensure support at home.
- Talk to each other. When someone is ill or has to miss rehearsal, give her a call, write a note or send an e-mail.
- Spread work among many members. Sharing chorus responsibilities prevents burnout, presents new member opportunities and leads to better personal and public recognition.
- Staff an information booth to answer member questions following each chorus rehearsal. A membership team member can provide information and answer questions about deadlines, costumes, finances and upcoming events.
- Accept each member exactly the way she is... respect all of the various talents and commitment levels.
- Be understanding of the individual pressures that affect people's lives.
- Ensure that all members feel welcome in the chorus, not just new members.
- Riser buddies should maintain regular contact with guests and new members. They should also actively call or e-mail veteran members who are absent and let them know they are missed.

## MEMBER RECOGNITION

### *(Action Plan Template 4.8)*

Members need recognition not only to feel rewarded for a job well done, but also to receive feedback that what they are doing is appreciated. Use a weekly chorus newsletter for important chorus news and interesting information about individual chorus members' lives. Find ways to give more individual recognition in front of the chorus, and celebrate the little things with special awards.

Discover the talents and interests of the individual members and give them an opportunity to use them. For instance, give members performance opportunities to exhibit their musical skills, to give something back to the community, and to just have fun singing.

Show that you appreciate and recognize the value and unique contribution of each member by greeting them with a genuine smile every time you see them. Give praise and recognition to members who have performed tasks, recruited members and volunteered for events or jobs.

Additional Ideas for Member Recognition:

- Send news releases about members' accomplishments to their company newsletters and local media.
- Have a special recognition night during the year. Be creative and add numerous things to this list. You could even form a mini-chorus to sing to the rest of the chorus.
  - Those under 25 years of age
  - Married over 40 years
  - Those who travel more than 50 miles to rehearsal
  - Those who reach membership longevity milestones: 5, 10, 15, 20 and more years.
- Create goofy awards, e.g., "A Happy Hooper" for knowing and executing choreography to perfection, the "Golden Tonsil" for vocal improvement, the "Woman of the Week" (WOW Award) for birthdays and special occasions or the "Been at This for Twenty Years" (BATTY Award) for 20 years of service.
- Make a "vision" bulletin board to be displayed at rehearsal, including a chorus photograph, goals for the future, a blurb about your director, and a spot for rotating information on highlights about members' lives.

- Have a “Sweet Adeline for the Night” and make it a special occasion.
- When a rookie is qualified for her first chorus performance, give some type of award.
- Sponsor a Young Women in Harmony group and invite them to sing for the chorus.
- Become more community minded. The chorus could become actively involved with a local charity or activity that would qualify for a Young Singers Foundation grant. Make singing to the community an annual event. Keep former members informed of events to keep the door open for their return.
- Implement new activities that will benefit all members.

## **ASSESS MEMBERSHIP SATISFACTION** *(Action Plan Template 4.9)*

Recognizing the differences in members’ perceptions, backgrounds and personal motivations is important to the individual member, the chorus, the region and to Sweet Adelines International. As a member matures, her desires, and what she wants from and what she can offer to the organization may undergo radical changes for many and varied reasons.

Twenty years ago, stress-management was probably not an issue that prompted women to join. Today, women recognize the health benefits of singing and music’s ability to release tension and aid them in managing stress in their busy work lives. If the current mode of operation adds stress to their lives, the prospect of their becoming long-term members dims.

Perceptions actually change with life stages and consequent changes to the individuals. The more chorus leaders know about the needs of their members and their special talents, the more they can empower members to use these gifts at all levels of the organization.

## **Member Satisfaction Survey**

Implementing an annual membership satisfaction survey allows leaders to monitor and assess the satisfaction level of the membership. If members aren’t satisfied with particular aspects of chorus life, they probably won’t continue their membership.

The main objective of the satisfaction survey is to:

- Establish current satisfaction levels.
- Find out the likes and dislikes of membership.
- Discover ways in which members feel the membership could be improved.
- Determine if members are intending to renew. Determine why not if “no.”
- Discover what members believe would help to encourage nonmembers to join.
- Determine if members feel they are gaining benefits and value.
- Determine if the chorus is meeting members’ expectations.

Putting results to work:

- Develop an improvement plan in areas where deficiencies or problems have been identified.
- Consider retraining leaders in problem areas.
- Share the results with the chorus membership; avoid specifics and naming names.
- Take survey results as a wake-up call for future directions.
- Based on results, re-focus objectives/strategies/action plans to improve member retention.

## **ADDRESS MEMBER COMPLAINTS** *(Action Plan Template 4.10)*

Use satisfaction survey results to identify member complaints. Importantly, assess whether the chorus has steps in place to address and reduce complaints.

Ideally, member complaints will funnel directly through the Membership Committee. As the main point of contact, it is up to the committee to give the member that voiced dissatisfaction some special attention. This is particularly



important when the member indicates that she is feeling discouraged and remains upset. A designated committee contact should place a phone call and express concern by:

- Asking questions and listening
- Acknowledging the problem or complaint
- Managing expectations
- Offering collaborative solutions
- Offering acceptable alternatives if a problem can't be solved
- Treating the member with appreciation for voicing her opinion
- Following through later to see if the problem and/or issue has been resolved

The Membership Chair should record the outcome of the conversation. Additional consultation may be required, but most likely, the phone call served to effectively address concerns. Members that are made to feel appreciated, noticed and connected will not stay unhappy for long.

## Retention Through the Ages

### *(Action Plan Template 4.11)*

Every woman who joins Sweet Adelines International as a chorus member brings her own “perception” to the organization. Her individual perception is a composite result of previous musical experience, age, income level, marital status, family obligations, physical and mental health, birthplace, education and personal goals, just to name a few. From individual to individual, these perceptions may vary greatly or be very similar. Consequently, different approaches must be incorporated to maintain everyone's interest and long-term membership.

Considering the many variables in determining the basis of the member's perceptions, it is no surprise that women stay for varied reasons. Discussion groups, panels, and open forums can be used as vehicles to promote good communication among individuals with varying experiences.

Most choruses can be divided into several perception groups based on age ranges. Although the perceptions may appear to differ greatly on the surface, a closer look will reveal similarities in values and concerns. Some of these

similarities might be:

- Love of singing and music
- Feelings toward the director
- Desires and goals for the chorus
- Financial concerns
- Lack of self-confidence in certain areas, e.g. choreography, costuming, performing
- Personal incentives, such as musical education, leadership and performance opportunities

It is healthy to note any dissimilarity between the groups. These disparities may be considered when problem-solving, setting goals or making long-range plans for the chorus.

To celebrate the uniqueness of each perception, the members need the opportunity to meet together in a safe environment and identify their needs, their resources, and their realistic commitment. The time to do this could be during a retreat or simply a designated rehearsal night where attendance will be high.

A panel, composed of one articulate member from each of the designated groups, can communicate the ideas generated in the respective group discussions. This type of proactive communication in front of the entire chorus can promote understanding and a cooperative spirit amongst the membership. This effort frequently yields a non-threatening environment that encourages people to respect each other's opinions while striving for similar goals using different means. Hopefully, it will also emphasize positive aspects of working together for success and satisfaction, and increase respect for the ideas of others. After all, each is striving to build a cooperative chorus that benefits from applying the varied skills of each of the members for the good of the chorus.

### **GENERAL PROFILE OF EACH PERCEPTION GROUP:**

#### ***Members 35 and younger***

Young mothers, college students and young career women feel that their time is a premium. If you have a large percentage of members in this group, keep rehearsals fast-paced and compact. This age group likes more in a shorter time. Intense one-hour rehearsals with not much social

time are what they prefer. They are used to the discipline of school, so talking on the risers will make them crazy. They think that it is a waste of their time and they won't stay. They also want to be involved in the decisions but don't want to be in charge. This is the fast food generation. "I'll pay for it, as long as it's fast, hot and tastes okay." They will prefer learning tracks and being assigned work to do on their own time. They are also keenly aware of lyrics to the songs, so if you have too many old songs about being alone and never being loved and wanting to die if the man does not come back, they will look at it as whining. Keep your music politically correct and up with the times. Design costumes to suit this age group – this is an area in which they like to participate because it allows them to give their opinion without actually having to do work! They would rather have a ready-made costume, bought from a catalog or off the rack than something hand-made.

Examples of Possible Thoughts and Ideas:

- I want to know as much as the director ... tomorrow!
- I never thought I would like this music, but I love it and I find I want more, more and more!
- This music isn't as complicated as I originally thought. But why can't they arrange some of today's music in barbershop?
- Why does it take the rest of them soooo long to learn the choreography?
- Why can't jeans be part of our travel costume? I've learned to sew on my own sequins ... but the costume cost! Yikes! Don't they know I have to eat? What about comfortable shoes ... like Crocs?

### Age 36-49

Women in this age group are independent, have the time and the resources to enjoy a night out. They also may be more emotionally needy. If they are single parents or unmarried, or if they are in unhappy relationships, you will find that they will need countless hours of support and time. They are looking for the satisfaction that they receive from being good at something and getting credit for it. It has also been awhile since they sang, so be patient with them until they get their voices back in shape. This age group is looking for social time, and will probably go out after rehearsal and talk and sing until midnight. These

women are also your "riser talkers." They are your potential musical and administrative leaders. This is also the "Barbie" generation and the more glamorous and glitzy the costumes, the better. They want to be able to play dress-up for the rest of their lives.

Examples of Possible Thoughts and Ideas:

- How do I know I'm singing the right part? Should I switch?
- Why is the director so strict about talking on the risers?
- Is the first row the most important row in the chorus? Or are all the rows equally important?
- Costumes! I can't wait to see the new costumes. I hope that it sparkles even more than the last one!
- Should I expect the director to speak to me at every rehearsal?
- This chorus sounds so good. Can I live up to the expectations?

### Age 50-64

Women in this age group are looking for a family to nurture. Their children are leaving the nest and their spouses are either retiring or urging them to get out and find friends. They have money and time. They are hard workers and are really good at charring committees. Even this late in life they will blossom. They are good at organizing short-term projects like craft sales and social suppers. This is the "room mother" generation and they enjoy putting these skills to work for the chorus. They won't be the first ones to know their music, but once they learn it, it's permanent. This is the age group that likes social time and wants to get to know each member on a personal basis. Put this age group on the membership committee, especially on membership retention. Making new friends is important ... but keeping the old friends is even more important to this group. This is also the age group that realizes their own mortality, and they want to build a legacy that will live on after they die. Give them your trust and help them give something to the next generation.

Examples of Possible Thoughts and Ideas:

- Do I have the energy to maintain the minimum acceptable standard I have set for myself and that this

chorus expects?

- What if I make a choreography mistake or, heaven forbid, fall off the risers?
- I can relate to so many of the songs we sing; my story is an important part of the message we send to our audiences.
- Will the joy in my heart from singing overcome the pain in my feet from those uncomfortable chorus shoes? Can I wear flats instead of heels?
- My wisdom will make me an essential part of this chorus.

## Age 65+

Women in this age group have more time to devote to chorus activities, but may have limited financial resources. Many incomes have been cut to social security and retirement pensions. Find ways to help them “earn” their dues by allowing them to work for the chorus. They will sew for hours, give you daytime rehearsals, make phone calls to fabric stores, get the lowest bus and air fares possible, shop for sequins and write letters to missing members. Their voices are beginning to get a little unreliable and their hearing is not what it used to be, but they are loyal and reliable members. They don’t always understand why a new member gets put on the front row, because they are used to a structure based on seniority. This age group will not miss a rehearsal unless they are in the hospital. They will make the costume deadlines if they have to stay up all night sewing and they will pass their tapes if it takes fifty one-on-one sessions. They are not going to be “shown up” by younger members. They will stand on the risers all night despite aches and arthritis and fever and heart problems. Accommodate them. They are your most reliable membership, and they’ll sing any song about any subject. They don’t like talking on the risers because it is rude and because they can’t always hear every word said by the director.

Examples of Possible Thoughts and Ideas:

- I am somewhat overwhelmed by the rapid growth and new faces in my chorus every week. Do any of these new people know how important I was to this chorus in prior years?
- I will work to improve myself, so that I don’t become too

complacent about my past contributions/successes.

- Am I appreciative of every new member who passes the audition and is accepted for membership?
- Do I believe each new talent improves our chances of achieving the goals set by the chorus? They are the future though and I will go out of my way to make new members feel welcome.
- Is the director upset about all of the talking on the risers during rehearsals?

Once the strengths and similarities among the groups are identified, the information can be analyzed and utilized in several different areas. Use the data to provide all of the members with the opportunities and benefits they seek, i.e., musical, educational, social, and humanitarian.

## Retention Through Guilt-Free Membership

**(Action Plan Template 4.12)**

Many choruses find that members start experiencing elevated feelings of guilt and worry while striving to obtain the high standards and goals set by the leadership. However, the responsibility for creating a guilt-free atmosphere is best when shared by the chorus leaders and the individual members.

**Members.** The responsibility for fulfilling membership requirements is owned by the member. Each one of us is responsible for choosing to attend rehearsals, learning music quickly, participating in performances, improving vocally and so on.

**Leaders.** The chorus leaders own the responsibility for providing and maintaining a safe and positive environment that motivates and empowers the individual member to accept her own responsibility.

## CREATING A GUILT-FREE ATMOSPHERE

In a nutshell, guilt-free membership happens when leaders create an atmosphere where members’ differing levels of time, financial capabilities and energy are recognized and respected.

## **Participation levels**

Everyone's concept of 100 percent is different. In order to retain members, there must be some flexibility to accommodate these differences and still reach the chorus' goals. Let members know that it's all right for them to step back from their chorus commitments during times of stress or take a needed break. To survive, bend, don't break. A healthy chorus has programs to involve all members, yet is still flexible enough to allow individuals to participate as much or as little as they are able.

## **Attendance**

Many choruses have found it beneficial to eliminate attendance rules. Instead, members demonstrate performance readiness either by singing into a recorder or singing to a section leader. Members who miss coaching sessions should be given access to audio and video recordings of the sessions and options to sing the "new" version with a quartet, or into a recorder or live for the director. Directors help make the decision if there is a question about readiness. Some groups establish percentage requirements for attendance, with the opportunity for members to audition for the director, if attendance percentages are not met. Offering flexible rehearsal hours is also effective. For instance, early evening hours will accommodate younger members, and daytime hours will assist older members and busy stay-at-home moms.

## **Finances**

Concerns about money are some of the major guilt producers in choruses. Respect differences in the financial sensitivities of all members. Be positive with financial decisions and avoid misunderstandings by frequently communicating all monetary expectations.

Some choruses offer creative financing such as "angel funds" or no interest loans for both new and current members. Others have established point or incentive systems, allowing members to receive financial "points" for participating in activities of the chorus. The chorus helps defray members' expenses to attend functions such as regional or international competition, based on the number of points earned.

## **Director's Role in Member Retention**

### **(Action Plan Template 4.13)**

The director is the most highly visible leader in the chorus. Everything a director does either encourages or discourages a member to stay. As such, leaders must ensure that the culture portrayed by the director is in line with the goals of the chorus.

## **Training**

In order to gain the respect of the members, directors should be competent and willing to improve with ongoing training. Leaders should help the directors become the most capable, enthusiastic and dynamic musical leaders that they can be by providing educational opportunities for them. Pay expenses to regional and international workshops, seminars and conventions. Bring in regional and international faculty to coach, motivate and train members.

## **People Skills**

Directors must possess excellent people skills. A director needs to frequently recognize and show appreciation to members who go the extra mile for the good of the chorus. Developing an atmosphere of reward and accomplishment and seeking opportunities to give verbal recognition to as many members as possible is a formula for success.

## **Musical Excellence**

Directors that are committed to musical excellence and to producing a quality musical product will plan stimulating and productive rehearsals. In order to achieve this, assistant directors and section leaders need to be utilized on a regular basis. The director must demonstrate flexibility and be open to alternative suggestions if they are deemed to be in the best interest of the chorus.

## **Promptness**

Start and end rehearsals on time. Respect member's time by planning each rehearsal with a balance between the

concentration and drill needed for learning with humor and fun. This is best accomplished by making sure that the chorus sings more than talks during rehearsals. There is a great deal of competition for our members' time, so proper use of that time is important.

Additional ideas for directors:

- Provide new member orientation in music and choreography. Help them get performance ready. Make it a big deal when a new member is qualified for her first chorus performance. Give some type of award.
- Develop a good education program for current members. Plan education events within chorus (judging categories, etc.).
- Keep a positive attitude; it increases energy and each member's self-esteem.
- Introduce new music throughout the year. Plan exciting repertoire for performances.
- Dispense with mandatory rehearsal requirements; use recorder qualifying and visual qualifying as the means to know that a member is ready to perform.
- Laugh at yourselves. Know when to break the tension. Watch for humorous moments – let them be a healthy part of the rehearsal.
- Find ways to give more individual recognition in front of the chorus.
- Treat every member with respect. Understand the differences in time, energy and financial sensitivities of all of the members.
- Encourage quartet singing. Use tag quarteting at rehearsal once a month.
- Provide choreography assistance outside of rehearsal time.
- Offer personal vocal instructions (PVI) on a weekly basis, given by designated music staff members.
- Constantly train and develop future chorus musical leaders.
- Provide 100 percent accurate (notes, words, in tune) repertoire learning tracks.
- Have a passion for and understand the music and the art form.

- Remember, it's a privilege to be a Sweet Adelines director. Insist, praise and take half the blame.

## Member Renewals

### *(Action Plan Template 4.14)*

Most choruses do a good job of acknowledging the receipt of new member applications but sometimes neglect to acknowledge the renewals. Remember that renewing members are just as valuable as new members are – it is an important communication tactic to recognize them, too.

- Encourage members to take advantage of international dues discounts available through the multi-year member categories. Renew for three years (10% discount), renew for five years (20% discount), renew for 10 years (30% discount and no dues increases for 10 years). Consider giving members that choose to renew for multiple years either special recognition or an exclusive gift.
- Give special attention to first-year members by sending personalized six-month and 10-month letters. Thank them for membership and key in on specific reasons why they should continue their membership.
- Send membership reminders that are rich in member benefits, value and offers that members want and need (this comes from the perception groups data and member satisfaction surveys).
- Win back lost members. Tell them about new benefits and enhanced value that the chorus may now offer. Review member surveys that they may have filled out and find out what the chorus can do to win them back. Offer incentives to members who recruit lost members.
- Consider a special thank-you letter to first-year members who are continuing their membership.
  - Express pride in what membership offers them and appreciation of their ongoing membership.
  - Make the thank-you personal and reassuring.

## THE FUTURE

Sweet Adelines International must offer unparalleled growth opportunities for its members in order for it to compete with other exclusive women's groups, both musical and non-

musical. It must offer humanitarian opportunities for its members that reflect care, concern and encouragement within the membership and their communities. It must produce chorus environments that celebrate the contributions of all members at all stages of life and commitment levels.

Even more importantly, members need to convey, beyond the organization itself, the message of what a wonderful organization Sweet Adelines International is and what it can do for women. Being the “best kept secret” is just that ... a SECRET! The very idea of a “secret” limits participation by others.

Moving forward, what is the most powerful way to tell the world about Sweet Adelines International? By working together and uniting members to deliver a consistent theme while portraying a positive image that reflects the organization as a whole.

By working together, the consistency of our recruitment and retention efforts will produce a stronger and more believable presence. Consequently, uniting membership strategies creates greater harmony between regions, choruses and the international organization, improving our overall membership growth. Together we can make being a member of Sweet Adelines International an unforgettable experience where women feel special and a part of something extraordinary. In the end, we are rewarded with new friends and exciting opportunities. The future is now.



# Section Four **ACTION STEPS**

## **Action Plan Template Retention Analysis**

### **4.1 Analyze Retention Rates**

Analyze the chorus' ability to retain members by calculating the \*retention rate. Calculate the net membership gain (or loss) over a specified time period and determine its source: existing or new members.

Many choruses may not realize that they have retention issues because the total number of members remains fairly steady. Therefore, calculate the percentage of new members compared to the percentage of resignations. If new member acquisition is significantly higher than the number of members lost, the chorus should implement tactics to improve member retention.

The American Society of Association Executives (ASAE) reports that most of the surveys for both trade and professional associations find that the average retention rate falls between 82 and 90 percent. The average rates five years ago were a percentage point or two above this. If you are running below 85 percent, the chorus probably needs to tune up retention efforts that address your member value statement. If you are running below 80 percent your value statement may need an overhaul.

\*The retention rate is the percentage of individuals who were members at the beginning of a period, and remain with the chorus at the end of the period.

# Section Four **ACTION STEPS**

## 4.1 Analyze Retention Rates, continued

<b>Retention Analysis</b>			
Start Date:	Sample	Year 1	Year 2
End Date: Determine the dates to review retention by entering a Start Date and an End Date. (After the initial one-year analysis, establish retention trends by continuing this analysis for an additional 3-5 years).			
A) Enter the number of active members in the chorus as of the start date.	100		
B) Enter the number of active members in the chorus on the end date.	83		
C) Calculate the retention rate (B/A x 100)	83%		
D) Enter the number of new members accepted between the start date and end date.	21		
E) If applicable, enter the number of new members who resigned before the end date.	4		
F) Calculate the % of new member resignations by: (E x 100/D). This percentage is the new member turnover rate.	19%		
G) Calculate the number of remaining active new members by: (D – E)	17		
Note: The number of members at the End Date should equal the number of active members plus the number of new active members (B + G)	100		

### Retention Objectives:

The chorus will retain \_\_\_\_ percent of members by the end of the fiscal year.

Or: The chorus will retain \_\_\_\_ of our current membership base of \_\_\_\_.



# Section Four ACTION STEPS

## Action Plan Template Retention Analysis

### 4.2 Resigning Member Exit Survey

The exit interview can uncover the reasons why members are leaving the chorus.

**[Chorus Name]**

### Exit Member Survey

We were thrilled to share our joy of singing with you during your membership in this chorus and are sorry to see you leave. Thank you for being part of our special group. Please complete the short survey below. Your responses will help us better understand the expectations and essential needs of existing members. We appreciate your time and look forward to receiving your input.

**Name:**

#### 1. What first attracted you to Sweet Adelines International? Check all that apply.

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Performance       | <input type="checkbox"/> Friendships           | <input type="checkbox"/> Education            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community Service | <input type="checkbox"/> Barbershop Music      | <input type="checkbox"/> Contest/Competitions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Singing           | <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify |   |

#### 2. Rehearsals

	Yes	No	Not Applicable
Convenient Rehearsal Location			
Convenient Rehearsal Time			
Appropriate Rehearsal Length			
Well-managed and Organized Rehearsals			

**Additional Comments:**

# Section Four **ACTION STEPS**

## 4.2 Resigning Member Exit Survey, continued

### 3. Rate your overall satisfaction with the current chorus you are leaving.

- Extremely satisfied       Satisfied       Somewhat satisfied  
 Unsatisfied       Very unsatisfied

### 4. Did you feel welcome in the chorus?

- Very welcome       Welcome       Somewhat welcome  
 Not at all welcome

### 5. If you did not feel completely welcome, why not? *(check all that apply)*

- I felt demographically isolated  
 I felt disconnected to the music  
 Other members did not make an effort to interact with me.  
 Other members were OLDER/YOUNGER/DIFFERENT ETHNICITY

*(List all that apply)*

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Other:

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### 6. If you could make one change to the chorus, what would it be?

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### 7. Have you felt comfortable sharing these concerns with chorus leaders?

- Very comfortable       Comfortable       Somewhat Comfortable  
 Not at all comfortable

# Section Four **ACTION STEPS**

## 4.2 Resigning Member Exit Survey, continued

**8. If you didn't feel comfortable discussing concerns, why not?** (*check all that apply*)

- I did not want to be known as a complainer.
- I felt that I might be embarrassed in front of the chorus for complaining.
- I didn't want to burden the leaders because they appear so busy.
- Leaders do not seem open to different opinions or new ideas.
- I wasn't a member long enough to feel comfortable approaching leaders.
- Other:

**9. How many years were you a member of Sweet Adelines International?**

- Less than a year
- 2 – 5 years
- 6 – 10 years
- 11 – 15 years
- 16 – 20 years
- 20+ years

**10. What circumstances are preventing you from continuing your membership in Sweet Adelines International?** (*Choose all that apply.*)

- Lack of time
- Dissatisfaction
- Health reasons
- Family obligations
- Financial reasons
- Work obligations
- Moved/no chorus in the area
- Other, please specify

**11. Do you feel that you were adequately informed about the financial, time and member expectations of Sweet Adelines International membership?**

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**12. What area(s) of your Sweet Adelines education could be improved? Please be specific.**

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# Section Four **ACTION STEPS**

## 4.2 Resigning Member Exit Survey, continued

**13. What area(s) of your Sweet Adelines education did you find most beneficial?  
Please be specific.**

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**14. In your opinion, what is the best part about being a member?**

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**15. Please describe one main feature of Sweet Adelines International that would attract a new member.**

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**16. Please indicate your membership future with the organization.**

- I wish to leave temporarily, but will return
- I wish to transfer my membership
- I wish to become a Chapter or Member-at-large
- I wish to resign from Sweet Adelines completely

Thank you for taking your time to complete this survey.

# Section Four **ACTION STEPS**

## 4.2 Resigning Member Exit Survey, continued

### **Put Resigning Member Exit Survey results to work:**

- Develop an improvement plan in areas where deficiencies or problems have been identified.
- Review the reasons why members of each longevity group are leaving and consider strategies to better retain members in all groups, especially those with the highest turnover.
- Consider retraining leaders in problem areas.
- Take survey results as a wake-up call for future directions.
- Based on results, re-focus objectives/strategies/action plans to improve member retention.

# Section Four **ACTION STEPS**

## **Action Plan Template The All Important First Year**

### **4.3 Evaluation of the Potentially Successful Member**

Leaders can determine each new member's individual strengths and weaknesses by answering the following questions:

#### **Singer's history/audition... musical influences**

Does the new member have previous chorus or singing experience? What feedback have you received from other chorus members and musical staff? Has she been influenced by or been an influence on her assigned section?

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#### **Singer's Needs**

Does she have the ability to achieve the expected standards/results? Does she seem like she fits in with the rest of the chorus? Does she convey a sense of humor? Does she have a positive attitude and do other chorus members have positive attitudes about her? Is she respectful and respected? How often does she require special attention and/or help?

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# Section Four **ACTION STEPS**

## 4.3 Evaluation of the Potentially Successful Member, continued

### **Singer's Habits**

Is the timing of her joining the chorus suitable with her personal life? Is she flexible to accommodate her schedule according to the chorus' events and activities? What is her energy level? Does it seem easy for her to get along with others?

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### **Healthy Competitive Spirit**

Does she strive to improve herself for the good of the whole? Is she keenly aware that winning follows as a natural consequence of a collective, positive inner commitment? Does she carry the attitude that trying is better than no attempt at all? Does she give her best effort at all times? Does she appreciate and value other rewards other than simply winning?

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# Section Four **ACTION STEPS**

## **Action Plan Template The All Important First Year**

### **4.4 New Member Orientation – Rookie Program**

Instituting a “Rookie Program” will help new members feel accepted, comfortable and instantly connected.

Who will chair the Rookie Class? Who will provide committee support?

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Prepare 6 to 8 Rookie Classes. Spend time with members that have joined in the last year or two. Ask:

What questions did they have when they joined?

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What has helped them most to assimilate into the chorus?

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What “terms” and expectations have been confusing to them?

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What has helped put them at ease?

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# Section Four **ACTION STEPS**

## **4.4 New Member Orientation – Rookie Program, continued**

After doing some research, prepare your Rookie classes around the areas that concerned them most.

Class 1:

Example: Introductions and Class Outlines

Atmosphere

Introductions

What they can expect from each class

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Class 2:

Example: Singing Together

Introductions of Director(s), Section Leaders and/or Tape Listeners

Discuss how to learn music and taping procedures/expectations

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Class 3:

Example: Living and Working Together

Introduction of Board/Management Team

Finance Chair/Coordinator presentation

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# Section Four **ACTION STEPS**

## 4.4 New Member Orientation – Rookie Program, continued

Class 4:

Example: A Brave New World

Sweet Adelines as a foreign language

Question and Answers

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Class 5:

Example: Let's Play Dress Up!

Introduction of Costume Chair/Coordinator(s) and Makeup Chair

Discussion and/or presentation of costume and makeup

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Class 6:

Example: The Contest Experience

Step-by-Step Contest Experience Description

Question and Answers

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# Section Four **ACTION STEPS**

## 4.4 New Member Orientation – Rookie Program, continued

Class 7:  
Example: Graduation  
Timing  
Diploma and Ceremony

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### **Follow-Up:**

Encourage new members to find and experience weekly the joy of singing and to be the best that they can be. List additional ideas that will help them navigate that first year with ease:

1. Consider sending New Member Weekly Vocal Production E-mails and New Member Weekly Visual Performance E-mails. (See Sample Section)
  
- 2.
  
- 3.
  
- 4.
  
- 5.

# Section Four **ACTION STEPS**

## **Action Plan Template The All Important First Year**

### **4.5 Big Sister Retention Program**

To thrive, a Big Sister Program requires thorough planning, organization, clear goals and follow-through. Start by selecting a Big Sister Chair to oversee this important retention program. Who will chair the Big Sister Program?

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Recruit Big Sisters and provide Big Sister applications to members wishing to play a vital role in developing new members.

### **[Big Sister Application]**

Name:

Joining Year:

Offices Held:

Committees:

Extracurricular Activities:

Have you been a Big Sister before?

If yes, is (are) she (they) still member(s) of the chorus?

What benefits can you bring to a Little Sister and the chorus as a Big Sister?

How many hours a week would you reasonably be able to devote to your Little Sister?

Have you met all of your financial obligations?

## Section Four **ACTION STEPS**

### **4.5 Big Sister Retention Program, continued**

Do you attend rehearsals regularly?

If applicable, list three prospective members (in rank order) who are presently going through auditions who you would like to have as a Little Sister.

Make an effort to become acquainted with prospective members as they visit. Use this personal knowledge and work with the Membership Committee to appropriately match Big and Little Sisters. Consider the personalities and backgrounds of the new members so that matching Big Sisters and Little Sisters may lead to close relationships between similar individuals.

Introduce the matched sisters to one another at the appropriate time. (Usually following the audition and/or membership application process.)

Hold scheduled meetings with Big Sisters to discuss new member education and orientation, plus the responsibilities of a Big Sister and the expected progress of Little Sisters.

Distribute frequent bulletins to Big Sisters, highlighting specific information for them to disseminate to Little Sisters.

Work with Big Sisters to organize social activities that develop friendships and close connections with the chorus.

Conduct periodic reviews with each Big Sister about the involvement with, and evaluation of, her Little Sister. If a problem is identified with the relationship, or when there is a Big Sister who is not fulfilling her responsibility, discuss the situation with the Big Sister in private. If the situation can be easily remedied, and put back on track, do so. If the Big Sister is unable or unwilling to fulfill the responsibilities, give her an honorable way out. Then, working with the Little Sister, quickly find a new Big Sister to continue the mentoring relationship.

# Section Four ACTION STEPS

## Action Plan Template The All Important First Year

### 4.6 New Member Survey

As new members reach the one-year anniversary mark, ask them to complete a membership survey.

[Chorus Name]

### New Member Survey

1. What first attracted you to Sweet Adelines International? Check all that apply.

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Performance       | <input type="checkbox"/> Friendships           | <input type="checkbox"/> Education            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community Service | <input type="checkbox"/> Barbershop Music      | <input type="checkbox"/> Contest/Competitions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Singing           | <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify |   |

2. Please answer the following questions about Rehearsals:

	Yes	No	Not Applicable
Convenient Rehearsal Location			
Convenient Rehearsal Time			
Appropriate Rehearsal Length			
Well-managed and Organized Rehearsals			

**Additional Comments:**

3. Rate your overall satisfaction with your chorus experience.

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Extremely satisfied | <input type="checkbox"/> Satisfied        | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat satisfied |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unsatisfied         | <input type="checkbox"/> Very unsatisfied |   |

# Section Four **ACTION STEPS**

## 4.6 New Member Survey, continued

**4. If you could make one change to the chorus, what would it be?**

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**5. Do you feel that you were adequately informed about the financial, time and member expectations of Sweet Adelines International membership?**

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**6. What area(s) of your Sweet Adelines education could be improved? Please be specific.**

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**7. What area(s) of your Sweet Adelines education did you find most beneficial? Please be specific.**

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# Section Four **ACTION STEPS**

## 4.6 New Member Survey, continued

**8. In your opinion, what is the best part about being a member?**

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**9. Please describe one main feature of Sweet Adelines International that would attract a new member.**

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**10. Would you be willing to recommend the chorus to friends/family/colleagues looking for a singing opportunity?**

- Definitely will recommend                       Will not recommend  
 Will recommend with reservations

**11. What publications, Web sites, radio and television programs do you enjoy?**

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**12. What types of activities and committees would you like to participate in during your second year of membership?**

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## Section Four ACTION STEPS

### 4.6 New Member Survey, continued

**13. How many years do you anticipate being a member? Provide your best estimate.**

2-3 years

5-10 years

Lifetime

4-5 years

10+ years

**14. What circumstances might prevent you from continuing your membership in Sweet Adelines International? (Choose all that apply.)**

Lack of time

Dissatisfaction

Health reasons

Family obligations

Financial reasons

Work obligations

Moved/no chorus in the area

Other, please specify

*Thank you for taking your time to complete this survey.*

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#### **Put New Member Survey results to work:**

- Develop an improvement plan in areas where deficiencies or problems have been identified.
- Consider retraining leaders in problem areas.
- Consider discussing any issues or concerns with the new member's section leader, riser buddy, big sister, etc. and soliciting their additional support and attention.
- Based on results, re-focus action plans to improve new member retention.

# Section Four **ACTION STEPS**

## Action Plan Template Satisfying Existing Members

### 4.7 People Skills

By combining compassionate people skills and appropriate member recognition, leaders can reward and nurture existing members so that all aspects of membership are successfully fulfilled.

**Retention Strategy:** How can the chorus instill exceptional people skills within the membership?

Action Plan (list ideas for improving people skills)	Timeframe Commence / Complete	Responsibility

# Section Four **ACTION STEPS**

## Action Plan Template Satisfying Existing Members

### 4.8 Member Recognition

**Retention Strategy:** How can the chorus effectively recognize members?

Action Plan (list ideas for member recognition)	Timeframe Commence / Complete	Responsibility

# Section Four **ACTION STEPS**

## Action Plan Template Satisfying Existing Members

### 4.9 Member Satisfaction Survey

Implementing an annual membership satisfaction survey allows leaders to monitor and assess the satisfaction level of the membership.

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**[Chorus Name]**

### Member Satisfaction Survey

1. Please answer the following questions about Rehearsals:

	Yes	No	Not Applicable
Convenient Rehearsal Location			
Convenient Rehearsal Time			
Appropriate Rehearsal Length			

**Additional Comments:**

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Which of the following changes would improve our rehearsals? (check all that apply)

- Better time management
- More organized agenda
- More singing opportunities
- More focus on socializing
- Increased emphasis on vocal training
- Increased emphasis on choreography training
- Less focus on competition
- More focus on competition
- Increased variety in the rehearsal plans
- None, I'm happy with our rehearsals.

# Section Four **ACTION STEPS**

## 4.9 Member Satisfaction Survey, continued

### 2. Rate your overall satisfaction with your chorus experience.

- Extremely satisfied       Satisfied       Somewhat satisfied  
 Unsatisfied       Very unsatisfied

If unsatisfied, why? (check all that apply)

- Lack of education  
 Lack of performance opportunities  
 Personality conflicts  
 Cost  
 Personal time conflicts  
 Work time conflicts  
 Lack of support from other members  
 Lack of support from the director  
 Other

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### 3. If you could make one change to the chorus, what would it be?

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### 4. Do you feel welcome in the chorus?

- Very welcome       Welcome       Somewhat welcome       Not at all

If you do not feel completely welcome, why not? (check all that apply)

- I felt demographically isolated.  
 I felt disconnected to the music.  
 Other members do not make an effort to interact with me.  
 Other members are OLDER/YOUNGER/DIFFERENT ETHNICITY  
(List all that apply)

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Other:

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# Section Four **ACTION STEPS**

## 4.9 Member Satisfaction Survey, continued

5. In your opinion, what is the best part about being a member?

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6. Please describe one main feature of Sweet Adelines International that would attract a new member.

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7. How would you rate the following costs associated with membership?

	Excessive	Reasonable
Chapter dues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
International dues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Chorus assessments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Regional assessments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Performance Costs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Competition Costs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Contributions to activities/projects	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other:

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8. Do you plan on renewing your membership?

Yes       No       I'm unsure at this time.

If no, please explain the main reasons why.

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If yes, in what types of chorus activities and committees are you interested in participating?

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*Thank you for taking your time to complete this survey.*

# Section Four **ACTION STEPS**

## 4.9 Member Satisfaction Survey, continued

### **Put results to work:**

- Develop an improvement plan in areas where deficiencies or problems have been identified.
- Consider retraining leaders in problem areas.
- Share the results with the chorus membership; avoid specifics and naming names.
- Take survey results as a wake-up call for future directions.
- Based on results, focus objectives/strategies/action plans to improve member satisfaction.

# Section Four **ACTION STEPS**

## Action Plan Template Satisfying Existing Members

### 4.10 Address Member Complaints

Use member satisfaction survey results to identify member complaints. Importantly, assess whether the chorus has steps in place to address and reduce complaints.

**Retention Strategy: How can we develop a Member Complaints Management System?**

Action Plan	Responsibility
<p><b>Example Action Plan:</b> Member Complaints will funnel through the Membership Committee.</p> <p>Designate committee members to place phone calls to members that express dissatisfaction.</p> <p>Express Concern by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asking questions and listening</li> <li>• Acknowledging the problem or complaint</li> <li>• Managing expectations</li> <li>• Offering collaborative solutions, or</li> <li>• Offering acceptable alternatives if a problem can't be solved</li> <li>• Treating the member with appreciation for voicing their opinion</li> <li>• Following through later to see if the problem and/or issue has been resolved</li> </ul> <p>Record the outcome of the conversation and determine if further follow-up is required.</p>	<p>Membership Committee</p> <p>Designated Membership Committee Members</p> <p>Designated Membership Committee Members</p> <p>Membership Chair</p>



# Section Four **ACTION STEPS**

## **Action Plan Template Retention Through the Ages**

### **4.11 Perception Group Planning**

Most choruses can be divided into several perception groups based on age ranges. Although the perceptions may appear to differ greatly on the surface, a closer look will reveal similarities in values and concerns. Discussion groups, panels, and open forums can be used as vehicles to promote good communication among individuals with varying experiences.

**Retention Strategy:** How can the chorus strengthen communications and promote better understanding and a cooperative spirit amongst the membership?

# Section Four **ACTION STEPS**

## 4.11 Perception Group Planning, continued

Action Plan (list ideas for perception group planning)	Timeframe/ Responsibility
<p>Example: Set a date where and when it is possible to get the greatest attendance. Allow at least three hours to complete the session.</p> <p>Announce the perception planning session. Emphasize the importance.</p> <p>The planning facilitator, director and president/team leader decide what Perception groups are appropriate for the chorus and who will be in each group. They also assign an articulate discussion leader for each of the groups and a secretary to record the results in the respective group.</p> <p>When the designated day arrives, the facilitator gives a brief introduction about the plan for the session. She divides the members into respective groups based on age ranges. The discussion leaders and secretaries lead their assigned groups.</p> <p>Each group will now have the opportunity to discuss privately their questions (see Getting to Know You questions on the next page) and come up with ideas and recommendations for the chorus based on their perspective. When all responses have been recorded (usually 1 to 1 ½ hours) the groups rejoin the others.</p> <p>The facilitator introduces each group discussion leader and secretary. The facilitator asks the questions and the discussion leader reads and shares her group's ideas and answers in front of the entire chorus.</p> <p>During this time the rest of the members are in the audience listening and learning from responses about other Perception Groups. No questions are permitted during this session. Listening is the key.</p> <p>A person or two are assigned to record by laptop, easel or overhead all the responses as they are shared with the large group. Ideally, a hard copy of the results of the session will be distributed or sent via e-mail to all the members, including those who were unable to attend the session.</p>	

# Section Four **ACTION STEPS**

## 4.11 Perception Group Planning, continued

### Getting to Know You Questions (Example Answers)

Area	Unique Strength	What can I do?	How can I use it?
<b>Previous musical training.</b>	Been in many musicals in high school, college and community theater.	Dance well.	Be on the choreography team.
<b>Life experiences that contribute to who you are.</b>	Piano teacher.	Play and sight-read.	Can make accurate part tapes.
<b>Knowledge and education.</b>	BA in English.	Love to write.	Volunteer to be editor of Chapter Bulletin.
<b>People skills ... how do you relate to others?</b>	Teacher.	Learn music quickly.	Be a Section Leader.
<b>Musical influences during your life</b>	Great high school vocal teacher.	Better than average breath support.	Smooth, seamless singing.
<b>Competition.</b>	Love being on stage.	Know how to relax.	Perform better.
<b>Rehearsals.</b>	Friendly personality.	Meet new people easily.	Be a greeter.
<b>Costumes.</b>	4-H.	Sew and design.	Costume Committee.

# Section Four **ACTION STEPS**

## **Action Plan Template Retention Through Guilt-Free Membership**

### **4.12 Create a Guilt-free Atmosphere**

Many choruses find that members start experiencing elevated feelings of guilt and worry while striving to obtain the high standards and goals set by the leadership.

**Retention Strategy:** How can the chorus create a guilt-free atmosphere?

In a nutshell, guilt-free membership happens when leaders create an atmosphere where members' differing levels of time, financial capabilities and energy are recognized and respected.

**List ways to create flexibility in participation levels.**

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**List ways to create flexibility in attendance requirements.**

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**List ways to support members that are experiencing financial pressures.**

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# Section Four **ACTION STEPS**

## 4.12 Create a Guilt-free Atmosphere, continued

**See a list below of suggested ways that members can break out of the trap of perfectionism and at the same time pursue excellence:**

1. Work at accepting everyone's efforts graciously and positively.
2. Stress your accomplishments in your mind.
3. Laugh—laughter is the sunshine of the soul ... and without sunshine very little can grow.
4. Stop listening to your over-demanding, never-satisfied inner judge.
5. Refrain from self-criticism and from harsh criticism of others.
6. Do not keep score of your failures or mistakes.

# Section Four **ACTION STEPS**

## **Action Plan Template Director's Role in Retention**

### **4.13 Enhance the Director's Role in Retention**

The director is the most highly visible leader in the chorus. Everything a director does either encourages or discourages a member to stay. As such, leaders must ensure that the culture portrayed by the director is in line with the goals of the chorus.

**Retention Strategy:** How can the Director play a critical role in membership retention?

**List educational opportunities that would enhance the director's skills, e.g. people skills, administrative or musical training.**

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**List ways that the director can fulfill musical excellence, e.g. utilize assistant directors or section leaders on a regular basis, be open to alternative ideas or demonstrate flexibility.**

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**What changes could the director make to improve rehearsals? E.g., start and end rehearsals on time, balance learning with humor and fun or ensure that members sing more than talk during rehearsals.**

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**List additional ideas for the director's role in retention.**

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# Section Four **ACTION STEPS**

## Action Plan Template Member Renewals

### 4.14 Develop a Renewal Plan

Most choruses do a good job of acknowledging the receipt of new member applications but sometimes neglect to acknowledge the renewals. Remember that renewing members are just as valuable as new members are – it is an important communication tactic to recognize them, too.

#### Strategy: Develop a Renewal Recognition Plan

Action Plan (list as many as you require)	Timeframe Commence / Complete	Responsibility
<p>Example: Send membership reminders that are rich in member benefits, value, offers that members want and need (this comes from the perception groups data and member satisfaction surveys). (see example copy)</p> <p>Encourage members to take advantage of international dues discounts available through the multi-year member categories. (Renew for three years (10% discount), renew for five years (20% discount), renew for 10 years (30% discount and no dues increases for 10 years). Recognize multi-year members in front of the chorus and in the chorus' publications. (see example copy)</p>	<p>Send reminders one month prior to anniversary date.</p> <p>Continuous promotion.</p>	<p>Membership Committee.</p> <p>Treasurer and Membership Committee.</p>

## Section Four ACTION STEPS

### 4.14 Develop a Renewal Plan, continued

Send reminder letters or e-mails to members at least one month prior to anniversary dates:

#### Example copy:

Dear (personalized to member),

Congratulations on your upcoming (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, etc.) anniversary! (See sentence suggestions below)

By continuing your membership, (Chorus) will remain an active and vital part of the community. This year we plan to .... *provide performance, event, and community samples* ....

*Or* By continuing your membership, you'll keep your singing skills on track while supporting the chorus. This year we plan to ... *list educational opportunities, competitions, featured coaches, vocal production training, etc.*

*Or* By continuing your membership, you'll stay connected with friends that have the same interests as you. This year we plan to ... *list social activities, community projects, networking opportunities, etc.*

When you extend your Sweet Adelines International membership for an additional 3, 5 or 10 years, you'll save up to 30 percent. Plus, you'll receive a FREE Pocket Tones Pitch Pipe. Complete a multi-year membership application and include the promotional code: POCKETTONES to receive your free gift. Go to <http://www.sweetadelineintl.org> to download the form.

Remember to take advantage of the variety of benefits you receive as a member, including the digital edition of *The Pitch Pipe* magazine, discounted sales items, the online Training Library, free quarterly Webinars and much more. In addition to the benefits on the international level, *there are several activities and benefits in (Region and Chorus). List chorus and regional benefits...*

If you have any questions about membership, please contact (*Membership Committee Chair or committee member*) at (*phone number*) or e-mail (*e-mail address*).

Sincerely,

Chorus President or Director, Membership Chair





**SECTION 5:**

*Marketing Center*



## Members Only Online Marketing Center

The Sweet Adelines International online marketing center was developed to help members create cohesive membership campaigns by offering user-friendly, prefabricated tools and resources. The marketing center offers downloadable campaign images, customizable templates and copy, membership development tactics, member testimonials, archived Webinars, sample materials, guidelines, handbooks and much more.

Working together with your region and utilizing the campaign tactics and tools will enable each segment of our organization to unite in reaching our essential audience and ultimately spark an upward growth trend like we've never seen before. Within this marketing center, you will find resources that will assist your chorus in designing a marketing plan suitable for the women in your area. Here is a snapshot of the contents in the marketing center:

- A variety of helpful resources for writing grant proposals.
- Campaign images branded to match Sweet Adelines International's graphic standards.
- Image gallery with attractive and inspiring photos of real members to use in campaign materials.
- Library of professionally designed print and Web templates available for local customization with your chorus' contact information.
- Online pressroom with pre-written templates and relevant monthly topics to customize and distribute locally.
- Training library with educational articles, handbooks, Webinars and tools.
- Real testimonials from members to be used in advertising collateral.

### CENTER TIPS

The Center Tips page of the Marketing Center provides basic guidelines on how to utilize the variety of tools and resources available. This page will direct you to each resource page throughout the Marketing Center, including Grant Proposals, Photo Library, Templates, Logos and

Graphics, Press Materials, Training Library and Additional Resources.

The Center Tips page provides helpful instructions on how to build professional marketing materials with templates. The online templates have been designed for user-friendly, flexible customization so that members can easily create and print materials. On the Center Tips page you will find information about Adobe Acrobat and the links needed to download the latest version. You will also find links to the Adobe Reader help files, how to add and edit text, utilize forms and print and upload files. Before creating your first promotional pieces through the Marketing Center take a few minutes to read through the information on the Center Tips page.

### GRANT PROPOSALS

This section provides resources that will assist you in obtaining funding sources for your Sweet Adelines International initiatives. You will find information about fundraising efforts including a grant proposal writing document, a guide to funding research, details on how to write a successful proposal, a guide for non-profit organizations, and more.

### LOGOS/GRAPHICS

This portion of the marketing center provides information on Sweet Adelines International's graphic standards and downloadable links to a variety of corporate, campaign, convention, YWIH and Foundation logos and graphics.

A Graphics Standards Manual is available for download so that members can review the required standards for applying the corporate and campaign graphics. Strict adherence to these guidelines is strongly recommended. Becoming familiar with these standards and faithfully applying them will allow Sweet Adelines International to maintain consistency and integrity throughout all our communications initiatives.

### PHOTO LIBRARY

Through this photo library you will find a variety of photos taken of actual members of Sweet Adelines International. You will see that our members are the perfect models to use in the new **real women. real harmony. real fun.** membership campaign.

## CUSTOMIZABLE TEMPLATES

The Templates page of the Marketing Center allows members to choose from a selection of professionally designed templates, customize them for local use, and download or send the files directly to printers or publications. These templates include virtually all types of pre-designed advertising media: magazine and newspaper ads, flyers, posters, business cards, guest passes, brochures, e-newsletters, Web banners and more. This artwork builds our brand and ensures consistency throughout the entire campaign, which is important to the prospect.

These files will enable members to create, control and distribute high-quality documents. A text form field is included on each template under the Contact Us: area for members to add chorus contact information. Several of the templates also include blank text fields for complete copy customization.

## PRESS MATERIALS

This page allows members to choose from a selection of pre-written press release templates that feature a variety of newsworthy events within Sweet Adelines International.

Current press template items include a press release template on recruitment, a press release template on announcing a champion, a press release template on announcing a new chorus, a letter to the media, a fact sheet, a public service announcement and more.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The Additional Resources page of the Marketing Center offers extra items that will help in building a successful membership campaign. Members will find survey and spreadsheet templates, member testimonials and sample membership campaigns. Downloadable links to a recruiting video and Young Women In Harmony Program video are available.

## TRAINING LIBRARY

The Training Library page is designed to assist members in acquiring the skills they need when developing a successful membership campaign. This resource section addresses advertising, marketing and promotional matters, plus offers a selection of educational materials and ideas to be used in correlation with the **real women. real harmony. real fun.** campaign.

## WEBINARS

This section of the Marketing Center contains all the archived recordings of formerly presented membership Webinars. For members who are unable to attend a live Webinar or would like a review, these Web-based seminars can be viewed anytime, day or night, at your convenience. All members are encouraged to take advantage of these valuable educational tools where expert trainers share their experience, knowledge and provide the basic skills needed to plan successful marketing campaigns and administer positive membership solutions.



Go to the online Marketing Center.



# *The Vocal Lesson Plan*

# The Vocal Lesson Plan

## Vocal Lesson #1

### Posture: The Basis for All Good Singing

Our goal in Sweet Adelines International is to teach you how to sing with a **freely produced, rich, open and resonated sound**, and it all begins with appropriate posture. [See *Illustration #1*] This posture allows our bodies and voices to be relaxed and tension free.

Try to ensure that you are **relaxed** before you sing. Do not hunch up your shoulders, drop or raise your chin, or clench your jaw. When looking in a **mirror**, your stance should be upright with your shoulders relaxed, hands loosely by your side, eyes looking straight ahead with your chin at a normal angle. Many singers make the mistake of presuming they must be facial contortionists but this is not true – a good singer is one who looks and sounds natural.

### Exercise and Posture Drill

- Stand up as straight as possible with spine stretched tall and crown of head trying to touch the ceiling.
- Raise arms horizontal to floor with palms down. Think of putting your shoulder blades in the back pocket of your jeans!
- One foot should be slightly ahead of the other, with weight balanced forward on the balls of both feet.
- Unlock the knees and keep them flexible.
- Tuck the pelvis under and slightly forward.
- Now turn the arms over so that the palms are facing toward the ceiling.
- Notice the extra stretch that occurs in the ribs. The chest is now very wide, separated and high, with a lot of space between the bottom of the ribs and the waistline.
- Keep everything aligned and lower the arms to a normal position.
- The back of the neck is pulled back against an imaginary wall.
- Now put a smile on your face and walk around the room. Restate this good posture often.

### Common posture problems:

**Locking the knees:** When the knees are locked, the body is off balance. This causes body tension, which creates a tense singer. Be sure to put the weight forward on the balls of the feet and keep the tailbone tucked under to help avoid inadvertent locking of the knees.

# The Vocal Lesson Plan

**Swayback:** Sometimes a singer tries to attain a lifted chest by pulling the shoulders back (and consequently tensing them) instead of using the muscles around the rib cage to lift the ribs out of the waistline. The intercostal muscles surrounding the rib cage are the muscles that should be used to lift the ribs and the sternum. When the shoulders are pulled back instead of lifting the sternum high, and the buttocks are not tucked under, but are instead thrust backward, swayback posture is the result. In this tense, unbalanced position, good vocal production is not possible.

**Chest droop:** As a musical phrase is sung and air is exhaled, it is easy to allow the chest to cave in and the rib cage to drop back into the waistline. At the end of the phrase, if this occurs, the singer has lost the height of the sternum. As you sing a phrase, consciously retain the height of the sternum and resist the collapse of the rib cage.

You might have other posture problems as well as these three common ones. To monitor your posture, look in a full-length mirror and compare your body alignment to the illustration here and *Illustration # 1*. Check each of the ten elements listed beside the illustration (feet, weight, knees, buttocks, etc.).

Practicing and attaining good posture will make a noticeable difference in the overall sound of the chorus. So we challenge you to master correct singing posture. When you do, you will notice a significant improvement in the quality of your voice, and you will be prepared to begin work on the next key ingredient of vocal production: breathing.

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## Breath: The Fuel for Singing

**BREATH is the fuel for singing.** The tone we produce when we sing rests on a cushion of air; thus, the breath is the fuel for the sounds we produce. The more control you have over the air flow, the more control you will have over your singing tone. We see, then, how important it is to supply the fuel properly. **The upper airway needs to be open and relaxed.** [*See Illustration #2*]

**Breathing is movement** – movement of air, movement of muscles and organs, movement of energy. A healthy voice means **free movement of air and all the muscles** involved in breathing, and free movement of the vocal folds.

Imagine a kite flying high in the air. When the airflow is consistent, the kite will fly smoothly and steadily on top of the air current. When the airflow is inconsistent, the kite will bob and dive with no rhyme or reason. Your singing tone is much like that kite. If you provide a strong steady airflow, your vocal tone will have the opportunity to ride strongly and smoothly to our ears. If your airflow is uncontrolled and inconsistent, your voice will break and waiver.

# The Vocal Lesson Plan

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## Breathing For Singing: The Distinction

What makes breathing for singing different from other breathing is the **action of the rib cage**. In normal breathing, the rib cage expands to bring in oxygen, then collapses or lowers as the breath is used. In singing, we want to create a feeling of firm support for the lungs so that as we use the air, **the rib cage does not collapse**. It is a feeling of nonviolent resistance keeping the rib cage high and wide and not allowing the ribs to drop into the waistline. The singer must learn to inhale quicker and exhale slower than in a reflex, life-breathing situation.

Here's a simple exercise to discover the muscles and organs involved with breathing as a singer:

- Sit in a chair with your feet flat on the floor.
- Lean over and rest your forearms across your knees, relaxing your head, neck and body.
- Inhale slowly and deeply through your nose.
- Feel your back and stomach expand; relax into your lap, while you are expanding your lower abdomen.
- Exhale slowly through your mouth and gently pull your tummy away from thighs, lifting your abdomen in.
- Let the chest stay relatively still.

Repeat as many times as you like. Recommended: try nine times as a start. Each time you repeat, move a little toward sitting upright, continuing to breathe, expanding your abdomen and ribs.

---

## Abdominal Muscle and Breath Support

While keeping the rib cage high and wide, we use the abdominal muscles for support. As we sing, the diaphragm gradually lifts, pushing air up and out of the lungs as the tone is produced. Because the rib cage is kept high and wide, the diaphragm will lift gradually and we have better control of the breath. **[See Illustration # 3].**

Think of your rib cage as an accordion, keeping it expanded, rather than squeezed together.

## Exercises to Develop Strength in the Breathing Muscles

As you do these exercises, remember to keep the chest (rib cage) high and wide, with no tension. Notice that the basic breathing and posture principles from Exercise #1 apply to all exercises.

# The Vocal Lesson Plan

## Exercise 1

1. Begin with a standing singer's posture, holding the chest high and wide.
2. Inhale through the nose as you expand the rib cage and lungs to capacity.
3. Release any tension in the chest or shoulder area. Now exhale, using a hissing sound like air escaping from a tire, as you count slowly from one to eight.
4. Resist the inclination to allow the rib cage to collapse while exhaling.

Perform this exercise daily, gradually **increasing your exhalation time to 16 counts**. Note that the danger in this exercise is tension and overexertion. It is easy to become tense about not allowing the rib cage to collapse. Remain conscious of keeping free of tension, constriction and tightness in the shoulders and chest.

Repeat a few times each day, gradually increasing the amount of time you hold the breath until you can **hold it for a full minute** without tension. You can do this exercise while driving, working, etc.

## Exercise 2

- Inhale through the nose as you expand the rib cage and lungs to capacity.
- Instead of "hissing," **count aloud to 20**. Work up to 40 counts over a period of time.

## Exercise 3

- Inhale through the nose as you expand the rib cage and lungs to capacity.
- To let the breath out, count aloud extremely slowly from one to six, with much openness and resonance in the voice, constantly feeding the tone a great deal of warm air.
- To keep the chest high and wide, think of expanding the rib cage again as you speak each number.
- Your full breath should be used up when you finish speaking the number six. Now take another full breath and begin again.

## Exercise 4

- To remind yourself of the proper muscular feeling when keeping the rib cage high and wide (nonviolent support), first place your right hand just below your breastbone, so you feel the inverted V of your rib cage (epigastrium/sternum).
- Make a **fist with your one hand**; place it against your mouth **and blow gently on the fist**, not allowing any air to escape.
- Be aware of your rib expansion and the firmness of your sternum area.

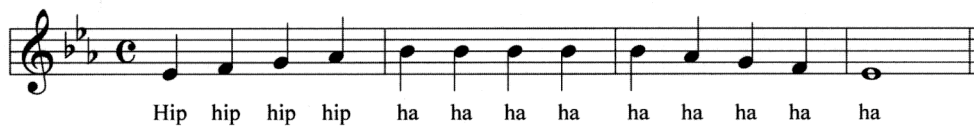


# The Vocal Lesson Plan

## Exercise 5

- To strengthen the abdominal muscles, hold the chest high and wide, inhale through the nose as you expand the rib cage and lungs to capacity.
- Now sing the following exercise, thinking about the support and control provided by the diaphragm as it slowly rises, while the chest stays high, wide and quiet.
- Begin on a comfortable note in your range and sing up and then down the scale, making each note staccato and using the following sounds and notes.

*Go up by half steps with each repeat.*



## To Recap, Breath is the Fuel for Singing

- Assuming that the upper chest is wide and the shoulders are level, neither the shoulders nor the upper chest should rise as air comes into the lungs.
- Expansion ultimately will be felt in the lower rib cage and the back. The abdominal area visibly expands during inhalation.
- Inhalation should be silent, with no audible sound upon breath intake.
- During exhalation or singing, the lower abdominal muscles lift upward and inward, lifting the abdominal bulk up against the diaphragm.
- While singing, the singer must resist the urge to let the rib cage contract and go down. The conscious maintenance of an expanded rib cage will aid the singer in developing a supported tone.
- The more you exercise your breathing, the more control you will have over your voice. With a little time and practice you will be a master of breathing control. Breathing correctly needs to be a habit, meaning you need to do it without thinking about it. So in the beginning you really want to concentrate on the proper technique.

## Some Typical Language Used During Rehearsal

- **Column of air:** A consistent source of air coming from the bottom of your lungs through the top of your head. Imagine a blow dryer pointing up from your diaphragm. A continuous column of air allows notes to be sung with the same excellent quality no matter where they fall in the singer's range.

# The Vocal Lesson Plan

- **Massage your vocal cords:** Visualize the air coming from the bottom of your lungs massaging your vocal cords and the sound will be smooth and relaxed. Tense muscles make tight, forced sound.
- **Energized breath:** A quick, deep breath that adds energy to the vocal line.
- **Forward motion:** The feeling/sense that the vocal line is moving toward something in anticipation, making the song interesting to listen to and keeping the tune from dragging. Proper breathing is critical to the success of forward motion.
- **3-D Breath:** Inhaling into the space all around you, in front, to the sides, in back. Establish the singing space inside your mouth and throat as you inhale.

---

## Some General Considerations

- Singers are vocal athletes and must learn to be expert breathers. The chorus only sings as well as it breathes.
- A musical phrase is like a spoken sentence.
- The singer should mark breathing places on the music and memorize the breathing plan along with the words and notes.
- Too few planned breaths can cause the music to lose its energy and to sound strained.
- Too many breaths make the music sound choppy and difficult for the listener to follow the musical story.
- Rhythm (or lack thereof) is strongly affected by breaths. Taking too much time to get a breath can cause lost beats and poor synchronization.

**Rest assured that breath support and breath management are topics that are discussed, reviewed and refined continuously. You are as close to breathing properly as your very next breath!**

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# The Vocal Lesson Plan

## YOUR FIRST EXPERIENCE SINGING BARBERSHOP HARMONY

### 4-PART HARMONY EXERCISE

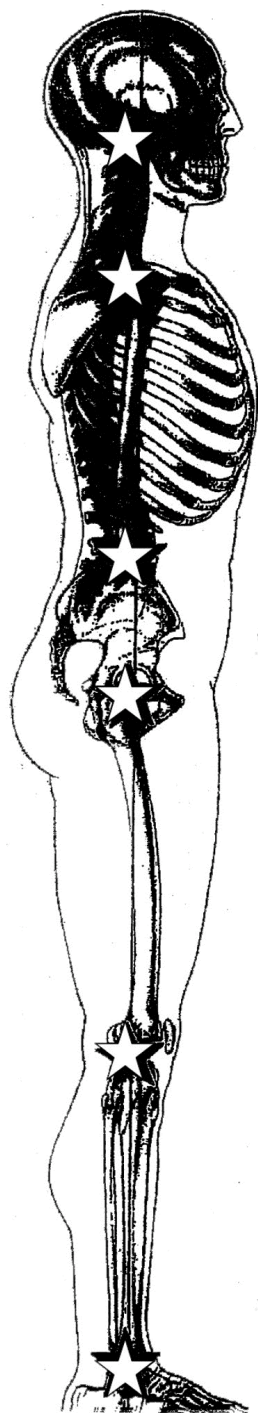
TENOR  
I can sing in har -mo -ny. Oh, yes, I can!

LEAD  
I can sing in har -mo -ny. Oh, yes, I can!

BARITONE  
I can sing in har -mo -ny. Oh, yes, I can!

BASS  
I can sing in har -mo -ny. Oh, yes, I can!

# The Vocal Lesson Plan



## Vocal Lesson 1, Illustration #1

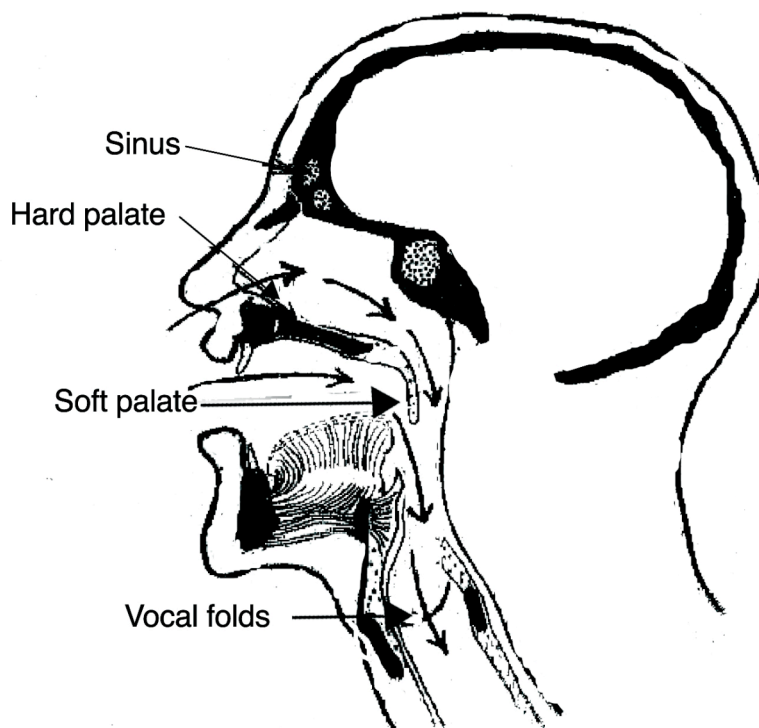
- Neck released, head able to move freely
- Head remains level
- Chin parallel to the floor, neither lifted nor lowered
  
- Chest (sternum) lifted high and spread wide
- A feeling of the ribs being filled up out of the waistline
  
- Buttocks tucked under
  
  
- Knees relaxed and flexible
  
  
- One foot slightly in front of the other, feet comfortably apart for good balance
- Weight forward on the balls of the feet, heels on floor

# The Vocal Lesson Plan

## Vocal Lesson 1, Illustration #2

### The Upper Airway

Arrows indicate flow of air through nose and mouth

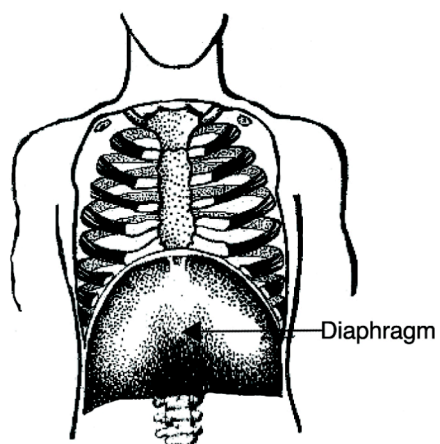


# The Vocal Lesson Plan

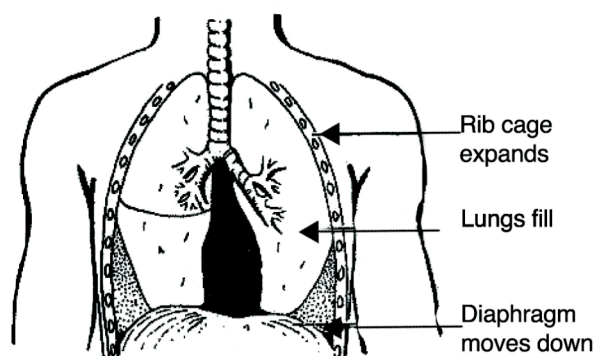
## Vocal Lesson 1, Illustration #3

### Ribs – Lungs - Diaphragm

a) At Rest



b) Positioned for Inhalation and Control



# The Vocal Lesson Plan

## SAMPLE TEACHING PLAN FOR VOCAL LESSON #1

(To be used by the instructor)

### A. WELCOME

1. Introduce yourself; tell something about your background and why you love harmony and barbershop music.
2. Tell why your chorus is offering this Vocal Instruction Program. Some possible reasons follow:
  - Annual service offered to women in the community who love to sing.
  - Opportunity to get acquainted with other women who like to sing.
  - Educate women about the musical art form of barbershop harmony.
  - Actively seek talented individuals to help your chorus grow in size, diversity and ability.
  - Primary purpose is to focus on vocal improvement for application in their lives whether they join or not.
3. Phone calls: if your chorus plans to contact participants by phone between lessons, let them know these calls are part of the program.
4. Announce the format for the rest of the evening.

### B. LESSON #1 – POSTURE AND BREATHING

1. Singer's Posture
  - Explain why posture is the basis of all good singing.
  - Have everyone do the Exercise and Posture Drill on page one of the Handout for Vocal Lesson #1.
  - Discuss Illustration # 1 – "Proper Singing Posture from the Toes Up"
  - Reinforce the idea that proper singing posture has a major impact on breathing.
2. Breathing for Singing
  - Using Illustration # 2, "The Upper Airway," briefly describe the movement of air in breathing, explaining the need for relaxation in the upper airway.
  - Using Illustration # 3, "Ribs – Lungs – Diaphragm," have participants do the seated exercise on page 2, to discover the muscles and organs involved in diaphragmatic breathing. Remind participants that breathing for singing will feel different from our normal breathing. Encourage participants to ask questions.

# The Vocal Lesson Plan

## Sample Teaching Plan #1, page 2

- Ask participants to do as many of the exercises (1-5) on pages 2 and 3 as time allows.
- As time allows, sing the four-part exercise on page 5, their first chance to sing barbershop!
- Tell participants that for additional information go to <http://www.sweetadelineintl.org/education-main.cfm>, Barbershop Basics and/or Betty Clipman's Vocal Production Series.

## C. SUMMARY

1. Homework assignment: Find times during the week to practice good Posture and Breathing as described in the Handout for Vocal Lesson #1. Pay attention to the feeling when walking this way.
2. Remind participants to resist judging themselves. They are in PROCESS! Frustration can be an important part of the learning process. The frustration of not being able to reach the toy isn't seen as failure for the infant, but it makes her want to move forward! When we take our minds off needing to sound good and hit the notes – i.e. the results – we can experience the true magic of singing. And not only has it been proven to be exceptionally effective—it's also fun!!
3. Remind them to bring a friend next week.
4. Tell them something about the next week's lesson: Vocal Lesson # 2. Creating The Sounds of Singing Exercises for developing resonance and creating beautiful vocal sounds.
5. Thank participants for coming and reinforce the gift they're giving themselves by participating.

## D. ORIENTATION

1. Describe the four voice parts used in the barbershop style. Have section leaders or a quartet demonstrate each part.
2. Show them how the printed music is organized and which line is for each voice part.
3. At some time before or after their first lesson, each visitor should be voice-placed prior to attending sectional rehearsals or the full chorus rehearsal.



# The Vocal Lesson Plan

## VOCAL LESSON #2

### Phonation: Creating The Sounds of Singing

PHONATION is the act of producing vocal sound in either speech or singing. It involves the vocal folds (also called vocal cords), as well as the breathing mechanisms already discussed [see *illustration # 2* from lesson 1]. Relaxation of the tongue and throat are crucial in allowing your “best” voice to sing.

In addition to playing parts in the creation of sounds, the vocal folds help protect the trachea (windpipe) respiratory system from foreign matter. They close when the brain signals them to do so.

#### Three actions cause the vocal folds to close:

1. **Swallowing** – muscles engaging when you over-articulate the words. Your brain tells your throat that you’re eating, so the swallowing muscles protect you from choking. This results in the vocal folds closing. To complicate the matter, excess saliva is generated to help with digestion of the imaginary food.
2. **Bearing down** - (as in childbirth or elimination) or lifting heavy objects, in which the vocal folds close in order to build thoracic pressure and provide strength.
3. **Producing sound** - in which the vocal folds close with varying levels of tension to produce the different pitches on which we sing or speak.

The first two of these actions close the vocal folds tightly, creating a high level of tension in the vocal apparatus. The production of sound, on the other hand, closes the vocal folds more loosely. When the vocal folds are closed properly for singing, there is a great degree of freedom and relaxation in the vocal apparatus.

Nerve impulses originating in the abdominal area help the vocal folds to close properly for singing or speech. Thus, the sound must start with the breath from the abdominal area as the abdominal muscles lift the air up and out across the vocal folds. The process is fourfold:

1. Inhalation, or breathing in
2. Suspension, a brief interlude after inhalation
3. Exhalation, or breathing out
4. Recovery

# The Vocal Lesson Plan

Phonation occurs in step three, exhalation, and the start of the sound is called the "attack" or "initiation." In singing, the most important word of a phrase is the first word, which requires a proper initiation of air and sound.

Phonation must begin with the initiation occurring deep in the breathing apparatus, not in the throat.

In order to initiate sound properly in singing, we must leave the vocal folds and throat area open and relaxed during inhalation, suspension, and the beginning of exhalation, in one continuous process. We use the abdominal and breathing muscles, rather than the throat, to begin the sound. As with any other technique for good singing, we must practice using the proper mechanisms for phonation and attacks in order to understand how they feel when they work correctly. It takes sufficient practice and focus to make these seemingly complex techniques become second nature, but it's worth it!!

## Exercises That Help The Singer Learn Proper Phonation

Remember to stand in correct singing posture and to breathe properly. Keep in mind that you want to achieve the correct method of phonation, placing the sound on the column of air that has already begun deep in the chest and abdomen.

### Exercise 1

Think about blowing out birthday candles. Begin to blow and then turn the breath into a "000" sound on a comfortable pitch. Feel the tone begin in the breathing muscles.

Repeat.

### Exercise 2

Hiss a familiar song, such as Happy Birthday, using no words or tones, just hissing.

### Exercise 3

Any sound that starts with "H" helps the singer begin exhalation before phonation. Start with two short blows, then sing two short "ha" sounds on a comfortable pitch.

Repeat.

Now repeat again, singing one step higher. Continue in this manner.

# The Vocal Lesson Plan

## Exercise 4

The following exercise is a musical means of practicing the coordinated attack and release. Observe the note values precisely. Avoid glottal attacks. Your attacks should be smooth and quiet. Repeat on different pitch levels and with other vowels.

Ah Ah Ah Ah Ah Ah Ah Ah Ah Ah Ah Ah Ah Ah (etc.)

## Resonance: Creating Good Vocal Vibes

RESONANCE is the amplification and enrichment of tones produced by the voice. When we talk about resonance, we're talking about singing with fullness and space.

Without resonance we produce a "thin" sound. As a matter of fact, when our tone lacks resonance we sound like little girls (or boys) rather than women (or men). **[See Illustrations #1 and #2]**

The tone we produce should be like a diamond on a black velvet pillow with the brilliance, sparkle and projection of a diamond and the warmth, richness, body and texture of black velvet. The velvet effect comes through proper resonance.

Sounds good, you say, but how do we produce resonance? What causes the tone to resonate? Resonance is greatly facilitated with open space in the mouth and throat, coupled with the movement of air, as you learned last week. Three different chambers serve to varying degrees as resonators for the human voice: *[See Voice Lesson 1, Illustration 2]*

1. **The pharynx** - the primary resonator -the area behind the mouth that extends down into the throat and up into the nasal area.
2. **The nasal cavities**
3. **The mouth**

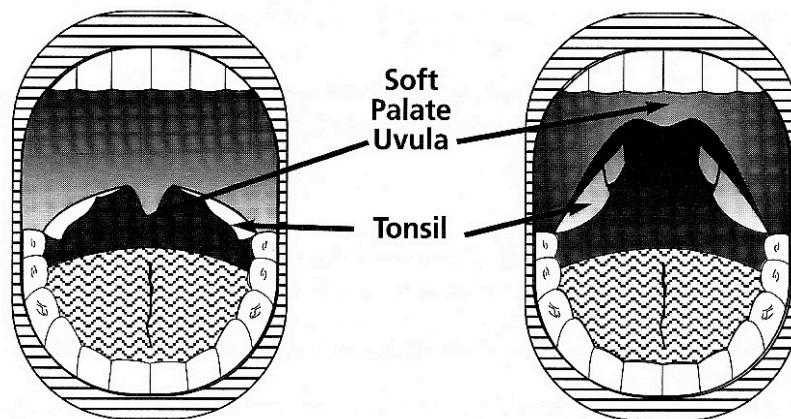
The amount of resonance in the voice is determined by our ability to keep the mouth and head cavities open and relaxed while we sing. The result is what we often hear referred to as an "open, freely produced tone."

# The Vocal Lesson Plan

## The Soft Palate

The SOFT PALATE is the membranous and muscular extension of the hard palate in the roof of the mouth. It serves as a partition separating the mouth cavity from the nasal cavity. The soft palate should always be raised. If you visualize an arch in the back of your throat, your palate will be raised. When you say "ah" at the doctor's office, your soft palate is probably raised.

Every singer needs to keep the soft palate open and the jaw relaxed.  
*[See also, Voice Lesson 1, Illustration 2]*



**Normal Soft Palate Position**

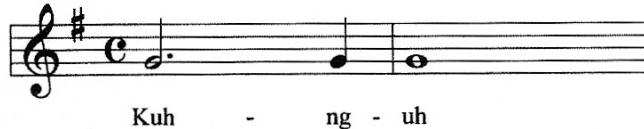
**Raised Soft Palate Singer's Position**

- When the soft palate is normal, or down, the sound is unpleasant and nasal.
- While looking into a mirror, watch the uvula (the dangling lobe near your tonsils) move up and down. When the uvula is up, the palate is in the proper position for singing.
- The "Pinch Test:" To find out if the soft palate is raised while singing vowels, do the pinch test: Sing a vowel and pinch your nose. If the sound/tone does not change while your nose is pinched shut, your palate is raised. If the sound changes to a very nasal tone, the palate is down. Test yourself often while singing. Learn to feel the difference and consciously think about keeping the palate up. Combined with the inside smile, you'll love the way you sound!

# The Vocal Lesson Plan

## Exercise:

The following exercise shows that singers are in control of their soft palate as follows: The "kuh" sound provides a reflex action that lifts the soft palate. The "ng" sound allows the palate to drop; the 'uh' then lifts it again.



## Resonance and Imagination

There is probably no other aspect of singing in which imagination is more important than in learning to resonate well. If you imagine your tone coming through your cheekbones, or through your eyes or out of the top of your head, remarkable changes in vocal resonance can take place. Because the singer hears from the inside, sometimes it is difficult to accurately judge the quality of the sound she is hearing. This is where a skilled teacher with a keen ear is indispensable.

Training the human resonating system to amplify, reinforce, and enrich the vocal tone is not usually accomplished in a short time. It is primarily an activity of memorizing sensations, and much of the early learning involves trial and error. But it is encouraging to know that, once acquired, vocal resonance skills are learned for good. Much like learning to ride a bicycle, once you have learned, you will retain the ability.

Part of achieving resonance is a natural lifting of the soft palate, often referred to as using the "inside smile." The inside smile allows greater space in the resonating cavities of the head, gives warmth to the tone and assists in raising the soft palate.

## How to Achieve the "Inside Smile"

### Exercise 1

- Close the mouth, but not the teeth (feeling an openness in the whole oral cavity).
- Smile as though you were smiling at someone across the room, a smile you do not wish to be noticed by others.
- You'll feel a slight lifting of the cushions under the eyes and a space opening up over the soft palate.

# The Vocal Lesson Plan

- You almost feel as though you are going to break into a yawn.
- The soft palate goes up, although you have not pulled it up.
- This lift of the cushions under the eyes and the soft palate are extremely important.
- Pretend you are sniffing the beautiful fragrance of a rose.

## Exercise 2

- Smile a "natural" smile, not a grimace, just don't let it show on the outside.
- At the same time, lift the outside corners of your eyes.
- Let your eyes show the natural warmth of a smile.
- Grimacing or tightening the cheek muscles and pulling the corners of the mouth wide is incorrect and will create tension in the throat area.

## Exercise 3

- When you use the "inside smile" there is a feeling of "dome" in the oral cavity; there is also a "yawning up" sensation (never a "yawning down" position which creates pressure on the throat.)

## Exercise 4

- The same sensation comes into the soft palate area when one is expressing surprise with a slight gasp and the cushions under the eyes lift.

## Exercise 5

- When one uses the inside smile, the tongue has a sense of freedom. It feels ready to jump into action in any direction the singer desires. When the inside smile is dropped, the tongue feels as if it has fallen into bed for a bit of rest.

---

## Exercises That Help the Singer Relax and Resonate

When we vocalize, we've often put in a full workday and are carrying lots of tension. Many of us keep everyday stress in the areas that need to be relaxed and free for good vocal production: the jaw and neck. It is difficult to sing with an open, relaxed throat if we have not prepared the body properly. Here are some techniques that will help release tension.

### Exercise 1

- Using your fingertips, gently massage the temples.
- Then massage down the sides of the face and at the jaw hinge.
- Relax and "let go."

# The Vocal Lesson Plan

- You may feel the urge to yawn.
- Massage underneath the chin, gently loosening the tongue muscles.
- With your face down, gently roll your head from side to side, keeping the shoulders relaxed and sternum high. Feel a stretch up the back of the neck and you should begin to feel more relaxed.
- Pretend you have fallen asleep in a comfortable easy chair. Let your jaw hang loose, totally relaxed.
- Good imagery: Be on the verge of drooling.

## Exercise 2

Sing the following exercise slowly, being aware of both your breathing and air:

Go up by half steps with each repeat.

Hip hip hip hip ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha.....

## Exercise 3

With arms raised, knuckles placed between the molars of the upper and lower jaws, elbows high, and using the inside smile, sing the following exercise. Let the jaw hang and use just the tongue. This exercise also loosens the front tongue muscles.

Lah lah lah lah lah lah lah lah lah lah lah lah lah lah lah

## Exercise 4

To continue to reinforce relaxed jaw, an open, relaxed throat, and to loosen the back tongue muscles, sing the following exercise. The tip of the tongue should be touching the lower gum ridge and the jaw should stay relaxed. The arm position and inside smile are the same as in Exercise 3.

Yuh yuh yuh yuh yuh yuh yuh yuh yuh yuh yuh yuh yuh

# The Vocal Lesson Plan

## Exercise 5

Use the same arm position, inside smile and good posture, as in exercise 3. Keep the tip of the tongue touching the lower gum ridge. Allow the tongue to move freely and keep it relaxed so that movement from one vowel to the next is smooth and clear. Get the feeling of singing the vowels with the jaw relaxed, the molars apart, the inside smile and the sternum high and wide. Memorize that feeling.



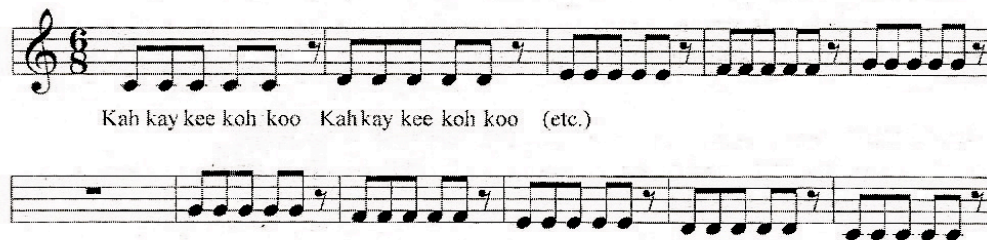
## Exercise 6

This "K" exercise is used to strengthen the soft palate. When singing any word beginning with a "k" the fine muscles of the soft palate are automatically activated; the palate arches upward. This action opens up the space in the back of the mouth, which gives greater space inside the mouth for resonance and formation of words.



## Exercise 7

This is another "K" exercise. Use it to strengthen the soft palate and develop the inside arch and the muscles connecting to it, allowing for greater flexibility and resonance.





# The Vocal Lesson Plan

Vocal Lesson #2, Illustration #1

## The Beginning of Resonance!

Repeat a note, progressively matching the space and size you see below.

ah

AH

AH

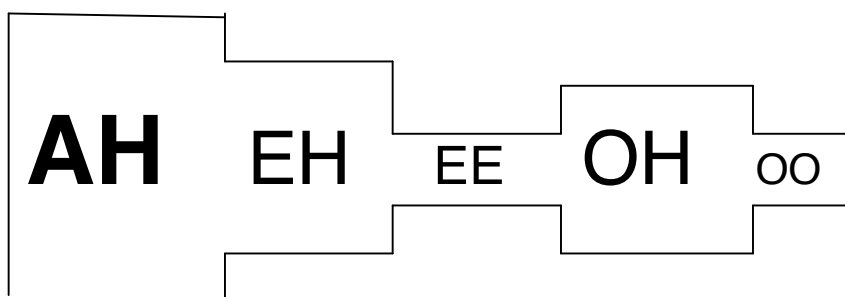
**AH**

**AH**

# The Vocal Lesson Plan

Vocal Lesson #2, Illustration #2

## THE VOWEL TUNNEL



Space inside  
the typical mouth.

TO MATCH RESONANCE, ALL VOWELS NEED TO BE  
PRODUCED IN THE “AH” SPACE

**AH EH EE OH OO**

# The Vocal Lesson Plan

## SAMPLE TEACHING PLAN FOR VOCAL LESSON #2

(To be used by the instructor)

### A. INTRODUCTION

1. Welcome everyone. Remind them about the joy of being a Sweet Adeline and remember to use a sense of humor...and smile a lot!
2. Introduce any new participants to the group.
3. Ask participants to describe where and when they completed their Lesson # 1 homework assignment. Ask for questions and reactions.
4. Briefly review breathing and posture, calling on participants to check for understanding.
5. Announce the format for the rest of the evening.

### B. LESSON #2 – PHONATION: CREATING THE SOUNDS OF SINGING

1. Phonation and the Vocal Folds
  - Explain the word and function of Phonation...it's a strange word to most new singers.
  - Using Lesson # 1 – Ill. 2, discuss the importance of relaxation of the throat and vocal folds.
  - Have the class physically do the Exercises on page 2, so they can “feel” proper phonation.
  - Be sure to have them sing Exercise # 4.
  - Continually monitor posture and breathing.
2. Resonance: Creating Good Vocal Vibes
  - Describe resonance as a requirement for a freely produced sound that allows blended unit singing.
  - Explain the need of consistent open space and movement of air to facilitate resonance.
  - Use Illustrations 1 and 2 to demonstrate the difference between a “thin” sound and a resonant sound.

***(Strong Suggestion: Put these on overhead transparencies, PowerPoint, or draw them on a flip chart.)***

3. The Soft Palate
  - Have students discover their soft palate by sliding their cleanest index finger across their hard palates and finding where the roof of the mouth turns into the “soft palate.”
  - Demonstrate the “Pinch Test” and have participants respond. Have them sing a simple song, with a lowered soft palate, then on your signal, lift their soft palates.
  - Tell them to memorize the feeling, more than memorizing the sound.

# The Vocal Lesson Plan

## Sample Teaching Plan #2, page 2

### 4. Resonance and Imagination

- Describe and demonstrate the “inside smile”. Remind them of the relevance in achieving resonance.
- Have participants sing at least two of the “Exercises That Help the Singer Relax and Resonate” on pages 5 and 6, employing as much as possible the inside smile, raised soft palate, proper posture and breathing. Whew! Be cautious about giving them too much to do at once.
- As time allows, sing a simple tag using the above skills.

## C. SUMMARY

1. Reinforce that breath management depends on good posture.
2. Phonation and resonating ability depend on good breathing technique, using space and air.
3. Remember: letting out your voice is like baring your soul. This is one reason why it feels so incredibly good to sing and why singing has so many proven health benefits.
4. Remind them to bring a friend next week. New people can catch up on the lessons by reading the handouts and asking questions about anything that confuses them.
5. Announce next week’s lesson: **Articulation: Singing Words That Communicate**, with exercises for achieving musical articulation and rhythmic breathing.
6. Tell participants that for additional information go to <http://www.sweetadelineintl.org/education-main.cfm>, Barbershop Basics and/or Betty Clipman’s Vocal Production Series.
7. Thank participants for coming and reinforce the gift they’re giving themselves by participating.

## D. ORIENTATION (Membership opportunities and audition information.)

Planned program presented by membership team and/or various other chorus leaders, accompanied by appropriate handouts.

# The Vocal Lesson Plan

## Vocal Lesson #3

### Articulation: Singing Words That Communicate

Singers are distinguished from other musicians in that their range of artistic expression includes the beauty of language.

Singing words, rather than speaking them, presents special challenges. Vowels are given specific pitch and sustained according to the rhythmic requirements of the music. Although we strive to sing emotionally in the same way we speak, musical expression extends far beyond its spoken or written sounds and meaning.

Everyday speech, particularly among Americans, tends to be quite imprecise, and varies with regional differences, accents, and dialects. As a worldwide organization, no matter which country you live in, Sweet Adelines sing with the same pure American vowel sounds. When speech habits are carried into song, flaws are magnified. Impure vowel sounds and unclear consonants become evident, often making it difficult to understand the words.

Often, when we have become sufficiently familiar with the notes of a song and begin to think more about the words, we concentrate on articulation and our delivery tends to become choppy rather than smooth and connected. Instead of forming consonants quickly and clearly, we overemphasize them. In order to avoid this choppy delivery, we must keep the rich, round, resonant sound, especially for a cappella ensemble singers.

To form words that will be understood, and at the same time communicate a musical message and its emotions, we must remember the principles of resonance, as you learned in Lesson 2.

- an open, relaxed throat
- a rich tone
- pure matched vowels

# The Vocal Lesson Plan

## Achieving An Open Relaxed Jaw and Throat During Articulation

One of the best ways to understand how to achieve an open, relaxed jaw and throat during articulation is to sing an entire song on one open vowel sound, rather than voicing the words. "Oh" is a wonderful vowel sound to use, while thinking of the operatic, cultured production of that vowel and the concept of singing "through" the vowel.

After practicing in this manner, try to keep the same open, relaxed feeling as you add the words of the song, thinking "Oh," but singing the words through the open "Oh" feeling. Ideally, the vocal line will be an almost continuous tone, as it was when you sang the vowel sound only.

***While vowels are the carriers of vocal tone, consonants are the interrupters of it. The sense of the words cannot be communicated and the time and rhythm of the song cannot be accurately conveyed if the consonants are not well articulated.***

In accompanied vocal music there needs to be greater emphasis on consonants so the words are understandable to the audience over the instrumental background. But because a cappella singers perform without accompaniment, there is nothing to sustain the momentum of the sound and the message of the song when a break occurs. In fact, when a cappella singers over-articulate, the consonants stop the tone flow completely and there are "white spaces."

Since consonants shape the tone, the better the quality, intensity and continuity of the tone, the more precisely it can be articulated by accurate consonants. Quick, clear consonants do not "chop up" a singing line, but give it shape and energy.

As much time value as possible should always be given to the vowel, particularly in legato singing. Consonants should receive as little time value as possible, but sufficient strength and energy to project well.

### Some rules of articulation:

- Consonants must be thought on the same pitch as the vowel they precede, to prevent the tonal attack from being scooped or flat.
- Consonants should be articulated distinctly, freely and flexibly, rapidly, and as naturally and plainly as in dramatic speech.
- Articulate the proper sound of each consonant; do not substitute one for another.
- Make vowels long, consonants short. Do not shorten the complete rhythmic length of the vowel by anticipating the ending consonant.

# The Vocal Lesson Plan

## Voiced And Unvoiced Consonants

Voiced	Unvoiced Counterpart	Other Voiced Consonants	Other Unvoiced Consonants
v vine	f fine	l love	h hello
g got	k keep	m mine	wh when
b bit	p pit	n not	th thing
z zip	s sip	r raise	
d dip	t tip	y you	
j jeep	ch cheap		
zh azure	sh rush		
dz leads	ts pizza		
gz eggs	x excite		

## Fundamentals of Vowels, Diphthongs, Dynamics

### Matched Vowels:

The Barbershop style of harmony requires that vowels be "matched." In other words, each chord should sound like one voice with four different notes.

- Vowels that are not matched cause the chord to sound out-of-tune, even if all the correct notes are being sung!
- Leads have the responsibility of setting the vowel sound.
- Harmony parts have the responsibility of matching the Lead vowels.
- When vowels are properly "matched," the barbershop chord will "Ring," i.e. audible overtones will be produced.

# The Vocal Lesson Plan

## Ten Basic Vowel Sounds:

Vowel	Sample Word	Type of Vowel
ee	as in need	Tongue Tongue Tongue Tongue Tongue <i>Lips don't change</i>
ih	as in did	
eh	as in red	
a	as in cat	
ah	as in pot	
uh	as in mud	Tongue Lip Lip Lip Lip <i>Tongue doesn't change</i>
OO	as in soot	
aw	as in lawn	
oh	as in moan	
OO	as in moon	

***It is essential that singers sing the words with long, pure matched vowels and short, clean consonants. This is the basis for excellent diction.***

## Diphthongs:

Diphthongs are a combination of two vowels sounded within a single syllable, with the greatest stress on the first one.

- The first vowel is the important vowel of the diphthong. (80%) The second “vanishing” vowel should be executed quickly and deliberately. (20%)
- Diphthongs are "turned" when going from the first vowel to the second vowel.
- Both vowels must be heard. The first or primary vowel is sustained like a normal vowel. The secondary one is treated like a clear consonant.
- If the diphthong is not "turned," the word changes, i.e. "night" sounds like "not."
- Proper turning of diphthongs is CRITICAL to the balance and unity of barbershop singing.
- Below is a basic four-part harmony warm-up that is good for matching vowels and turning diphthongs. Think of a tall open sound and use the concept of singing “through” each vowel smoothly from one to the next.



# The Vocal Lesson Plan

## The Magic of Vowels and Diphthongs - SATB

Musical score for SATB choir. The score is in 4/4 time and B-flat major. It consists of four staves: Soprano, Alto, Baritone, and Bass. Each staff has a vocal line and the lyrics "Mah Meh Mee Moh Moo" written below it. The notes are: Soprano (G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4), Alto (F4, G4, A4, Bb4, G4), Baritone (Bb3, Ab3, G3, F3, E3), and Bass (G2, F2, E2, D2, C2).

## The Magic of Vowels and Diphthongs

In Barbershop, it looks like this...

Musical score for Tenor Lead and Bari Bass in Barbershop style. The score is in C major and common time. It consists of two staves: Tenor Lead and Bari Bass. The Tenor Lead staff has a vocal line with lyrics "Mah Meh Mee Moh Moo" and a first ending bracket over the final measure. The Bari Bass staff has a bass line with lyrics "Mah Meh Mee Moh Moo".

# The Vocal Lesson Plan

**REPLACE THE VOWELS WITH THE FOLLOWING WORDS: (or make up your own!)**

**I am glad I'm here.**

**AH-ee ....AH-eem....HEE-r**

**I sing very well.**

**AH-ee**

**I sing with my friends**

**AH-ee.....MAH-ee**

**Resonance is mine**

**MAH-een**

**We can match our vowels**

**AH-oor.... VAH-ools**

**We know how to dance**

**KNOOH-oo....HAH-oo**

**I use space and air**

**AH-ee....SPEH-eece**

## The Most Common Diphthongs:

1 <sup>ST</sup> (sustained) Vowel	2 <sup>nd</sup> Vowel	Examples
AH	oo	cow, round, sound
AH	ee	pie, wise, sky, mine, night
OH	ee	boy, joy, toy
EH	ee	day, away, play
OH	oo	blow, go, though
EH	r	hair, there, fair
UH	r	ever, world, girl

## Exercises for Achieving Proper Articulation

### Exercise 1

Tongue Twisters: Sing any of the following sentences on a repeating single note.

- Sneeze, snort, sniff, snuffle, snuff, snuffle, sneer and snicker.
- Ninety-nine nuns in an Indiana nunnery.
- Millions of monks in a Minnesota monastery.
- Lemon liniment, lemon liniment.
- Clunk, junk, skunk, flunk.

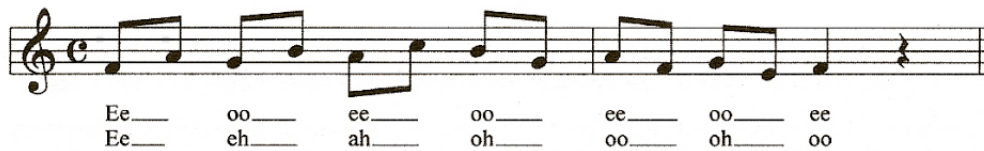
# The Vocal Lesson Plan

## Exercise 2

Sing an entire song on one open "Ohh" vowel sound, rather than voicing the words. After practicing in this manner, try to keep the same open, relaxed feeling as you add the words of the song, thinking "Oh," but singing the words through the open "Oh" feeling. Ideally, the vocal line will be an almost continuous tone, as it was when you sang the vowel sound only.

## Exercise 3

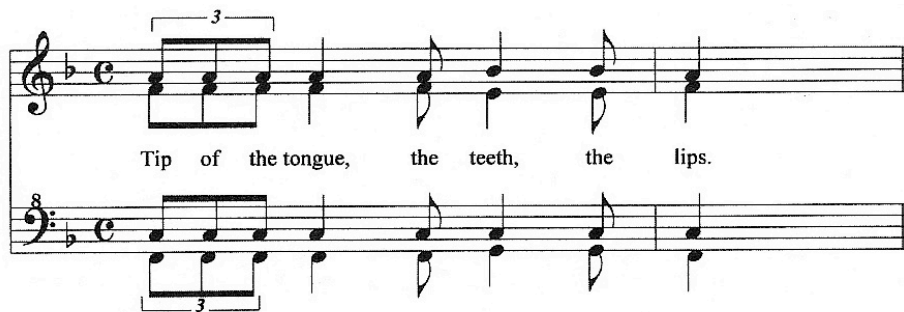
Smile and get the feeling of singing the vowels with the jaw relaxed, the molars apart, the ribs and the sternum high and wide. Memorize that feeling. Two groups of vowels are suggested but you can try some of your own.



Ee\_\_\_ oo\_\_\_ ee\_\_\_ oo\_\_\_ ee\_\_\_ oo\_\_\_ ee  
Ee\_\_\_ eh\_\_\_ ah\_\_\_ oh\_\_\_ oo\_\_\_ oh\_\_\_ oo

## Exercise 4

This exercise reminds you where to place your consonants. Repeat up and down the scale.



Tip of the tongue, the teeth, the lips.

## Exercise 5

A silly exercise good for practicing diphthongs.



Nine new neck-ties and a night-shirt and a nose!

NAH-eeN NOO Neck-TAH-ees & a NAH-eeT Shirt & a NOH-ooS

# The Vocal Lesson Plan

## SAMPLE TEACHING PLAN FOR VOCAL LESSON #3

(To be used by the instructor.)

### A. Introduction

Welcome everyone. Introduce any new participants to the group.

### B. Review

Lead the group through a routine of posture, breathing, phonation and resonance exercises from Lessons 1 and 2.

### C. Articulation

1. Describe articulation for singing, using the ideas presented in Lesson 3, pages 1 and 2. Involve the group by asking them to make the sounds for voiced and unvoiced consonants. (Lesson 3 , Page 2.)
2. Explain the importance of matched vowels. Divide the class into two groups. Have each group demonstrate a matched "OH" vowel using proper singing-posture. Then have each group repeat the exercise but with one or two members of the group singing an unmatched vowel.
3. Sing the Exercise "The Magic of Matching Diphthongs," (Vocal Lesson 3, Page 4) with matched vowels, good singing posture and attention to diphthongs. [Note the differences between the SATB and Barbershop formats.]
4. As time permits, sing any of the tongue twisters and exercises, Vocal Lesson 3, Pages 5 and 6.

### D. Summary

1. Reinforce the idea that singers must sing the words with long, pure matched vowels and short, clean consonants.
2. Resist judging your singing skill. Quiet the little critical voice in the head. It is the "fear" of sounding bad that makes the singer sound tense, off-key and indeed "bad." This has nothing to do with "talent." Once again, life shows us that we are who we believe we are! **We are indeed masters of self-fulfilling prophecies.** The perfectionist operates in the same fashion. The true perfectionist, in contrast to the high achiever, cannot allow herself to do anything that isn't perfect. This fear of being less than "perfect" only allows her to operate on a level far below her true potential.
3. Remind them to bring a friend next week. New people can catch up on the lessons by reading the handouts and asking questions about anything that confuses them.

# The Vocal Lesson Plan

## Sample Teaching Plan for Vocal Lesson #3, Page 2

5. Announce the topics for the next lesson: **Putting it all together. Extending your range. Dynamics, The Barbershop Style.**
6. Tell participants that for additional information go to <http://www.sweetadelineintl.org/education-main.cfm>, Barbershop Basics and/or Betty Clipman's Vocal Production Series.

### C. Orientation - Finances

Planned program presented by membership team and/or various chorus leaders, accompanied by appropriate handouts.

### D. Section Rehearsals (optional)

# The Vocal Lesson Plan

## Vocal Lesson #4

### Putting It All Together

#### Vocal Coordination

By now you're well aware that all of the essential elements of singing are interdependent.

- Breath support is dependent on good posture and muscle tone.
- Developing excellent resonating ability is significantly dependent upon good breathing technique.
- Phonation and articulation skills are effective only when resonance and tone production are good.

**Be Patient with Yourself:** The process of combining these singing skills into a single, coordinated vocal technique will not be completed quickly. It may take many months, or even years, before you begin to feel secure in your total singing technique. You will undoubtedly develop further if you continue to work on your vocal technique. **However**, in the meantime, you can thoroughly enjoy chorus life, using your singing voice while it continues to develop. Keeping the body in gentle motion – not huge movements, but slight, smooth adjustments continuously to PREVENT tensions/rigidities – is an ideal way to avoid tension in all parts of the body. Keep it simple! Don't try to complicate singing – be natural!

Also remember, when we take our minds off of needing to sound good and hit the notes – i.e. the result – we can experience true magic. **And not only has it been proven to be exceptionally effective – it is also fun.**

#### Vocal Interference

Always remember the basic rules:

1. Tension, in any area of the body, takes away from control and always reveals itself in your singing tone.
2. Only *you* can control muscle tension, first by being aware that it exists.
3. Removing muscular interference (tension) involves learning to disengage certain muscles, rather than simply to engage others, usually achieved through conscious relaxation.
4. The most usual areas in which muscular interference can take place include:
  - a. the tongue
  - b. the muscles of the jaw and neck
  - c. and the abdominal muscles
5. Tension you feel in your throat is due in large part to tension in the jaw and the back of the tongue.

# The Vocal Lesson Plan

## Tongue Tension

The tongue is surprisingly large and strong, as you saw in Lesson 1, and tongue tension can negatively affect the success of singing freely, resulting in:

- inconsistency of tone color among vowels
- pitch discrepancies
- the tongue being pulled too far backward and downward, which produces a covered or dark tone and vocal fatigue.

The following exercises may help free tension and allow the necessary tongue relaxation to take place:

Keep the tip of the tongue in its “resting place” – behind the lower teeth just touching the lower gum line. All movement for forming different vowels should come from the middle of the tongue, with the tip remaining in the “resting” place. The tip only comes up to form dental and sibilant consonants (d, t, s, z); otherwise it has no reason to leave its little “bed” behind the lower teeth.

### Exercises:

1. Massage the underside of your chin with your thumbs....that’s your tongue!
2. On a single note, sing the alphabet, keeping the tip of your tongue in its “resting place.”
3. Rest the tip of your tongue on your lower lip. Consciously relax your jaw and tongue. Practice singing some vocal exercises or the notes of a song in this position using the "ah" or the "oh" vowel. Be aware of the extra space at the back of your mouth. Keep the same feeling as you sing normally.

## Jaw and Neck Tension

Tension of the jaw and neck muscles can cause serious disturbances to tone production and undue vocal fatigue. Since so many people carry the tension of the day in their necks and shoulders, extra attention should be given to relaxation exercises for these muscles.

### Exercises:

1. Consciously open, release and relax your jaw. Concentrate on the sensations you feel when these muscles are relaxed. Memorize these sensations so you can recreate them at will.
2. Sing a simple five-note descending and ascending scale with an "idiot jaw."
3. Chewing technique: Practice the motions of chewing in an exaggerated manner and then gradually add random sounds, words, phrases, sentences and conversation while slowly reducing the degree of exaggeration of the mouth movement. This exercise helps to release excess tension in the vocal tract and encourages mouth opening and reduction of tensions in the jaw.

# The Vocal Lesson Plan

## Abdominal Muscles

When you inhale, remember to relax your abdominal muscles. Tense abdominal muscles are a very common result of nervousness during performance. What happens is a vicious cycle: the tense muscles restrict breathing, resulting in inadequate breath for singing; this causes anxiety, which results in more tension; and so on.

The most effective way to avoid tension in the abdominal muscles is to take several deep breaths before beginning to sing and to develop a habit of consciously relaxing these muscles when inhaling.

## Extending Pitch And Dynamic Ranges

As vocal skills develop, your range and dynamic capabilities will tend to increase naturally. Efficient breath management is the most important element for developing a larger range and extending your dynamic abilities.

### Extending pitch range:

Remember: breath support must remain constant at all times and in all parts of your range.

Basic concepts in extending your pitch range are:

#### Upper Range:

- Add more air to the highest tones to help you to reach them.
- Think of a lighter more nasally resonant voice quality when you sing up high.
- Think of the notes going higher and out in front of you, instead of down and back in your throat.
- When you sing higher, add space, air and breath “energy.”
- Think of your neck as widening in order to keep your airway open, and to prevent your larynx from jamming up in your throat. (*See Lesson 1, Illustration #2*)

#### Lower Range:

- Efforts to force more and more air to reach the lowest tones will not succeed.
- Think of a richer, fuller sound when you sing low.
- As you sing low, be sure to keep your chin parallel to the floor.
- Think of the low notes going up and out instead of “down.”

Be aware that you will not be able to hear the timbre of your own tone accurately, and a teacher with a keen ear can be of great help.



# The Vocal Lesson Plan

## Extending Dynamic Range:

In the early stages of dynamic range extension, practice in the most comfortable part of your pitch range, not in the high or low extremes. Be sure your breathing technique is adequate.

## Chorus Dynamic Language:

1 = Very Soft

2 = Soft

3 = Medium

4 = Loud

5 = Very Loud

### Exercise 1

This simple exercise helps to increase your dynamic capabilities for both “louds” and “softs.”

**Fortissimo (loud):** As you strive for greater volume, remember to use the best possible resonance and relaxation, not just breath power, to sing loudly. Work to achieve as much space and amplification as possible in your entire vocal range. Continue to as high a note as is comfortable. Begin with the "oh" vowel, then, repeat with other vowels.



### “LOUD” REMINDERS:

- Singing loudly requires a combination of well-controlled breath energy and effective use of resonance.
- Imagine and feel a great deal of space in all of your resonators; a cathedral shape in the mouth and generous space in the back of the relaxed tongue.
- Maintain strong support from the abdominal and back muscles.
- Sense an open, relaxed throat.
- Think of a free, humming sensation in the nasal cavities.
- Never drive the voice - achieve your loudest singing through generous size of the tone, not by brute force. It's not how “loud” you sing; it's how you sing “loud!”

# The Vocal Lesson Plan

**Pianissimo (soft):** Use the same exercise, but reverse the dynamics. The highest pitch of each scale is the softest note. Continue to as high a note as comfortable, then repeat with other vowels.

## Exercise 2

Sing controlled and soft in this exercise. Each time it is repeated, cut your volume in half.



Musical notation for Exercise 2, a vocal exercise in C major. The exercise is written for a single voice part on a treble clef staff. It begins with a common time signature (C) and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody consists of an ascending scale from C4 to G4, followed by a descending scale from G4 to C4. The lyrics "Lee Loo" are placed under the notes, with the first "Lee Loo" under the C4 and D4 notes, and the second "Lee Loo" under the G4 note. The exercise is repeated twice, with the second time being softer.

## “SOFT” REMINDERS:

- Singing softly requires consistent breath management and relaxed tongue and jaw.
- Think of keeping the ribs expanded while singing the soft tones.
- Produce your softest tones by thinking about a light quality with a bright, forward focus.
- Imagine the sensation of a "hum" in the tone.

## Exercises For Improving Vocal Coordination

### Exercise 3

The purpose of this exercise is to help eliminate muscular interference of the tongue. The jaw should be relaxed with very little or no movement. Your tongue should move freely forward and back. Continue to as high a note as comfortable, then repeat with other vowels and gradually increase tempo.



Musical notation for Exercise 3, a vocal exercise in 2/4 time. The exercise is written for a single voice part on a treble clef staff. It begins with a 2/4 time signature and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody consists of a series of eighth notes, starting on C4 and ascending to G4, then descending back to C4. The lyrics "Ya ya" are placed under the notes, with the first "Ya ya" under the C4 and D4 notes, and the second "Ya ya" under the G4 note. The exercise is repeated three times, with the tempo increasing gradually.

# The Vocal Lesson Plan

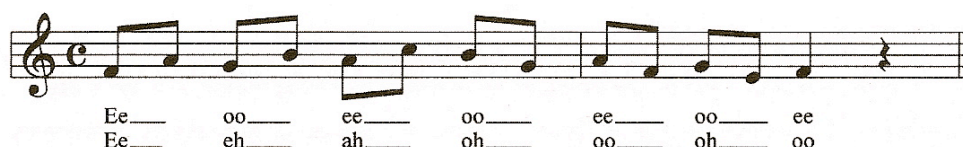
## Exercise 4

This basic exercise will help extend your higher range. Remember to think of your tone production as high, light, and forward in the mask. Use all vowels, especially "ee" and "oo." Use a slight crescendo on the highest note of each scale. Continue to as high a note as comfortable:



## Exercise 5

Use this exercise to extend your lower range. Remember to think of a fuller and relaxed approach as you descend in pitch, but never force your voice. Repeat by lower half steps, using all the vowels, to your lowest comfortable note.

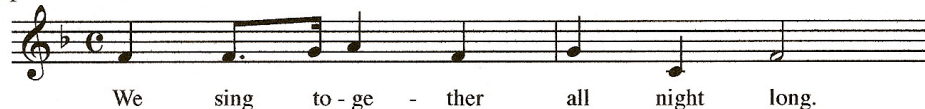


## Exercise 6

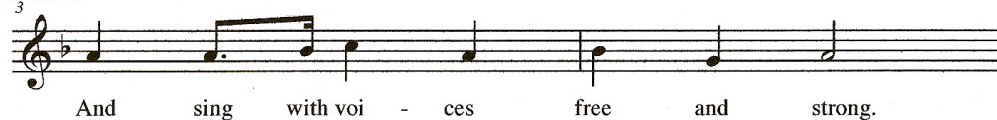
The purpose of this exercise is to practice the smooth legato style. In spite of the intentionally awkward intervals in this exercise, make your moves from note to note accurate, smooth, graceful and connected. Continue ascending by half steps. Begin with "ee" vowel, then repeat with other vowels.

## We Sing Together

### PART 1



### PART 2



### PART 3



# The Vocal Lesson Plan

## Fundamentals of Barbershop

The barbershop style is four-part a cappella harmony. In both male and female barbershop choruses and quartets, the four parts are lead, bass, baritone and tenor. Barbershop harmony is a combination of several characteristics unique to the style, such as chord structure (arrangement), the cone-shaped sound, delivery (vocal energy) and interpretation. These are integral factors, which contribute to the "lock-and-ring" characteristic of singing in the barbershop style.

## Barbershop Arrangements

Barbershop harmony makes frequent use of the major and minor triads, the dominant seventh and dominant ninth chords. The melody is carried primarily by the lead voice, while the highest voice sings a harmony part. The lowest voice sings a strong chord component and no chord tone is omitted throughout the arrangement. Non-harmonic tones, passing tones and non-chords are outside the scope of barbershop harmony.

## Energized Vocal Line

Energy is an intangible quality-it's something we can sense and feel, but it is difficult to describe. An above-average barbershop performance has a sound possessing energy. A significant amount of that energy is derived from proper breath support, but a certain amount can also be attributed to a positive, confident mental attitude and to the quality of "life" imparted to the voice by a lifted facial countenance and singer's posture.

To convey the essence of the barbershop performance to the listener, singers must:

1. Permit breath to be managed in such a way that the vocal line demonstrates vitality and life.
2. Put "heart" into your voice, using it artistically to convey sincere feeling for the message of the song. Without heart, emotion and energy, a mechanically perfect performance can be achieved but there will be no aesthetic beauty and no thrill for either the audience or the musician.

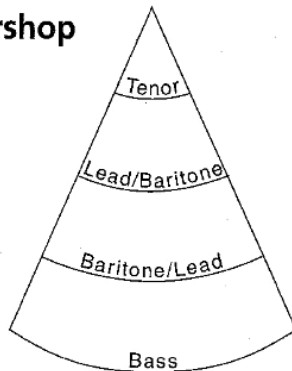
## Balance

Barbershop chords have different balance requirements than SATB chords. In SATB chords, all parts are given the same vocal intensity and weight. In barbershop, the **bass** is the foundation of the chord and sings with great depth; the **lead** and **baritone** have less depth and more clarity; and the **tenor** sings with a light quality and with great clarity on top of the chord (similar to snow on the mountain peak). This unique balance is called coning.

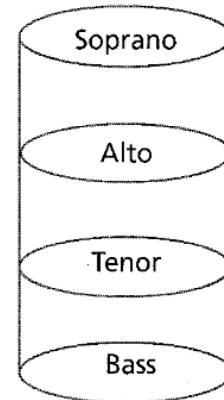
# The Vocal Lesson Plan

Below are examples of the proper balance of a barbershop chord and SATB chord:

**Barbershop**



**SATB**



When the **baritone** sings below the **lead**, she needs to sing with a richer, broader tone more like a **bass**, and the **lead** needs to sing with a clear confident tone. When the **baritone** sings above the **lead**, she needs to lighten her tone, and the **lead** needs to sing with a broader, and still confident tone. **Basses** and **tenors** also need to learn to cone as they go into either the higher or lower parts of their ranges. If a chord is out-of-balance, one (or more) of the parts is not properly "coning."

## Steps in the Barbershop Style

1. Perform music arranged in the barbershop style as defined in the Judging Category Description Booklet.
2. Sing all the right notes and words, together!
3. Sing all the notes in tune.
4. Sing with correct vocal techniques and proper barbershop balance (coning).
5. Pronounce words, primarily vowels, in the same way, together!
6. Develop a barbershop style through phrasing and interpretation.
7. Develop suitable dynamics (shading, nuances, word stress).
8. Sing the lyrics expressively - using consonants to add artistic inflection and finesse together!
9. Enhance the music by executing the visual presentation as a unit, together!
10. Remember, every member of a barbershop chorus is a valued and vital ingredient to the total performance, vocally and visually.

# The Vocal Lesson Plan

## AND FINALLY...

Excerpts from an article "**Reasons for Studying Singing**" by Van A. Cristy William C. Brown Company Publishers:

*"In a world of political, economic and personal chaos, music is not a luxury but a necessity, not simply because it is the "universal language," but because it is the persistent focus of man's intelligence, aspiration and good will. Music is an excellent insurance for any young person."*

*"No student ever wastes her time in a voice culture class, even though she never becomes a soloist. She is sure to carry away with her a stronger, more serviceable body as a result of her serious study of singing, for the physical requirements necessary for good tone production are conducive to good health. The student is taught correct posture, abdominal development, chest development, and breath control."*

*"Singing fortifies health, widens culture, refines the intelligence, enriches the imagination makes for happiness and endows life with an added zest."*

## ...from the Memoirs of Julie Andrews ....

"Once in a while I experience an emotion onstage that is so gut-wrenching, so heart-stopping, that I could weep with gratitude and joy. The feeling catches and magnifies so rapidly that it threatens to engulf me.

It starts as a bass note, resonating deep in my system. Literally. It's like the warmest, lowest sound from a contrabass. There is a sudden thrill of connection and an awareness of size — the theater itself, more the height of the great stage housing behind and above me, where history has been absorbed, where darkness contains mystery and light has meaning.

Light is a part of it ... to be flooded with it, to absorb it and allow it through the body.

The dust that has a smell so thick and evocative, one feels one could almost eat it; makeup and sweat, perfume and paint; the vast animal that is an audience, warm and pulsing, felt but unseen.

Most of all, it is the music — when a great sweep of sound makes you attempt things that earlier in the day you might never have thought possible. When the orchestra swells to support your voice, when the melody is perfect and the words so right there could not possibly be any others, when a modulation occurs and lifts you to an even higher plateau... it is bliss. And that is the moment to share it."

**THANK YOU FOR ALLOWING US TO SHARE WITH YOU THE JOY OF SWEET ADELINES!**

# The Vocal Lesson Plan

## Sample Teaching Plan For Vocal Lesson #4 (To be used by the instructor.)

### A. Introduction

1. Welcome everyone.
2. Extend an invitation to audition and encourage questions about the audition process.

### B. Coordination

1. Reinforce the following ideas:
  - All the essential elements of singing are inter-related.
  - Developing your singing voice takes time. However, in the meantime, you can thoroughly enjoy using your singing voice while it continues to develop.
2. Lead the group in relaxation exercises. (Lesson #4, pages 2 and 3.)

### C. Extending Pitch And Dynamic Range

1. Present the ideas about pitch extension and dynamic range as described in Lesson #4, pages 2 and 3. . Ask the group to stand and do Exercise #1 for extending the upper range. (Lesson #4, page 3.)
2. Sing Exercise # 2 on Page 4 to demonstrate singing controlled softs.
3. Lead the group in some exercises for extending dynamic range and improving vocal coordination: (Lesson 4, Exercises #3, #4, #5, pages 4 and 5.)
4. Sing the legato style "We Sing Together" round, first in unison, and then separate into three divisions, depending on the number of guests available. You could fill in the round parts with members of your chorus. (Lesson #4, Exercise #6 on page 5.)

### D. Fundamentals Of Barbershop

1. Briefly describe the elements of the barbershop style. Use the illustration of the barbershop "cone", Lesson #4, page 6.
2. Sing a tag or practice the new piece of music to illustrate the barbershop style.

### E. Conclusion

End the series of lessons by reading the quotations: *Reasons for Studying Singing* by Van A. Cristy and the excerpt from the *Memoirs of Julie Andrews*.

# The Vocal Lesson Plan

## Sample Teaching Plan for Vocal Lesson #4, Page 2

### F. Orientation

1. Planned program presented by membership team and/or various chorus leaders, accompanied by appropriate handouts.
2. Costumes/Makeup
3. Choreography Basics

### G. Graduation - WEEK 5

Provide an opportunity for the class to sing for the rest of the chorus, as you all celebrate the new membership together.



# The Vocal Lesson Plan

## Miscellaneous

### Sample Director's Welcome Letter

#### *Chorus Logo*

Welcome to a new and exciting musical experience...and congratulations for choosing to do something special just for you! We are so glad you have come to visit us and hope you will want to make the \_\_\_\_\_ Chorus a part of your life. Love of singing is what has brought us all together, but musical excellence and high achievement are what keep us fulfilled...no matter what our musical backgrounds may be. And since we have come from diverse experience levels and all walks of life, there are also lots of friends to be made and fun to be had.

Over the next few weeks, you will be learning a variety of vocal production skills that are so important and necessary for vocal excellence of every kind. This kind of training goes on throughout our chorus life and is part of every rehearsal all year long. You will learn a lot about our chorus and Sweet Adeline's International, the world's largest singing organization for women. Besides participating in great four-part harmony, you'll hear about the operation of our chorus, the costs involved in membership, the opportunities for leadership growth, and, of course, performances that can include you!

At first, our enthusiasm and energy may seem a little overwhelming to you. We love what we do and are anxious to share this wonderful musical hobby with you. Remember, each of us was a brand new guest once and so we do understand how you feel and we're here to help you feel comfortable and experience the joy.

We hope you'll recognize that the \_\_\_\_\_ Chorus enthusiastically shares friendship, personal growth and harmony, as well as strong music education. We work hard and we play hard...and have a terrific time doing it. Most importantly, we have a place on our risers just for you! I'm looking forward to seeing you next week and invite you to BRING A FRIEND to share this wonderful experience.

In Harmony,

**(DIRECTOR: HAND-SIGN EACH OF THESE!)**

\_\_\_\_\_, Director  
\_\_\_\_\_, Chorus

**(email address)**  
(phone number)

# The Vocal Lesson Plan

## NEW MEMBER TERMINOLOGY

### **Afterglow**

Cast party after a show or performance.

### **All-in-One**

A one-piece undergarment sometimes worn under our costumes.

### **“Break a Leg!”**

Said to wish someone “Good Luck” in a performance.

### **Bubbling (or trilling)**

A vocal exercise used to relax the lips, jaw, and throat, to open resonators, and to produce a resonant sound.

### **Chest voice (or chest register)**

Singing using the lower range of the voice.

### **Chorus breathing**

Taking a quick breath in other than a planned breathing place so as not to run out of air at the end of the phrase. Chorus breathing is done by leaving out a word or syllable, or breathing while holding the vowel of a word. It is NOT done between words (which causes phrases to be out-of-sync.)

### **Coning**

The art of adjusting the sound to maintain the proper balance of a barbershop chord.

### **Diphthong**

Two vowel sounds sung on one note, with greatest stress on the first vowel. For example, the vowel in “day” is actually a long “A” followed by “ee”.

### **Double**

Two parts on the same note – sometimes incorrect when one part is singing a wrong note that’s the same note sung by another part. Or sometimes correct when it’s the same note sung an octave apart.

### **Downstage**

Toward the front of the stage (nearest to the audience).

### **Dynamic contrast**

Planned volume changes to enhance the performance of a song.

### **Fanny rails**

The railings attached to the top row of the risers.

# The Vocal Lesson Plan

## New Member Terminology, continued

### **Forward motion**

Sense of lyrical flow, with vocal line movement toward something in anticipation, especially in a ballad.

### **Hang ten** (or "toe-ing the risers")

Standing forward to the front edge of the risers.

### **Head voice** (or Head register)

Singing using the upper range of the voice.

### **Inside Smile**

Lifting of the soft palate, with a twinkle in your eye.

### **Interval**

The distance between two notes.

### **Intro.** (or the Edge)

The beginning of the song.

### **Key**

Letter name of the note on the scale in which a song is written. This note is blown on the pitch pipe.

### **Lifted phrase ending**

To have enough air at the end of the phrase to keep the tone fully supported and energized so as to not let the phrase just die out. To sing all phrases as if they were a question.

### **Mask**

The facial muscles under the eyes into the temple, around the nose, in the lip area, and from the temples down to the chin.

### **Octave**

An interval of an 8th, with the lower and upper notes having the same letter name.

### **“Off Paper”**

Being able to sing your part without using the sheet music.

### **Onion skins**

The small tuning adjustments needed for locking a chord.

### **Overtone**

Unsung tone heard above the highest tone of a properly balance and matched chord.

# The Vocal Lesson Plan

## New Member Terminology, continued

### Physical warm-ups

Warming up the body to provide a suitable environment for the singing mechanism to operate.

### Pick-up

Beginning of a phrase sung by only one voice.

### Pitch pipe

The musical instrument used to help singers begin in the same key. It may be round and be manually blown by someone on the risers, or sometimes electronic pipes are used. *The Pitch Pipe* is also the name of the quarterly magazine published by Sweet Adelines International.

### Progression

A sequence of chords.

### Quartet Etiquette

Displaying courtesy by not singing along with a foursome that is singing – unless you are asked to join in.

### Queens of Harmony

The name given to International quartet champions.

### Resonators

Any of the cavities or parts of the vocal tract that serve to reinforce and enrich the phonated tones of the singing voice.

### Ringling chords

When a barbershop chord is perfectly balanced and in tune, overtones are produced and an exciting “ringing” sound results.

### Ripple (or wave)

A choreo. move that starts on one side of the risers and travels to the other side (and sometimes back again).

### Soft palate

The soft, squishy area on the roof of your mouth near the back (behind the hard palate).

### Swipe

Two or more chords used to embellish a melody note, sung on one word or syllable.

### Tag

The section at the end of the song that has been added by the arranger to give a sense of completeness.

# The Vocal Lesson Plan

## New Member Terminology, continued

### **Tuning**

Refers to the ability to sing both “in key” and “on pitch.”

### **Unison**

Two or more parts singing the same note.

### **Vibrato**

A wavering in the vocal tone that keeps chords from locking and ringing.

### **Vocal warm-ups**

Getting the voice ready to sing, and our ears listening to each other.

### **Woodshedding**

The art of singing barbershop harmony “by ear” without a written musical arrangement.

# The Vocal Lesson Plan

## SWEET ADELINES INTERNATIONAL Four-Week Vocal Lessons

### *INTRODUCTION FOR INSTRUCTORS*

#### **The Vocal Lessons:**

The lessons are presented to the guests during the first hour of rehearsal in a classroom separate from the existing chorus. Appropriate handouts are distributed each week. Instruction from the director or his/her appointee lasts 45 minutes. The remaining 15 minutes of the session are spent with the membership team and various chorus leaders who deliver a planned orientation program, always accompanied by appropriate handouts.

The lesson plans are designed to present three crucial areas important to singing well: a fully supported sound, a freely produced sound and a fully resonant sound. Each lesson must incorporate vocal exercises.

#### **Lesson Plans For Instructors:**

Each vocal lesson is accompanied by a suggested teaching plan for instructors. Feel free to be creative but be sure to include many of the physical and vocal exercises within each lesson. You may wish to make overhead transparencies of some of the illustrations to facilitate ease of instruction.

#### **Section Rehearsals:**

If the guests will be learning a new piece of music, you may wish to schedule section rehearsals with the entire chorus to immediately follow each week's vocal lesson. Section rehearsals provide a non-threatening atmosphere for beginners to learn music. They also provide an opportunity for the section to bond with the newcomers.

#### **Graduation:**

Design a celebration to fit your chorus. Consider a performance for family and friends, a performance by the "Class of 200-," special certificates, or a full-scale graduation with "pomp and circumstance," mortarboards, refreshments etc.

# The Vocal Lesson Plan

Four-Week Vocal Lessons, Page 2

## WEEKLY PLAN

Week 1: Posture and Breathing: The Basis for All Good Singing / Breath: The Fuel for Singing

Week 2: Phonation: Creating The Sounds of Music Resonation: Creating Good Vocal Vibes; The "Inside Smile"

Week 3: Articulation: Creating Words That Communicate; Fundamentals of Vowels, Diphthongs, Consonants And Dynamics

Week 4: Coordination, Range, Dynamics/Fundamentals of the Barbershop Style

Week 5: Graduation

## The Vocal Lesson Plan

Sample Lesson Overview and Schedule			
Week	Lesson Topic	Orientation Topic	Suggested Materials
Week 1	Posture/Breathing	Introduction to Chorus Life	-Welcome Letter -Lesson #1 Handout -Music -Learning CD of Audition Song - <i>Let's Get Acquainted</i> Brochure
Week 2	Phonation Resonation	Membership Auditions	-Lesson #2 Handout -Audition Process - <i>Singing Barbershop Harmony</i> Brochure
Week 3	Articulation Vowels/Diphthongs	Finances	-Lesson #3 Handout -Financial Information Sheet - <i>I've Got Barbershop</i> Brochure
Week 4	Coordination/Range/Dynamics Fundamentals of Barbershop	Costumes/Makeup Choreography Basics	-Lesson #4 Hand outs -Costume Information/Makeup Basics -Basic Movement Sheet
Week 5	Graduation	Celebrate!!!	<b>Certificate of Completion</b>

# The Vocal Lesson Plan

## Four-Week Vocal Lessons, Page 3

All choruses are encouraged to institute a follow-up “Rookie Program” for the continued education and comfort of the new members.

### Talking Points for Inviting Guests to a Membership Night

- How long has it been since you did something just for yourself?
- Would you like more music in your life?
- Do you miss singing?
- Even though this is a large group, the learning is very individual. We really do help each person grow to be the best they can be.
- You’ll find great singing, outstanding teachers and lots of wonderful new friends.
- Every week you’ll go home happier than when you came.

### It Takes That Personal Touch

- Personalize your e-mail flyers with a short note from you. Ex: “You’re going love this!” “You really need to give this a try. It’s a blast!”
- Make multiple contacts to the same people – keep encouraging them! Ex: A second or third e-mail and a follow up personal call after your e-mail. Give EVERYONE a chance! Let them make their own choices. **Don’t decide for them** that:
  - they’re too busy;
  - too tired;
  - don’t have enough money;
  - can’t sing, etc.
- Offer them a ride
- Tell them why YOU love our chorus!