

YOU TOO CAN BE A COACH  
IES – 2008  
CAROLE KIRKPATRICK

### ***TYPES OF COACHES***

#### ***COMPLETE COACH***

This type of coach is qualified in all phases of the barbershop art form. The coach is entirely responsible for music selection, interpretation and presentation. The coach selects costumes and advises on all things barbershop, both on and off stage. The group essentially makes no decisions without the input of the complete coach.

#### ***ALL AROUND COACH***

This coach is also qualified in all phases of the barbershop art form. The coach and the group together make the best decisions for the group. The coach advises the group when it seems reasonable to get other outside coaching in some phase of performing, arranging, costuming and showmanship.

#### ***SPECIALTY COACH***

This coach is primarily an expert in one or two important elements of the barbershop art form. This type of coach is often used by a group in addition to any regular coach they may have.

#### ***CHORUS DIRECTOR OR QUARTET MEMBER WHO ALSO COACHES***

This type of coach usually has a limited amount of time for coaching, but can be a valuable resource, because of their musical experience, and can be of great help to local groups.

#### ***FIFTH EAR***

This person could be anyone who has a good ear, time, and a willingness to listen and tell the group what flaws they hear in the performance. The fifth ear may not always have a coaching solution to the problem, but can be a valuable resource in pinpointing areas that need improvement.

Source: Diane Porsch

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## *STYLES OF COACHING*

### *ANALYST*

Finds the problem – just says, “fix it.” Doesn’t always have a solution but recognizes the problem.

### *TECHNICAL/LEFT-BRAIN*

Takes the technical approach to all problems and solutions. Does not relate well to imagery or feelings. Suggests solutions from the technical approach.

### *CREATIVE/RIGHT-BRAIN*

Talks about feelings and sensations. Relates word pictures and images, uses descriptive adjectives. Might not always understand the technical aspects of singing or doesn’t want to introduce that element when trying to solve creative problems.

### *DEMONSTRATOR*

Is able to define problems, and then successfully demonstrate the vocal quality, tone or visual picture desired. Sometimes uses taped or video examples of desired performance for group to imitate.

### *TYRANT*

Tends to bully the group. Makes them conform to specific techniques and ideas. Aggressive personality – not afraid of confrontation. Their way or the highway!

### *PERMISSIVE*

Has a very gentle approach – tends to avoid direct criticism. Believes you get more from the singers by always being positive. Works a lot on building confidence and self-esteem of the singers.

### *ARRANGER*

Works through the arrangement to obtain the best creative musical product. Usually works with higher-level groups who have excellent vocal skills and who understands the art form.

### *PART SPECIALIST*

Spends biggest percentage of time coaching one voice part – not the best choice for using as an all around coach, but excellent for building individual part skills.

***VOICE TEACHER***

Focuses most attention on building individual vocal skills of each singer. Is mostly interested in techniques to help build the group skills as a whole by improving each individual singer's skills.

***CATEGORY SPECIALIST***

Works on specific category to increase overall knowledge of the group. Ideal to have a coach in each category – ideal but probably not available to most groups

***SUPER COACH***

Able to combine many or all of the above styles. Recognizes the most important need of the group and is able to prioritize problems. Sees the overall big picture.

### ***SAMPLE COACHING SCHEDULE***

#### ***Get Acquainted***

Give the group a brief background of your experience – let them know your “specialty” area. Have a friendly discussion and put them at ease – let them get to know you. Some areas that might need clarification:

Find out their expectations of you and themselves

Talk about fees, other costs, etc.

Listen to what they say and work in their ideas as much as possible

Reassure them you are here to help them, not hinder the process

Answer any questions they have about “how honest” you will be with them

Make this opening conversation as easy and comfortable as possible for all

#### ***Warm-Ups***

Have group vocalize/warm-up – you can begin your analysis here – make mental/written note to use during the session. Many groups do not use a good warm-up program before rehearsing – this is your chance to help them establish a good habit – by letting them know the importance of good warm-ups.

#### ***Perform***

Have them sing a couple of songs in a performing mode while you take more notes. Try to pinpoint major flaws at first – while at the same time complimenting them on good points of the performance.

#### ***Discuss Major Issues***

Try to work on no more than three issues in a single coaching session. Work on the most obvious problem first – try not to spend the entire session on THAT problem – move on while keeping the other issues in mind. Try to sort out “long-term” problems (for example, vocal skill issues as relates to each part) and discuss the need for each singer to work individually outside of coaching sessions). Work for small successes throughout the session, like fixing note issues, synchronization, etc., so the group comes away from the session feeling a sense of accomplishment.

#### ***Take a Break***

This might be a good time to discuss what has transpired so far and give you all a chance to talk about what to work on for the remainder of the session.

***Double –check For Understanding***

Always make sure that the singers understand what you are saying. If not, try using different terminology – say it again a different way. Look for visual clues that they don't understand – do not leave them confused. You may have to start over with a new and fresh approach to a specific problem.

***Insure a Successful Session***

Try and insure the group has a successful and satisfying experience. Leave them on a positive and encouraging note. Be firm about areas where they need to improve and then remember to praise them when they get it right!! It doesn't cost a thing to make people feel good about themselves!

***Wrap-up, Assignments, Future Scheduling***

Discuss the progress that was made during the session. If they plan to use you again as a coach, schedule two or three sessions in advance. Give them clear assignments of what you would like to see accomplished before you coach them again. Encourage them to make their rehearsals meaningful by sticking to an appropriate rehearsal schedule. Help them develop a method of self-coaching or internal coaching, if you think the group is capable and this method would work for them.

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## *COACHING AIDS/ACTIVITIES*

### *Available from Sweet Adelines International*

Judging Category Description Book  
Arranger's Manual  
Educational videos/CDs/DVDs, including International Contests

### *Activities*

Attend any and all local, regional educational events, including IES  
Talk with judges and other coaches  
Ask to attend other coaching sessions in your area as an observer  
Ask a coach you respect to be your mentor  
Ask to be a "fifth ear" for local groups  
Attend as many local shows as possible and analyze performances  
Research vocal/music resources at local library  
Attend other types of musical concerts  
Volunteer/work with local high school/college/private music teachers

### *Other Resources*

The Art of Entertaining: Fritz Mountford – Hal Leonard Publishing  
Finding Your Voice: Carolyn Sloan – Hyperion  
Musician's Spirit: James Jordan – GIA Publications  
The Performer Prepares: Robert Caldwell – Pst...Inc.  
Singing for Dummies: Pamela Philips – Wiley  
Understanding and Enjoying Music: John D. White – Dodd, Mead & Co

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*ANALYTICAL LISTENING OBSERVATIONS*

*VOCAL OBSERVATIONS*

**Note and Word Accuracy – Are the performers singing accurate notes and words?**

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Vocal Production Skills – Is the singing supported by using good breathing skills?  
Is the sound open and free?**

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Harmony Accuracy – Are the intervals clean? Is the performance in tune? Are the chords ringing?**

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Synchronization – Are all vowels matched and sung together? Are attacks & releases together? Is internal synchronization clean? Are they breathing as a unit?**

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Interpretation – Is there an effective phrasing plan? Is there forward motion? Are there meaningful dynamics? Is the rhythm/tempo appropriately established and maintained?**

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Energy - Is vitality established and maintained? Is the performance belabored and tedious?**

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Artistry & Finesse – Is the skill level of the individual performer high enough to elicit a unified emotional response from the listener?**

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

***VISUAL OBSERVATIONS***

**Body Posture – Are all singers in the appropriate singing posture? Do you observe sagging shoulders, dropping heads, slumped carriages?**

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Physical Expression & Energy - Do all singers convey confidence, vitality, and expressive body language? Do they seem nervous/apprehensive? Are their faces displaying the character and mood of the music?**

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Visual Plan and Performance – Does the visual plan enhance or impede the overall performance? Is the choreography together and appropriate to the song?**

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**OVERALL SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

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