

SWEET ADELINES INTERNATIONAL CORPORATION

**RMT EDUCATION FORUM
OCTOBER 19, 2009
NASHVILLE, TN**

***COMPILATION OF REPORTS
FROM THE SPECIES NETWORKING FACILITATORS***

**REGIONAL COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATORS'
NETWORKING SESSION
Sharon Babb, Facilitator**

Discussions on seven areas took place:

1. Database Organization and Tools

This area seemed to be one that held great interest and importance re regional communication. Several tools/web servers/ and data base products were compared. Some were paid services while others were free. Those suggested included: I Contact, Go Daddy, Constant Contact, and various Yahoo! groups. The CoCs thought that employing such services for contact with members should be a regional expense and that they need to have an opt-out system available.

2. Websites

Several issues emerged in this discussion:

- Could International negotiate lower prices for Web development with “private” Sweet Adeline resources?
- Could a list of regional web site addresses for COCs be made available?
- Could a short sheet on “website how-to” be devised?
- Could choruses without websites have their own pages on regional websites?
- Can a rationale for the benefits of branding consistency be devised and disseminated?

3. Use of Social Media

CoC’s noted that this new area is one on which they need even more education. The Social Media plan was distributed and discussed. Region 25 has instituted a pilot program on how to get on Facebook, etc. They felt that copies of newsletters, directories, and circulating notebooks for choruses could be made available there with one hard copy sent to choruses. They were also reminded to send copies of their newsletters to International Board members or to ask staff at headquarters to enter them into the Board-Only portion of the International website.

A continuing concern is the handling of learning tracks for regional songs, events, etc. Clearer and more up-to-date information re copyright issues, mechanical licenses, cost per track and counts of downloaded tracks needs to be formulated and disseminated.

4. International Technology Issues

The CoCs wished for databases and distributed servers that are compatible from International to Regional to Choruses so that everyone is on same page technologically. They yearn for consistent formats and that members only address information and updates be made available to CoC’s. They also wanted AET available at convention via computer and more functionality of Crystal.

5. SOR and ARE notes

They would like to see a calendar of tasks for the CoC included in the *RMT Handbook* and that a reminder to them of their duties/deadlines be sent to them mid-year by headquarters staff.

They suggested asking the incoming CoC to handle the ARE or SOR. Could there be a new and improved form for ARE? CoC's need copies of all SORS. They also reinforced the idea that copies of SORS be sent to the TC and CoC.

Copy trails are needed on every correspondence to and from International.

6. Webinar Topics

Suggested topics included:

- International organization and structure, *e.g.* who's who, what they do
- Website implementation
- Using technology at the chapter level

They also suggested that archived webinars could be used at regional educational weekends

7. Combination of Regional Contests

A generally positive reaction but did not want it required. They liked the ideas of cost savings for smaller regions, shared venues, shared judging panels, competition outside of region.

(CoC Freib was willing to share information regarding A/V equipment that region can own for contest presentations, procurement on EBay, etc.)

**REGIONAL DIRECTORS' COORDINATORS'
NETWORKING SESSION
Harriette Walters, Facilitator**

The following was discussed and notated:

- Discussion of DEC – Update given by Harriette.
- DEC Communication to DCs and TCs regarding contracts to include education for directors.
- Personal responsibility for singers shift from learning to ART
- Discussion of director's vision such as hearing your own chorus, and new DCP training chorus through JCDB.
- International director training DVDs
- Should Awards be given for non asst. directors who pass the DCP?
- RCC responsibility to communicate any change of script at each regional competition.
- Contest booklet to choruses for ease of communication and education.
- International Elections were discussed at length, the importance.
- Director Mentors a necessity in each region.
- Online DC Forum to be set up.
- Assistant Director Forum to be set up? Utilize Paula Davis, DEC, resources.
- Section Leader Forum to be set up? Utilize DEC, resources.
- New Director training ongoing and to be separate from intermediate Director Training.
- Jan Carley could be a resource (Harmony from the Inside Out).

FREE FLOWING THOUGHTS AND DISCUSSIONS FROM THE FLOOR

- DC is the advocate for the regional directors (support and education).
 - Create a yahoo group for RMT DC to communicate and share what they do in their regions.
 - Internationally funded visits-how they are utilized in each region.
 - Assistant Director and Section Leader training is always necessary.
 - Directors and RMT get together to discuss the regional education ongoing.
 - Possibility of a Regional Mentor for directors, using internationally funded visits.
 - Who constitutes Faculty for internationally funded visits? – RMT designates a person to act on behalf and do the visit. Is this the most effective way to facilitate?
 - Does the EC have a library of DVDs, etc. from regional seminars?
 - L.A.W. School from Region 12 should be shared with all regions.
 - Identifying your chorus sound and make it more singer driven. Director level videos should be used as a tool, as well as those from international.
 - Idea: Everyone in the chorus go through the judging category description manual and pick a category and score themselves, etc.
 - Idea to be shared: Region 26 example of Mo coaching 13 choruses, workshop from small chorus perspective. Each chorus shared in the costs.
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- Any announcements regarding changes in contest at all should be via the Regional Convention Committee.
- Angels / Mentors for new directors in all regions.
- Samples of generic contracts, how to use regional funded visits, etc. in a central respository was suggested. Not sure if this is feasible or a good idea.

[Www.emusictheory.com](http://www.emusictheory.com) should / could be used to assist and as a resource for Directors.

**REGIONAL EDUCATION COORDINATORS’
NETWORKING SESSION
Patty Cobb Baker, Facilitator**

A lively group of 17 Regional Education Coordinators (ED) gathered in Nashville to share experiences and exchange ideas. Suggested topics for the ED Species Networking were plentiful. The following narrative captures the major topics and their salient discussion points.

EDUCATION EVENTS

The primary area of concern discussed under this topic was **how to increase attendance** at regional education events. This has been of particular concern due to the recent global economic challenges. One region reported that they had to make the difficult decision to cancel an event because of projected poor attendance, the result being a significant reduction in the event’s estimated financial loss. All agreed that the following two event planning elements are crucial to ensuring a well-attended event:

- Curriculum Design
- Event Marketing
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Curriculum Design – The group discussed the importance of performing a grass roots education needs assessment. The needs assessment determines the curriculum content and the grass roots element is of particular importance because it is the grass roots that attend the events. Whether through an educational survey to the region’s choruses or chorus visits during which their specific education needs are addressed, the EDs all agreed that members will attend education events - even in difficult economic times - if they perceive the education to be relevant to them.

Event Marketing – The EDs discussed the need for timely, eye-catching, and informative marketing of their education events. They discussed the need to work closely with the regional Marketing Coordinator to design event themes that will drive a consistent message to the membership about the **benefits** to them of attending the event. Again, if the members receive the message that the event can add value to their lives, they will attend. One region shared that they do an RMT road show to promote upcoming education events. Two RMT members travel together to every chorus, which has the added benefit of increasing the visibility of the RMT to the regional membership.

The EDs also discussed event format changes that have been helpful in drawing greater attendance, including:

- Holding the Show of Champions at their music school instead of at regional convention
 - Using the Area School format, where two or three smaller, local, usually one-day events are held in lieu of a larger weekend seminar. Many regions are using this format, or rotating it annually with the larger seminar, to save money and to attempt to reach more of the regional membership.
 - Including a YWIH quartet contest to encourage youth attendance; the winner receives regional funding to attend the International Rising Star Contest.
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EDUCATION BUDGETS

The topic of education budgets was discussed briefly. A question was presented about how to set a budget for education and about the size of the various regions' education budgets. It was agreed that the size of a region's education budget was strictly tied to its number of members, as it is the membership that funds the education through the regional assessment and/or regional education fees. Many of the EDs in attendance are from regions that have adopted a separate education levy (in addition to their regional assessment or incorporated into the regional assessment) and they stated that they have had success in the fee helping to draw more members to regional events. It also enables the establishment of a strategic education budget, as the funds are earmarked exclusively for education. These EDs emphasized that it is extremely important to market the change to an education fee/levy to the region before enacting it so the membership fully understands the benefits to them and to the region. One region said that they conducted a survey of their membership before enacting the levy to ascertain support for such a change.

REGIONAL FACULTY

The following question was brought to the forum and discussed by the EDs: "How can we raise the status/stature/knowledge/skill/recognition of regional faculty so they are on the "A" list as coaches and faculty in the region?" The EDs agreed that it is not the responsibility of the region to promote regional faculty to choruses as coaches, however they were in agreement that faculty development/skill building is a function of the region and developing a high quality regional faculty a function of the ED. Many EDs stated that they have a Regional Faculty Coordinator on their staff who is responsible for the administrative duties related to regional faculty, e.g., sending and receiving faculty applications, coordinating the logistics of faculty teaching at events, creating Faculty Profiles and posting them on an Education Page on the regional web site, etc. Faculty skill development is the responsibility of the ED and, if designed and executed well, will ensure a competent pool of teaching/coaching talent for the region.

INTERFACE WITH DIRECTORS' COORDINATOR AND EVENTS COORDINATOR

This topic was brought to the table because a new ED was having difficulty understanding her role in the education of directors. She was unsure whether it was her responsibility as ED or the DC's job, and communication/personality issues with her regional DC were causing additional confusion. The forum assured her that ALL education, no matter the audience, is the responsibility of the ED. The group encouraged her to review the job descriptions for each coordinator in the *RMT Handbook* and to seek the assistance of the rest of the team, if need be, to ensure clarity in the assignment of job duties. Having said this, the group also agreed that it is all right to share or shift minor responsibilities among coordinators if this works best for the team. However, doing so does not change the official job description in the *RMT Handbook*. For example, one region stated that the DC plans the region's Directors' Seminar, with assistance from the ED in curriculum development and from the EVC for facility planning. The rationale for this job sharing is to assist with workload issues and to ensure that the DC stays in touch with the directors and their education needs.

SUCCESSION PLANNING

This topic led to a very interesting discussion of ways to ensure an ample supply of qualified leaders and a smooth transition when leadership changes hands. One ED said her RMT uses education events as a venue through which to publicize the coordinator jobs. They begin classes with an RMT member describing the joys and duties in her respective position. A suggested pool of talent for the ED position is the ED's committee chairs or staff. Many EDs stated that they utilize an education planning committee, as well, from which they find qualified candidates to recommend for appointment. The ED in Region 34 described a process that she is currently using in which two individuals who expressed an interest in serving as ED after her term expires are spending several months working with her to plan and conduct education events. When one is appointed, the other non-appointed member and the outgoing ED will assist the new ED in her transition, for a period lasting approximately six months. Both potential appointees understand and agree to this process. The process ensures that the interested applicants understand the job before assuming it and that the ultimate appointee receives ample assistance during the transition time so no ED functions are neglected.

CROSS-REGIONAL EVENTS

None of the EDs in attendance had experience with cross-regional events, however all said they would consider it if it were geographically feasible (i.e., members could affordably travel to the event) and could save the region money. All of the EDs agreed that it is a good marketing practice to publicize your regional education events to the regions near you. Some EDs also mentioned that their regions had conducted joint education events with the men's barbershop community.

MISCELLANEOUS DISCUSSION

A question about the appropriate acronym to use for Education Coordinator was raised. The acronym ED is used, not EDC, because EDC is the acronym used for the International Education Direction Committee.

A few EDs requested coordinator timelines and reminders from International for when actions are due to International Headquarters. The group encouraged one another to reference the *RMT Handbook* for excellent timelines for each RMT coordinator.

A request was made for writeable forms for International Faculty evaluation forms. The EDs would LOVE to see even more educational offerings at International Convention. Lastly, Valerie Taylor kindly offered to be the point of contact for adding EDs to the ED Yahoo! group. valerie.taylor@privacysolutions.co.uk

Once again, we all wished we had many more hours available to us to share, explore and create. The group thanked International for this valuable networking opportunity, and looks forward to furthering the discussion in Seattle.

**REGIONAL EVENTS COORDINATORS'
NETWORKING SESSION
Anne Cargill, Facilitator**

The main points agreed suggested for discussion prior to the session were as follows:

1. Offering a new educational event

Have any attendees replaced spring regional event with a series of one-day education events held at various sites across the region?

2. Adding excitement to an event!

3. Competition

- auditorium ?
- hotel ballroom?
- convention center?

4. Other suggested topics were:

- Competing Quartets & Choruses
- Show of Champions (contest)
- To bus or not to bus? – contestants only or audience and contestants?

1. Offering a new educational event

Have any attendees replaced spring regional event with a series of one day education events held at various sites across the region?

Suggestions included:

- Change from weekend to several day events
- Mock quartet & double quartet contest
- Classes at contest (Friday & Sunday)
- Fall chorus coaching

The group discussed the options of replacing spring event and suggested the following ideas:

- One region had replaced a fall event with four different one-day events which was very successful.
- One region had one weekend only in January.
One region had three events and reported that the first was great, the second smaller and the third a failure
- One region reported a big event in January with International competitors and a quartet workshop in fall.
- One region (25) does a pre-workshop contest with real panel where the panel gives comments but not scores. A workshop then addresses the comments.
- One region has a double quartet contest with cash prizes where 600 people came to the workshop. Up to 40 quartets participated and each sang one song.

YWIH quartets – one region does a YWIH contest on Thursday night prior to regional contest. Some help is given to winner to get to Rising Star at International.

Some regions have one school per year in the summer alternating between administrative/music

Joint BHS/SAI young people events or festivals

Region 24 has added an arranger workshop and had a packed weekend (1-1/2 days) where it had to turn people away.

One region had Fall Chorus Coaching in November on a Friday night/Saturday with Jean Barford. Any chorus can sign up and be coached by Jean. \$150. Small choruses have taken advantage of this. All choruses in region had C+ or higher (2 hours with Jean). Everyone could stay and watch. Region hires Jean. For larger areas, have a travelling coach.

2. Adding excitement

Some ideas for adding excitement to events included:

- Barber poles throughout venue to encourage tag singing.
- Joint regional event – Reg. 26/13 – successful event. Some challenges. Potential for good results. Cost is a concern.
- Region 7 – Battleship of Barbershop Stars – 2011. Limit registration. First come, first served to control numbers.
- Send info about leadership retreats and classes to adjacent regions to open them up.
- Get competition registration to other regions' classes/events.
- Involve other people on RMT in event planning as creativity abounds.

The main points agreed were:

- Not one size fits all.
- Mock quartet/double quartet contest
- Classes at contest (Friday or Sunday)
- Fall chorus coaching

3. Competition

Do most regions still use an auditorium for regional competition? What has been the experience using convention centers? Hotel ballrooms? Are regions still making money from contest? If so how do they do it?

Of those present four regions use an auditorium, four use a hotel, and six use a convention center.

Many regions use the same location year after year. In one region the convention bureau is helping keep it fresh because they like having them.

Familiarity is important in building relationships with a city and asking the city for perks.

There was a discussion on ways to counteract members' concerns about going back to same place:

Moving around to different locations can be a nightmare and too costly. Much to be said for having same venue for a lengthy period of time. Will find that a lot of hotels already know about SAI because they talk amongst themselves.

Use other people to help find venues, but most EVCs do own contracts and don't have site coordinators.

International will consider changing contest dates if absolutely necessary.

Regional Education Faculty – hired to give all choruses 6 hours of free coaching.

Education classes during contest? Some do, some don't.

- Region 3 – briefing Thursday night, class Friday afternoon.
- Region 24 – Friday morning keynote speakers over breakfast. Then a general membership class afterwards for those who don't want to pay for breakfast.
- Overseas panels often teach classes on Sunday morning.
- Brunch Sunday morning then installation of RMT + regional awards.
- Coaching on Sunday morning

4. Other topics

What do regions do for competing quartets and choruses?

- Large checks right after they win
- Invited to sing on Fall Show
- Gifts for quartets (after they compete)
- Teams get them when they come off stage
- Rally for the choruses only
- Video billboards (rather than ribbons)

After the quartet has been given awards of cash it was suggested that quartets need to be available to sing at opening of music schools.

Some choruses run music schools.

Show of Champions – what do regions do?

There were many different approaches to the Show of Champions.

Not everyone has Saturday night show. Some add guests usually from men's organizations. Some prefer to have a show with an afterglow feel with champions singing in the ballroom after dinner. Some have YWIH winners and top five choruses/quartets

Some examples were:

- Ballroom at hotel (after dinner)
 - After glow
 - Stage show
 - Open mic and dancing
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- Guest groups performing

One has an open barbershop mic where people sign up. Across hall, have another room for dancing for those who want it.

Another example was a Mass Sing on Saturday night in hotel atrium which lasts about an hour where past champion quartets put on open mic show, have raffle.

Another example was a party, sometimes around pool, where there might be hula lessons, synchronized swimming. Sing with different champs.

It was agreed that we need to think outside the box perhaps adding the most improved quartet/choruses, but to tailor the event to suit the region.

Busing

Audience busing Friday night/Saturday. Some eliminated Friday night busing.

Some cities paid for competitors' busing.

Most regions do not provide risers in rehearsal spaces.

Conclusion

It was agreed that the session had been a useful opportunity for networking and sharing ideas.

**REGIONAL FINANCE COORDINATORS’
NETWORKING SESSION
Carole Kirkpatrick, Facilitator**

ACCOUNTING SOFTWARE

The discussion centered around different methods/ processes that are available for record keeping within the regional bookkeeping function. It was apparent that most of the Finance Coordinators were very familiar with several different methods, but a few Coordinators seemed lost and a bit over their heads when it came to contributing and understanding the discussions. Many of the regions have a software accounting system in place, those being:

- Excel
- Quick Books
- Quicken

Benefits:

- Online potential (cost is about \$300 year)
- Access anywhere
- Passing on files
- All EMT members can monitor their budgets
- Time Saver
- User friendly

REGIONAL COSTS

This was an area of great concern for everyone. All of the Finance Coordinators were very interested in finding ways to cut expenses while still getting their jobs done. Most regions are experiencing loss of membership which translates to loss of income for the region so it is imperative that they find more economical ways to conserve funds and also volunteers’ time. Ideas shared for possible savings and ways to generate income:

- More meetings via conference call/Skype
- More localized educational events
- More one-day events
- More area schools
- Up-beat, interactive faculty that will be a draw
- Regional assessment that includes fee for schools

REGIONAL FUNDRAISING

All regions are looking for creative ways to generate non-dues income. There were many innovative suggestions and a lively discussion about ways to get more income for the regions:

- Charge a fee for regional learning CD’s (be aware of licensing and copyright fees)
 - Raffle for International All Events Tickets
 - Have video billboard at regional contests and charge for ads
 - “Love Notes” in regional competition progra
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- Have a larger Harmony Bazaar with more vendors
- Solicit for grants and/or corporate sponsors
- Have regional webcast and charge for “shoutouts” and ads
- Manufacture and sell regional pins
- Raffles (\$10,000) half to region/half to winner (consult State Laws)

LEADERSHIP RECRUITMENT

This seems to be an ongoing problem in all regions. There doesn't seem to be a lot of interest from the general membership in taking on a leadership role at the regional level. It was mentioned that some current regional leaders, when talking to the general membership about this issue, make it sound as though the jobs “are really hard, take a lot of time” and generally give the impression that a person probably wouldn't want to take on the challenge. Obviously, this kind of communication is not very positive. Other regions stated that they have held “job fairs” and are really, truly trying to get others interested in serving at the regional level. Suggestions for recruiting:

- Chorus visitations with specific emphasis on leadership
- Job fairs at all regional events
- Shadow programs
- Stress reimbursement for expenses incurred
- One-on-one discussions/encouragement with likely candidates
- Keep a sharp eye out for possible candidates when out and about

REGIONAL CONTESTS

As this is the largest budget item for all regions, the Finance Coordinators could think of the following ways to cut costs:

- Consider having contests in hotel ballrooms
 - No busing would be necessary
 - If contest still held in theater, consider having Show of Champions in the hotel ballroom to save costs of theater
 - Multiple year contracts with hotels to “lock in” costs
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- **REGIONAL MARKETING COORDINATORS'**

- **NETWORKING SESSION**

- **Kathy Carmody, Facilitator**

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- WEBSITE

- • Kudos given to International Marketing and Communication/Webmaster. Great model for regions.

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- REAL GROWTH

- • *Real Guide to Growth* materials coming from International (Publishing date February 15)
- • Need to emphasize the relationship between marketing and choral experience

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- UPCOMING WEBINARS – Completed.

- • Rookie Program (Webinar archived in Marketing Center)
- • Director's Role in Membership G & R (Webinar archived in Marketing Center)

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- • Regional level ...

- - Insist on directors' involvement in membership
- - Train general membership about marketing your chorus and SAI (Webinars archived in Marketing Center)

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- • How to approach strangers – need talking points for recruitment (See attached)

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- MARKETING CENTER

- • Irresistible photos – Regions and Choruses can submit additional photos for posting. Marketing Center photos are royalty free and may be used in chorus membership campaigns.

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- PILOT PROGRAM

- • Non-competitive integrated approach to membership growth. Members will join according to how they fit with chorus personalities
- • Simultaneous campaigns – all choruses in a region campaign at the same time; increases “branding” (of choruses, of SAI)
- • Pilot Accountability – International Membership Coordinator keeps track of pilot programs progress and successive steps
- • Requested next year's Marketing Forum include a panel discussion of pilot programs

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- REGIONAL MARKETING EDUCATION:

- • INSIST! on 20 minutes to talk about marketing at regional events
- • Marketing Coordinators teach a class at regional events.
- • Continue to implement marketing tools throughout regions
- • We can sell the music/singing
- • Repeatedly teach and reinforce member retention within chorus and SAI
 - - having fun?

- - appreciated?
- - internal marketing
- - take an interest in members' personal lives
- - catch their eye
- - positive incentives
- - Web presence – “getting to know you”
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- • Asset Allocation
- Find/make use of free/cheap outlets for marketing rather than expending funds on expensive radio TV and print media.

- Notes from Scribe, MKC Networking, Oct. 19, 2009, Nashville, TN

- 1. Round the horn intros – 11 regions represented
 - 2. Sneak preview guide and other handouts overview
 - 3. Website discussion
 - Some regions under communications, some marketing. Needs to have coordination between marketing/communications and webmaster
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 - *Manual for membership is being updated – action plans added
 - - vocal lessons have been edited to 4
 - - anatomy and technical reduced
 -
 - Discussion of need for interaction between director/membership/marketing
 - Need to train members how to talk us up
 -
 - Pilot program
 - - put templates on regional site
 - - get techie to explain modifying templates
 - - input
 - - time frame of first quarter of fiscal year may need to be rethought
 - - discussion of how to present and teach tools
 - - media relationship development
 - - chorus branding
 -
 - Go back to region and insist on 20 minutes for marketing and 20 minutes for marketing
 - Measuring – reports being copiously studied
 - - Regions not in pilot program can use tools now!
 - - This pilot program gives regional marketing coordinator a finger on the pulse of who needs help
 - - We can only sell the singing, not the love
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- - Retention
 - Rookie follow up “Rookie Mamma”
 - Older member needs
 - Internal marketing is essential
(gratitude journal or bracelet trade)
 -
 - Timelines
 - see handout on how to work backwards
 -
 - Budgeting
 - Internet making costs very effective
 - Wear costumes one more year and other fundraisers
 -
 - * Flash mob – invite to come video something (check it out on YouTube)
 -
 - Dec. – Sing-off! coming.
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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 gonna 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 2nd or 3rd e-mail
A follow up personal call after your e-mail

Give EVERYONE a chance! Don't decide for them that:

They're too busy;
Too tired;
Don't have enough money;
Can't sing, etc.

Let them make the choice themselves.

- Offer them a ride
 - Tell them why YOU love our chorus!
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**REGIONAL MEMBERSHIP COORDINATORS’
NETWORKING SESSION
Fran Furtner, Facilitator**

The MEC’s who gathered during this session were enthusiastic about learning new approaches and sharing ideas on member retention and recruitment. They also wanted to continue their communications and agreed to set up an online forum where they can connect on an ongoing basis. Key discussion topics and takeaways are noted below:

Retention

- **Chorus Visits** – The MECs feel it’s difficult for them to have a direct hand in member retention outside of running the region well, providing great educational opportunities, and being a resource for the chapter leaders. However, visiting each chorus once a year is one way they can connect with the members, show they are valued and, hopefully, contribute to member retention. Many regions fund an annual visit by the MEC or one RMT/regional faculty person to each chorus in their region. During these visits, they share information from International or ideas from other choruses, conduct training or help with planning/goal-setting. One participant said she asks chorus members to fill in the blanks to “I like -, I don’t like -, I think we should -, I wish we would –” and this can be a launching pad for chorus dialogue, positive reinforcement and goal-setting.

It was pointed out that not all choruses are receptive to these kinds of visits because they perceive a regional person is coming to “fix a problem” or “spy” on the chorus – or they just don’t see the time invested as worthwhile. Nonetheless, the group agreed that doing chorus visits is a valuable touch point with the membership and shows that the administrative side of Sweet Adelines is important, as well.

As part of this discussion, one participant mentioned they have changed the name of their annual \$50 “regional assessment” to an “education fee” – and members seem more receptive to this label.

- **Motivating Under-Achieving Choruses** – The MECs acknowledged that special attention needs to be paid to choruses that don’t meet the Basic Criteria for Public Performance – or ones that consistently fare poorly at regional competition. It’s especially difficult to keep these members motivated and in the organization. Suggestions included making sure those choruses understand what needs to be done to improve and to help provide resources and tools, including strategic goal-setting. One region has a strong director-mentoring program that pairs directors from high and low-achieving choruses. Based on the level of improvement of contest scores, another region funds a portion of expenses to SAI- or BHS-sponsored directors’ training to help those directors get more education.

The MECs agreed it’s best to try to head off problems beforehand – and to send in appropriate RMT/faculty assistance, as needed. At the same time, it’s vital these choruses understand the consequences of not improving – and that they might have to go into revitalization or possibly even back to prospective status at some point.

- **Regional Events** – Although there's no data to back this up, it's believed that members who regularly attend regional events and take advantage of the education and social networking opportunities are likely to feel even more connected with the organization (and therefore, more likely to retain membership in it). Consequently, the regions do things to draw members to their regional activities. One region reimburses participants a portion of their fees based on how far they have to travel (furthest = largest reimbursement; in-town attendees get no reimbursement). Others make a point of recognizing prospective chapters, choruses with the highest growth or retention rates, etc. at regional events.

Of course, the biggest draw is the subject matter and faculty. If a region is not getting good attendance at its regional events, it was suggested that leadership take a hard look at the excitement/magnet power of the offerings.

Recruitment

- **Marketing Center** – The MECs applauded The Marketing Center and the wealth and quality of promotional materials that are available there. All the MECs were familiar with this resource although some said that not all of their choruses are clued in yet – and it was suggested we hold a class to show how easy it is to use. I mentioned that this has been covered a couple times as part of our marketing webinars but perhaps a step-by-step, hands-on presentation/tutorial is needed. It was asked if Prospective choruses were permitted to use the Marketing Center, as well (since it lives in the Members Only section) and I said “yes” and advised them to contact Ann-Marie Dowling for access.

Also, the MECs applauded International for using current technology and tools to reach out to members and prospects (e.g., a Facebook page, the digital editions of *The Pitch Pipe*, etc).

- **Bilingual/Non-English Marketing Materials** – Some areas (e.g., Canada) need bilingual marketing materials and others need them in languages other than English. The MECs were pleased to hear that the Communications Dept. has already planned to reach out to these regions and work with the Marketing Coordinators on developing translations and custom templates for our non-English countries.
 - **Free Voice Lessons** – It appears that the “Free Voice Lessons”/“Learn to Sing” approach continues to be the most successful way to attract visitors. Some have tried collaborative efforts with other choruses in their region by promoting the lessons during the same time period. I noted there will be an updated four-week Voice Lessons program in the new “Real Guide to Growth” manual that will be published in 2010.
 - **‘One Voice’ Pilot Program** – Several of the MECs were from regions participating in the One Voice pilot program and they shared some of their activities and results. Those who were not participating in the program were eager to hear about it. Although pilot participants had positive feedback about the program, it was noted that the quarterly reporting was hard to do and time-consuming.
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- **Men's Society** – It was observed that the culture seems to be changing regarding collaboration with the Barbershop Harmony Society – and that the men's choruses can be a good resource for helping us recruit new members. In some regions, there are “barbershop summits” where men and women barbershoppers convene (“big barbershop day out”) – and in others, Harmony Youth Camps have created opportunities for SAI and BHS members to connect and work together (Harmony Explosion camps, Buckeye Invitational, Harmony Festival for Teens, etc.). In the UK, for example, there are strong links among three barbershop organizations.

While talking about Harmony Youth Camps, one participant requested a class or webinar on how to develop a youth camp. Also, one inquired about the liability insurance for these kinds of events and whether the SAI policy provides coverage.

- **Regional websites** – Most regional websites are doing a good job of inviting visitors to check out the choruses in the region – and in leading them to chapter rehearsals and contacts.

What do you do?

Lively discussions among the MECs surrounded these sticky questions:

- What do you do when a prospective chorus hasn't been approved for performance but they do it anyway?
- How do you handle former Sweet Adelines billing themselves as Sweet Adelines for performances in the community?
- What do you do when a “difficult” chorus that sits near a regional border would really be a better fit with the neighboring region? How do you make that happen?
- What do you do when you know a Member-At-Large is competing?
- What should you do when you know a chorus is including dead people on their member list in order to have 15 people to charter?

Responses varied but the bottom line was that inappropriate behavior should be addressed by the regional leadership or with help from staff at HQs.

Other

- **Prospectives** – Is there a directory of prospective chapters so they can connect/network? Also, it was felt that prospective members sometimes get excluded from information that goes out to members.
 - **Membership Reports** – Some of the MECs felt that the reports generated by International are not accurate (some members missing) or hard to understand (for dual members, dates listed under second chorus are confusing). While this might be true, they were reminded that HQ relies on the information that is provided to them by the chapters. It was requested that forms requesting information have fields that are “typeable.”
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- Webinars – There was strong interest among the MECs in learning more about the webinars that are available and archived – and using them as teaching tools with choruses or at a regional meeting.
- Ongoing networking – As mentioned at the outset, the MECs were keenly interested in having a forum to continue their networking. Kathie Holloway from Region #4 volunteered to set up a Yahoo! address for the MECs and several of the Coordinators promised to send Kathie materials/documents for sharing.

I was grateful for the opportunity to spend time with this stimulating and dedicated group of Membership Coordinators – and came away with new ideas and topics to ponder and pursue as I fill out my term on the Membership Committee. Thank you, all. – *Fran Furtner*

**REGIONAL TEAM COORDINATORS'
NETWORKING SESSION
Marilyn Cox, Facilitator**

How to deal with non-receipt of records/files - either during a Team Coordinator's term or to pass on to her successor

Sharing by those who had experienced some problems produced a suggestion to set a deadline for receipt and/or transfer and, if not met, make arrangements to have someone(s) make a personal visit to pick up. The TC needs to ensure that this gets done.

Discussion revealed that in some instances it was discovered that team members were reticent to turn over files because their particular responsibilities hadn't been taken care of. This led to some further ideas on how Teams can ensure that jobs are being done, with the following suggestions:

- Each coordinator needs to present a report covering her actions between meetings as well as plans for the future.
- Team Coordinators should be on top of each member's duties and responsibilities and may need to talk individually with a coordinator if there seems to be a problem.

How Much In Charge is the TC? (Questioning if the TC should be on top of everything that is happening or just be the position that pulls things together?) Responses included:

- Team Coordinators should have complete records of all other coordinators' activities; if not, she or the other coordinators need to talk with those who are not providing up to date information. Keep in mind that this responsibility for knowing and understanding what's going on is a team effort.
- She doesn't have to be "the boss" (it is a team after all!), but her responsibility does involve helping all of the team members coordinate their efforts to achieve the best results for the region.
- Accountabilities/action items are recorded by the secretary and sent out in the report after the meeting.
- One region has each coordinator do a self-evaluation of herself at the end of the year and set an action plan for the next year which is then sent to the TC.
- One region talked about each coordinator getting a review from each of her peers, detailing items such as her interaction with others, her assistance with the team's work, etc. Repeating the review process yearly helps each member track her progress in these areas of teamwork.

Transition Strategies

Ideas to assist new RMT members to get up to speed quickly produced the tried and true strategies.

Let them know team expectations:

- reports to be sent and read prior to the meeting
 - quarterly reports
 - meeting of former and new members to talk about team/region long range planning, how the region is progressing with those plans, etc
 - making sure she has reports and information from at least the last three years
 - have a standard reporting form with a specific format for meeting/quarterly reports to help unify information
 - joint meeting of the former and current RMT.
 - some said that personal contact by the TC (in addition to reports and paper) seems to make the smoothest transition.
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- chances for the entire team to socialize together for get-acquainted/catch up purposes is beneficial
- again, it's imperative that the former coordinator pass on her files, information, plans, etc. to the incumbent in whatever manner is most effective for the two of them.

Aids in Helping Teams Function Better

- Communications Coordinator keeps track of any email consensus items and ensures they're put on the next agenda for ratification
- One region has a contact in each chapter with which the TC keeps in close touch.
- Each coordinator's report includes a plan for what she hopes to accomplish by the end of the next reporting period.
- Team members schedule visits to each chorus with a set agenda (for sharing team ideas, getting chorus input, etc.)
- Some regions have "Town Hall Meetings" at each educational function to discuss RMT actions and plans
- If teams vote online, those decisions need to be ratified at the next meeting to get the outcome into the minutes.
- In response to a question about whether to change meeting venues each meeting or pick one location that is least expensive for travel, some replied they move around while others stay in one designated location and change up the meeting arrangements and/or schedule.

Getting Others Into Regional Service

Marketing the team positions seems to have caught on in the past few years. Some of the ideas included job fairs at regional weekends where each coordinator had displays and talks with members about what she does and what has been accomplished, to help others know that it is fun and rewarding to serve on the RMT. It was agreed that one of the best methods is the personal touch – spotting people who are energetic, clear-headed, enthusiastic, making a difference in their choruses. In order to do this, team members need to have some way to know about these people. Ideas involved chapter visits, chorus liaisons to report to the nominating committee, using a Talent Pool form and keeping it up to date in a database, and presenting this as a topic at a Town Hall Meeting.

Some regions are having success with a Coordinator Associate who shadows a particular coordinator during her current term so the Associate can be more familiar with what the job involves. This includes attending the RMT meetings as an observer with no vote. Another idea is to appoint a trustworthy non-RMT member (perhaps a member from the hostess chorus) to act as secretary for the meetings. Her expenses could be partially (or totally) funded, and this way she can become familiar with how and what the team does.

One concern expressed by some regions is how to keep one chorus from dominating the team positions (ie. too many members from a few choruses). They are concerned that this may lead to mistrust from regional members. Ideas shared seemed to fall into two categories:

- Make arrangements to get as many people from a variety of chapters into chairmanships or leadership positions in front of the region so they can get known and their skills appreciated.
 - Continually exhibit openness with the region about how decisions made by the RMT are thoroughly discussed as to their effect on all members in whatever chorus size or area of
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- the region. Let them know that RMT members don't talk about "their chorus" but share the perspective of other choruses with whom they've conversed. Make sure there's a way to get that input from all choruses.

Consensus: What happens if there's a stalemate on an issue and both sides refuse to budge?

It was agreed that it is wise to be aware of this possibility and, in advance, be thinking about how to ameliorate it. Ideas such as tabling to the next meeting in order to get more research on the topic (be sure to specific members are assigned to investigate), taking a break in the meeting in order to discuss informally, or putting the topic on hold to return to it later in the agenda. It was also suggested that, in some contractual and legal instances, it might be best to go ahead and take a vote and abide by that decision. It's also good to know that the TC can always call headquarters to get direction and information on how to proceed. And, if it appears that no resolution of the situation is going to occur, teams are always able to turn the situation over to headquarters and they will ensure that someone or some group will be able to make the decision.

Regional Assessments

This topic was suggested due to regions hearing that some are incorporating attendance fees for all regional events into their one assessment paid a year. Questions were asked of those who were doing it, and replies varied. There are a variety of methods being used, including adding regional contest AET fees into the assessment versus others who just include regional educational schools and keep contest fees separate. Of those regions represented at the meeting, those who have a flat assessment still have a separate contest fee, and one adds a bus charge onto the contest all events fee. Also, some regions are charging a separate fee to members who don't stay in the hotel(s) for which the region has contracted (examples shared: \$40, \$10).

Strategic Plans

Many regions are overwhelmed with their pages and pages of strategic plan documents and find that they hardly have time to take care of immediate regional business, much less spend time on reviewing their plan at each meeting. Some of the TCs talked about how they have simplified their plan and have chosen to focus on a smaller number of items each year, i.e. 3 goals on which to work. The strategic plan should be a living document rather than just a spreadsheet, as it encompasses the vision and focus for the entire region. Some tactics suggested were to keep each item on a separate sheet, choose goals that fit into or overlap coordinators' already defined duties and simplify as much as possible.

Using Skype for Meetings

It was mentioned that one of the problems with using Skype is that you can only see one person at a time. You can hear any who are speaking, but the sound gets fuzzy when several are talking at once (!!).

One TC mentioned that she has coached quartets on Skype and it's quite effective. One region even mentioned setting up a teleconference for a particular meeting.

Other Ideas and Comments

Some regions have become incorporated to protect individual team members. A cost of \$100 was mentioned, but it could vary from state to state or country.

Kathy Triolo, Region #12 TC, is the new facilitator for the TC Yahoo Group. Contact her at ktricolo@comcast.net.
