

Chapter Evaluation

Does the Chorus Director have a contract? Yes _____ No _____

Does the chapter have assistant directors? If so, how are they used, and how often are they in front of the chorus? _____

Does the chapter have section leaders? What is their function? _____

Does the chapter have a music chairman and/or music team? If so what are their responsibilities? How often do they meet? _____

How is attendance at meetings, and is anything done to encourage good attendance? _____

Relationship between the music team and the board: _____

How often does the chapter produce chapter shows, and what is the format? _____

How often does the chapter do other performances? _____

Does the chapter compete? _____

What is the chapter's competition philosophy? _____

How is communication in the chapter? _____

Does the chapter have membership drives? _____

Does the chapter have auditions? _____

Does the chapter have new member orientation sessions? _____

Are the members genuinely interested in improving musically? _____

Does the chapter do warm-ups and craft sessions? _____

Does the chapter have section rehearsals? How often? What is the goal? _____

In a typical rehearsal, how much time is spent standing to sing? _____

How often does the chapter learn new music? _____

Does the chapter bring in coaches? How often? _____

The three things I appreciate most about my chapter are: _____

The three things I would change about my chapter are: _____

Self Evaluation

How often do I go to schools or workshops to hone my skills as a teacher and/or conductor? _____

How often do I listen to recordings of barbershop choruses? Other types of choruses? _____

How often do I observe other conductors? _____

How many resources (books, videos, etc.) do I own? _____

My right-hand person is: _____

When I need moral support I can always call (can be same as above; can be people inside or outside the chapter): _____

When I need expert musical advice I can call: _____

On a scale of 1 (weakest) to 5 (strongest), assess your abilities in the following areas:

As a Leader _____ Strengths _____

Weaknesses _____

As a Teacher _____ Strengths _____

Weaknesses _____

As a Conductor _____ Strengths _____

Weaknesses _____

As a Musician _____ Strengths _____

Weaknesses _____

As a Communicator _____ Strengths _____

Weaknesses _____

As a Planner _____ Strengths _____

Weaknesses _____

As a Learner _____ Strengths _____

Weaknesses _____

As a Risk Taker _____ Strengths _____

Weaknesses _____

Other thoughts: _____

HABITS OF SUCCESSFUL CHORUS DIRECTORS

I. Leadership

A. Philosophy

1. What is your vision? What kind of chorus do you want to direct?
2. Will the majority of the chorus go along with it?
3. Do you have in place or can you develop leaders to help realize your vision?
4. ALWAYS be positive, passionate, inspirational, and infectiously enthusiastic.
5. Remember that you and your singers are on the same team. Always let them know that though your jobs are different, you are all equally important to the success of the chapter.
6. Enjoy the PROCESS. Have your eye on the vision and keep moving in that direction, but don't get discouraged or bitter if it isn't coming quickly enough for you. At the same time, never stop pushing.
7. Never demand more of your singers and support team than you demand of yourself.
8. Know and care about your singers personally. Develop a brotherhood that surpasses music.

B. Administration

1. What are your short- and long-range goals? Are they appropriate to your chorus?
2. Communicate
 - a) With your board: What are your performance goals and desires?
 - b) With your music team:
 - (1) What do you want them to do?
 - (2) What do you want them to listen for?
 - (3) Communicate with them in advance so they have time to prepare.
 - (4) Ask them what they think should be addressed.
 - (5) Ask them what the biggest areas of concern are for them.
 - c) With your chorus
 - (1) Give them a rehearsal plan in advance so they can prepare.
 - (2) Continually communicate your vision to them.
 - (3) Give them a song list for performances well in advance.
3. Membership Drives: Be sure that some time is spent in normal rehearsal mode (with the guests on the risers with you) so that they can experience what you do every week.

C. Self Preservation

1. You cannot be all things to all people. Don't be completely without empathy, but don't compromise your vision either.
2. Find at least one true-blue confidant, supporter, advisor, etc.
3. Delegate. Use your team.
4. Have a renewable contract, even if you're not getting paid. It should include the chapter's expectations of you, but also a list of responsibilities of the administrative leadership and the general membership.
5. Request (strongly) that your chapter subsidize your attendance at schools and conventions.
6. Establish a chapter hierarchy in which suggestions, comments, or complaints should be brought to the President and/or Music Chair who in turn will bring them to you if they deem the point valid.
7. Establish a rule that nobody can say anything negative to you before rehearsal.

II. Musical Growth

A. Teaching

1. IMPROVE! Quality breeds quantity and ensures a future.
2. "Hard work is fun when improvement is evident" (Jim Clancy)
3. Make use of the expertise in your chapter.
 - a) Assistant Directors
 - b) Section Leaders
 - c) Visual Team
 - d) Pitch Master
 - e) Tempo Master
 - f) Etc.
4. Give your team true ownership of their respective concerns, but insist on a few ground rules (that you also must follow).
 - a) Always be positive.
 - b) Always be prepared.
 - c) Be proactive.
 - d) Keep your pace rather quick.
5. Know your singers' voices and abilities.
6. Ear & Voice test all prospective members.
7. Do physical, vocal, and mental warm-ups. Be sure to incorporate lot of craft.

8. Become a "System Chorus." In other words, develop a chorus of singers that understand the CRAFT of singing barbershop (e.g., posture, breath support, word sounds, tone, pitch, interpretive devices, emotion, blend) so that they can apply those skills to every song in the repertoire. Too often we get bogged down on working a song phrase by phrase without guiding our singers to see how what we do in this phrase applies to similar instances in every other phrase we sing. The warm-up period is a good time to learn elements of barbershop craft in addition to warming up the voice.
9. Introduce new songs on a regular basis. This keeps the singers motivated, and introduces new concepts to learn.
10. Use learning CD's. Be sure they are of a top quality—note and word perfect, in tune, good vocal quality—with the predominant part in the left speaker and the other parts in the right. If you don't have an in-house quartet or person to make them well (and most choruses don't), purchase them from a reputable source (we use Tim Waurick of Vocal Spectrum). This is invaluable to your singers because it allows them to work at their own pace. It is especially useful for new members who must learn your entire repertoire. This should be included in every chapter's budget.
11. Sing music that is suitable to your chorus's skills, especially for contest. You want songs that will challenge them and teach them new skills, but not songs that they have no hope of doing well.
12. Study and mark up the music. Know everything about the score: Who is on what part of the chord? Where are the breaths going to be? Where are the traps? What are the target vowels? Etc.
13. Avoid doing shows (e.g., "theme" shows) that require you to learn an entirely new set of songs.
14. Stand to sing
15. Allow the singers time to self-teach. Let them talk among themselves now and then.
16. Manage your time well. Have a rehearsal plan and stick to it as much as possible. Incorporate, among other things, warm-up/craft, new music, repertoire review, section rehearsal, etc. The stuff you really want to concentrate on should come early in the rehearsal.
17. Use coaches
18. Compete
19. Audio and/or video tape every week and review it critically. In addition to evaluating the chorus, evaluate yourself.
20. Establish good teaching methods
 - a) Plan ahead.
 - b) Maintain eye contact.
 - c) Smile
 - d) Be assertive.
 - e) Use a variety of approaches
 - (1) VAK (Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic)
 - (2) Left Brain/Right Brain
 - f) Have few but firm rules.
 - g) Be specific in instructions, corrections, and praises
 - h) Less talk, more singing
 - i) Plan shifts of mood
 - j) Vary your pace, but err on the side of too quick
 - k) Use positive reinforcement
 - l) Use humor, or at least have a certain humor about you
 - m) Be imaginative
 - n) Avoid giving too much information all at once
 - o) Get help if you need it
 - p) Encourage self-discipline
 - q) Make lessons achievable
 - r) Be consistent in your expectations
21. Make rehearsals and emotional experience. That's what all people really want.

B. Self-Education

1. WORK ON YOUR CONDUCTING SKILLS
 - a) Take college conducting classes
 - b) Invest in resources (books, videos [I highly recommend Rodney Eichenberger's video, "What They See Is What You Get," available through Hinshaw])
 - c) Watch yourself conduct in a full-length mirror.
 - d) Videotape yourself at rehearsal.
2. Work on your vocal pedagogy skills, or be sure to include a vocal specialist on your team.
3. Listen to recordings of other barbershop (and non-barbershop) choruses.
4. Ask your coaches to also coach you.
5. Attend as many schools and workshops as possible. Don't limit yourself only to barbershop schools, for example...
6. Join the American Choral Directors Association. They host extremely educational workshops and conferences, and publish journals with articles relating to the choral art.

12 Important Decisions Made By The Ambassadors of Harmony Over the Years

1. We removed the chairs and stood while we sang at rehearsals.
2. We quit letting ourselves “gang sing.” Even “Keep the Whole World Singing” must be done with quality.
3. We instituted auditions for the chapter.
4. We started bringing in coaches to teach us various aspects of the craft.
5. We started an annual “Retreat” (with a coach) to build skills and camaraderie.
6. We made intonation a primary focus, and NEVER let ourselves sing flat.
7. We started encouraging a tone that incorporates a lot of head resonance.
8. We committed ourselves to word sounds--matched, rounded vowels and properly executed consonants and diphthongs.
9. We instituted the “team” concept of directing, using assistant directors for warm-ups and auditions. We also have several people at any given time behind the director during rehearsals, monitoring pitch, notes, vowels, synchronization, visual sell, etc.
10. We stopped taking the pitch prior to starting a song. Tune-ups are always flat. Our singers learn to hear the note in their head before they sing. No one is allowed even to hum the pitch in advance of the song.
11. We developed the habit of resetting our body and tonal center at the beginning of each song phrase.
12. We were able to achieve an attitude that we actually believed we could win the gold medal.