



LAKE ONTARIO REGION 16

JUNE 2016 QUARTET WORKSHOP

CLASS TITLE: *Make Money Doing What We Do Best: SINGING!*
FACILITATOR: Sue Melvin
DESCRIPTION: How to get more gigs, increase community awareness, break into the lucrative Singing Telegram business, get the Internet to work for you, get marketing ideas, *and more!*

PRE-REQUISITES TO PUBLIC PERFORMANCE

- 1) Sing well
- 2) Look good
- 3) Be professional

GETTING STARTING WITH SOME FREEBIES

Gratis performances are great exposure, good experience for your foursome, and can evolve into paid call-backs and word-of-mouth referrals!

1. **Busk:** Go with what you know in your town and you know where the people are! Before you have a following, you need to get that following. For example, go to farmer's markets, go to open air festivals, go to places where people are gathering: BUSK! Put a sign out (VistaPrint \$19.99 with a Groupon!) and a tip bucket. Hand out business cards, etc. (Better yet, bring someone else to hand out cards while you're singing – A child is especially hard for passers-by to refuse!)
2. **Play some parties** – Friends' summer barbecues, anniversary and birthday parties, etc. Get the word out by doing some 15-20 minute performances.
3. **Sporting events** – For example, summer baseball games - They're often looking for people to do the national anthem, perform before the 7th inning stretch, perform before the game, etc. Sometimes these games are broadcast by cable stations or your clip ends up on Facebook or the local news.
4. **Get into the media** –
 - The low-budget local cable TV stations are often looking for different programming to air.
 - Morning radio shows (learn their jingle or set the call letters to music/tag you know.)
5. **Coffee Houses** – They're often booking gratis entertainment in exchange for exposure. Check their websites and speak with the manager.
6. **High Schools and Middle Schools** – Offer to do an assembly on *a capella* singing...They are often looking for musical opportunities with an educational component. Do a demo by parts (pick something easy that they can sing along with you), choose performance songs that are easy and more modern. Make sure it's inter-active and allow for questions. Many schools also have a budget for assembly programs.
7. **Restaurants** – Yes, sing in the restaurant when you're there together having a meal, BUT keep it brief (e.g. 1 short song like "Feelin' Groovy" or 1 verse of "Can You Feel the Love Tonight.") Remember the old adage of "Leave 'em wanting more" and do not assume that everyone in the dining room wants to be serenaded all night just because *you* like to sing.
8. **Large Charity events** – Help your chorus out by doing large women's events (local women's networking events, Breast Cancer Walks, Gilda's Club events, etc.) Women's organizations are more likely to support OUR women's organization. These events often get media coverage, and there are many opportunities to pass out cards.
9. **Gift Certificates** – Donate to a singing telegram gift certificate to a silent auction, public television station fundraising drive, etc.
10. **Open Air Festivals** – Offer to stroll around Dapper-Dan style singing for the crowd informally. (Again, bring someone with you to pass out cards while you're singing.)
11. **Christmas time** – Research the area winter and holiday festivals and offer to stroll around singing carols.



LAKE ONTARIO REGION 16

JUNE 2016 QUARTET WORKSHOP

MARKETING/PR

- **Business cards:**
 - Colorful
 - Not too busy – KIS (Keep it simple) For example, no need for quartet member names, www. prefixes for your website address, etc.
 - Consider a different card shape so the card is more likely to be kept in a wallet or purse (vs. thrown away like most business cards.)
 - ‘It only takes a nickel more to go first class’ – If it’s \$20 more for a classy, memorable business card it’s well worth it.
 - Most importantly, have the cards handy always! The more cards you distribute, the more chance you have of getting ‘takers.’
- **Social Media** – Use as many social media vehicles as you can (*Instagram, Twitter, etc.*), but create a quartet *Facebook* page at minimum. And don’t be afraid to ask your *Facebook* friends to share your post(s) about an upcoming performance(s.)
- **Website** – You don’t have to be fancy or spend a lot of money for a quartet website. *Weebly* is an easy, affordable option.
- **Testimonials** – Get testimonials/quotes from happy customers and fans to put on your website. This attracts future customers.
- **Photos** – Plan ahead and bring a camera man. Post still photos, or a short video clip of a successful singing telegram, on your *Facebook* page and/or website. Of course first ask permission to post/use.
- **Search Engine Optimization (SEO)** – Ensure key words are on your website Home Page so your quartet name comes up when people do internet searches. For example: “Singing Telegrams, Rochester, NY” You may do singing telegrams, but unless these 2 works are on your Home Page, the search engines will not pick it up.
- **Video Promo** – Consider getting a Film Studies student to do a free or minimal cost promotional video for you. Keep it short and professional, but interesting and fun. Post the video clip on your website, *Facebook* page, etc.
- **Marketing List** – Get organized and make a list of potential clients: Assisted Living facilities, Banquet venues, entertainment agencies, Coffee Houses, Country Clubs, Fraternal Organizations, etc. See sample spreadsheet (9 worksheet tabs):
[http://www.saregion16.com/db_uploads/Quartet_Marketing_Spreadsheet - 9 tabs.xls](http://www.saregion16.com/db_uploads/Quartet_Marketing_Spreadsheet_-_9_tabs.xls)
- **Marketing Letter** – Send a letter to the local Assisted Living facilities advertising your availability for performances. Include a business card with the letter. See sample here:
[http://www.saregion16.com/db_uploads/Quartet_Marketing_Letter - Sample.doc](http://www.saregion16.com/db_uploads/Quartet_Marketing_Letter_-_Sample.doc)
- **Phone Calls** – Letters are no good without verbal follow-up! Activity Director turn-over is high, so you need to keep calling. Don’t assume they will remember to call you. With or without a marketing letter, phone calls directly to the contact are a great way of getting performances. Be concise, be convincing, be prepared to give them the benefits of having you perform, and know what to say to close-the-deal.
- **Plug Yourself In Gigs** – Say something *brief* at the end like, “Thank you for having us this evening. We are a non-profit organization and donations from performances such as this one greatly help our cause. If you enjoyed our performance tonight, please tell your Activity Director. We would be delighted to entertain you again in the future.”
- **Press Releases** – Does your quartet have something to celebrate? For example, did you receive an award at contest? Or can you piggy back on your chorus’ accomplishments by asking them to include your quartet in the Press Release? This is a good way to get your name out there.
- **Other Choruses** – Another good way to get referrals is by maintaining a good working relationship with your local men’s barbershop chorus and other local singing groups.



LAKE ONTARIO REGION 16

JUNE 2016 QUARTET WORKSHOP

SINGING TELEGRAMS

Why limit ourselves to once-a-year Singing Valentines? Create a year 'round Singing Telegram business!

GENERAL

- Customers often want the telegram to be delivered soon. Make sure the person taking the calls or emails is someone who checks her email regularly and/or is available to turn the request around quickly.
- Make it known to potential clients that singing telegrams are available for *all* occasions (for example, anniversaries, birthdays, retirements, and not just for a love-interest; i.e. singing telegrams are great for children, parents, colleagues, etc.)

OFFERINGS

- Giving the recipient a silk rose works well because they are inexpensive, the stems don't break in cold weather or in transit, and the recipient can keep them as a keepsake.
- Include the purchaser's personalized message on the recipient on the back of your quartet business card and tie the card to the rose with some pretty ribbon. In this way, your card will be kept for future reference along with the rose keepsake!
- Take a selfie of the quartet with the recipient (or have someone else take the photo) and email it to the Purchaser. You can use the photo on your quartet *Facebook* page or website (with permission of course) and it's a lovely way for both parties to remember this special moment.
- 2 songs are plenty - For example, *Happy Birthday* and *Can You Feel the Love Tonight*. (See below.)

SONGS

Find some **short** songs that are good for singing telegrams. Long songs don't work! Have the arranger, your chorus director or someone knowledgeable help you shorten a song for telegram purposes. Some song ideas are:

- Generic Songs (for a non-live interest telegram recipient)
 - *Can You Feel the Love Tonight* (1 verse) – This is a good It's harder to find generic songs that don't necessarily involve a love interest – and we need these)
 - *Beautiful Baby* (Short version with *one* Chorus)
 - *Happy Birthday*
 - *Happy Anniversary* (sung to the tune of *Happy Birthday*)
- Love Interest
 - *Unforgettable*
 - *Cuddle up a Little Closer*
 - *L-O-V-E* (1 chorus of the song)

HOW MUCH SHOULD WE CHARGE?

- The prices you set and feel comfortable with will depend upon your town/city and the cost-of-living in your area. People in a large metropolitan area will expect to pay more than those in a smaller, rural community.
- Benchmark similar celebration-type gifts in your area. I.e. when you consider how much people traditionally pay for a dozen long-stemmed roses delivered, a 4-piece band (\$400-\$700 per hour), dinner and drinks out at a nice restaurant, theater tickets, singing telegrams from a company who delivers them in a gorilla suit, etc. it's not unreasonable for our Singing Telegrams and performances to be priced in a similar manner.



LAKE ONTARIO REGION 16

JUNE 2016 QUARTET WORKSHOP

HOW MUCH SHOULD WE CHARGE? (cont.)

- For 30-45 minute performances, ask what the customer what their budget is... They may have *more* in their budget than what you were going to ask for!
- Be a good salesperson by emphasizing the fact your performances include 4 singers dressed alike, singing in 4-part a cappella harmony, include audience participation and interesting emcee material.
- Make sure you can deliver on what you promise, but don't sell yourself short.
- For telegrams, consider offering "Ringing Telegrams" by phone for those who wish to deliver something special to someone out of town (or who are unwilling to pay the in-person price).

PLAN AHEAD / BE ORGANIZED

- As with any performance, make sure you get *all* the details and clearly communicate them in writing to your quartet, as well as confirm back in writing to the client. Communication problems can spoil the gift. Sample Singing Telegram/Singing Valentine info sheet here: http://www.saregion16.com/db_uploads/Singing_Telegram_Order_Form_-_SAMPLE.doc
- Know what you're going to sing before you walk in.
- No fire drills on the quartet standing positions; i.e. know who's leading on and where you will be standing to you don't look disorganized.
- Decide in advance who blows pitch, who presents the flower (in the case of a singing telegram), who speaks, etc.
- Get the money when the order is placed/in advance! COD is risky (they might not pay), and also makes it somewhat uncomfortable for the Purchaser to be paying you in front of the Recipient.

AFTER THE GIG

Send Thank You notes after your paid performances:

- The advantage of hard copy notes is the ability to include a business card OR
- Send an eCard. PunchBowl.com is a nice-looking, free eCard service OR
- Send a 'Thank You' email, and ask them to keep you in mind for the future. Make sure to include your phone number.
- Discuss briefly as a quartet what you did well and/or what improvements you could make next time.

HAPPY PERFORMING!

Please feel free to contact me with any questions at susiesings4u@yahoo.com or (585) 259-3094