

## **Rehearsal Planning & Implementation**

### **Why Is This So Important?**

Oftentimes, we can compare our roles as Chorus Directors, to that of Managers. As we all can glean from our own experiences, every Manager has their own Management Style. We respond better or worse to each different style. We all have one thing in common, though, the desire to be a successful Manager, or Chorus Director. I would like to share my beliefs of what the personality traits of a successful Chorus Director are, with you today.

**-Product Knowledge - Know your stuff. Be prepared. Don't try to "wing" it.**

**-Assertiveness - that is, knowing how and when to get tough and assert your authority as a Chorus Director.**

**-Ego Drive - meaning the desire to persuade. If you're not thrilled at getting to "yes", you probably shouldn't be out front directing.**

**-Ego Strength - that which allows you to stay optimistic and bounce back from rejections, disappointments, and judgment errors, as well as coach your chorus and staff to do the same.**

**-A sense of urgency, which is the drive to get things done now and the ability to communicate that to your staff, without making all tasks equally urgent, which only results in burnout.**

**-Empathy - meaning that when you manage people, you have to have "as much compassion as competitive fire".**

**Add to all this the ability to step back and take some time to plan. Planning is as important a function as setting your goals, and managing your people. You must realize that there are several very important areas of concentration for you, the Director, in order to make your rehearsals as effective as you want and need them to be.**

**Goals must be established and they must be written. The act of writing brings more accountability into the picture. Goals must be differentiated into short term and long term goals. They must all be kept in mind during the planning process. Short Term Goals are to be used when planning from week to week, and event to event. Long Term Goals are to be used when evaluating, analyzing, and deciding direction, as part of your original plan, or as part of a plan deviation due to circumstances and bench mark events.**

**BE FLEXIBLE.**

**SHORTCUTS ARE NEVER TO BE TAKEN.**

**ALWAYS KNOW YOUR SUBJECT.**

***FOLLOW YOUR DREAM***

Visualize the Goal

Hard work is not its own reward.

You need a direction for your goal. A plan. Focus on one thing at a time.

***BLOCK OUT THE TIME***

Regular, Rigorous, Rewarding.

***TAKE ONE STEP AT A TIME***

Can't reach the top in one jump.

X% per year.

***MANAGE YOUR WEAK POINTS***

Instead of repeating things you enjoy, concentrate on things that need improvement and attention.

***HOLD OUT A CARROT***

DO NOT plan one rehearsal after another with no break.

DO reward yourself with fun.

Celebrate, Recognize, Reward.

***LOOK BACK***

Remember and Review.

What have I accomplished?

What needs more work?

What should I prepare for tomorrow?

***HAVE A SIESTA***

Hard work does not mean non stop work.

When you are tired, you make mistakes.

Build rest into your schedule.

***DEVELOP A CHEERING SECTION***

Support pays off. Guests and family should know of your goals and participate.

***KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE DONUT, NOT THE HOLE***

Work is not a punishment.

Turn every drawback into an opportunity.

Hard work does have its drawbacks; it's difficult and painful moments.

*But it is the road to the end of the rainbow.*

**Develop Several Simple Rehearsal Templates With Schedules and Vary Activities**

**State the intended accomplishments for the evening's rehearsal.**

**7:00 PM - Warm Ups – 20 -25 Minutes**

**Include Physical and Vocal Warm Ups**

**7:25 PM - Review Repertoire – 30 Minutes**

**7:55 PM - Review New Music – 45 Minutes**

**8:40 PM - Review / Teach Choreography – 30 Minutes**

**9:10 PM – Section Rehearsals – 20 Minutes**

**9:30 PM – Quartet Activity – 15 Minutes**

**9:45 PM - Business Meeting and Break – 15 Minutes**

**How could we revise this for another rehearsal?**

**How would we revise this during the rehearsal?**

**Why would we revise this during the rehearsal?**

**How would we identify pertinent activities that would vary the rehearsal format?**

**Rehearsal Techniques and Teaching Skills**

**Analytical Listening**

*Develop a Musical Mentality*

*Correct Development/Control of the Voice/Instrument*

*Listen for: Range, Texture, Color (Quality), Flexibility, Consistency*

*Assess Accuracy, Musicality, Strength of Performance*

*Define Outstanding Vocal Characteristics*

*Vibrato*

*Air in Tone*

*Resonance*

*Focus*

*Vocal Energy*

*Determine Vocal Problems*

*Identify Desirable Qualities*

*Warm*

*Rich*

*Round*

*Ring*

*Shimmer*

***Define Guidelines to get to the Next Level***

***Vocal Skills/Solid Vocal Foundation/Stamina***

***Musical Energy***

***Unity***

***Vowel Match***

***Free Tones***

***Wall of Sound***

***Energized Vocal Line***

***Musical Presentation***

***Forward Motion, Energy***

***Emotional Involvement***

***Strong Interpretive Plan***

***Personality Well Defined***

***Characterization Believable***

***Seamless Performance Flows Smoothly***

***Poise, Confidence Displayed***

***Cone Perfectly Balanced***

**Other Teaching Skills to Consider**

- a. Ability to convey the competence in subject matter and confidence in one's ability to teach lessons
- b. Effective use of common instructional aids, including audiovisual techniques
- c. Ability to help singers understand the general principles and concepts underlying a particular concept
- d. Ability to explain both basic and difficult concepts clearly
- e. Ability to put a specific lesson into larger context; i.e.; develop both the small and large picture for understanding
- f. Ability to ask good questions
- g. Ability to provide feedback to singers
- h. Awareness of the strengths and limitations of various means for evaluating own teaching performance
- i. Ability to adjust lesson plan based on information garnered from singers' questions
- j. Ability to foster an effective learning environment including showing respect for the student, encouraging their intellectual growth and providing a role model for all material presented

**Maintain Focus on the GOAL!**

***-Be willing to make the necessary decisions.*** You won't have trouble with the "easy" decisions. It is the "necessary" decisions-the ones with the most riding on them, the ones that have to be made by a certain date or time, and the ones that others are watching you make (to see how you do it or figure out whether or not to support you) that are the most difficult (and the most important) to make. Recognize which decisions are important and devote the lion's share of your time and energy to making them. It may be human nature to put off the big decisions for as long as you can and blame your indecisiveness on all other matters you had to attend to first. But you don't have to be superhuman to overcome that tendency.

***-Strive for a Calm Attitude.*** Not a macho or desperate "surrounded by the enemy" stance. Sometimes a crisis will be the factor that motivates you to make a decision, but even under those circumstances, a calm, in control presence is essential.

***-Gather facts and opinions from as many sources as possible to get as many varying points of view as possible.*** Read, consult experts, and try to look at the situation from the perspectives of everyone involved in it. Don't just guess. Go to the source and ask for input. Open-mindedly listen to those who disagree with you as well as those who support you. Probe, probe, probe.

***-Distill the information you've gathered.*** Consider as many alternatives as possible. Have Plan A, Plan B, Plan C, and so on. Know the potential risks and benefits of each.

***-Listen to your intuition.*** Not all decisions are made solely on the basis of fact. Sometimes a gut feeling or a hunch makes one option more appealing than another. If the facts, your intuition, or a combination of the two still do not point to a clear cut way to go, you're simply going to have to take a chance. Don't overwork the decision making process. Have a reasonable amount of fact, and then act.

***-When you can, reduce the pressure caused by deadlines or the need to make on the spot decisions.*** Normally time causes the most pressure. Worrying about missing a deadline can often push you into making premature decisions or faulty ones. If time constraints are so severe that you have to decide before you feel confident about your decision, the best decision is apt to be a "no". Generally you can change your mind later.

***-If time permits and it is appropriate, set the decision aside for later consideration.*** Sometimes time or changing circumstances alleviate the need for a decision. Sometimes no decision is a decision (by refusing to side with either party, you are deciding to let them work out their differences on their own).

***-Or turn it over to your subconscious.*** Think about the problem before falling asleep or engaging in an unrelated activity. Even though your conscious mind is not focused on it, your subconscious is still working on the problem, mulling it over, and factoring data you've either buried or forgotten. When you consciously come back to the subject, you will have a fresh perspective on it and, in some instances, know exactly which decision to make.

***-Make the decision.*** If you encounter a stumbling block, talk with the necessary people, but don't talk to them as if you are asking for their approval or permission. Keep in mind that no matter what the decision some won't like the outcome.

***-If the decision is wrong, say "oops" and take corrective action.*** Authority and responsibility must wear the same pair of shoes. If the decision doesn't work, a good leader takes the responsibility. If it does work, a good leader passes the credit around.

### How to give feedback effectively

- Differentiate feedback from praise / positive reinforcement or counseling / with encouragement and empathy.
- Time feedback appropriately -- immediately after performance, rehearsal, or event, or after short interval (emotions leveled, data gathering, or formal time scheduled).
- Give descriptive rather than evaluative comments (focus on the problem not the individual, e.g.: "We are having an issue with the tuning in this song").
- Clarify understanding the problem.
- Specific data/concrete examples.
- Ask for rephrasing of the concerns to verify understanding.
- Encourage participation and creativity in identifying possible solutions. (In search of excellence).
- After the feedback session, write down short summary -- what was accomplished, what issues were discussed, and whether future goals were established.

**How To Recap Successes / Joys / Concerns for Each Rehearsal**

**This is important so we can establish where we are at any given point in time, and move ahead from this perspective and place. The goal here is not to lose what we have already learned and accomplished, yet to continue improving and adding new concepts with each rehearsal.**

**Summarize the evening's accomplishments. Summarize the most important facets which contributed to all the successes. Learning how to evaluate the accomplishments and successes is a critical component in the learning process for you, the Director and the Singer.**

**Ask questions to see what the singers knew about what was covered that evening.**

**Use questions to gain singers' attention.**

**Encourage singers to answer questions by providing cues or rephrasing.**

**Ask probing questions.**

**Establish and maintain eye contact with your singers during singing and non singing times.**

**Body language is congruent with verbal messages at all times.**

**Respond to signs of puzzlement, boredom (? Never!), curiosity.**

**Voice can be easily heard.**

**Wasn't too formal or informal in appearance.**

**Be YOU!!!**

**The best way to keep our chouses moving forward is to have well planned and effective rehearsals. Our singers are looking to us as the Leader and will respond to excellent Leadership and organization.**

**Don't be afraid to trust your instincts and make mistakes, because you will! That is our best teacher.**

**TRUST input from your Music Staff, your Management Team. TRUST Yourself with your instinct, your judgments, your decisions!**

**YOU CAN DO THIS!!!**

**Bibliography**

**Greater Nassau Music Program, 2009**