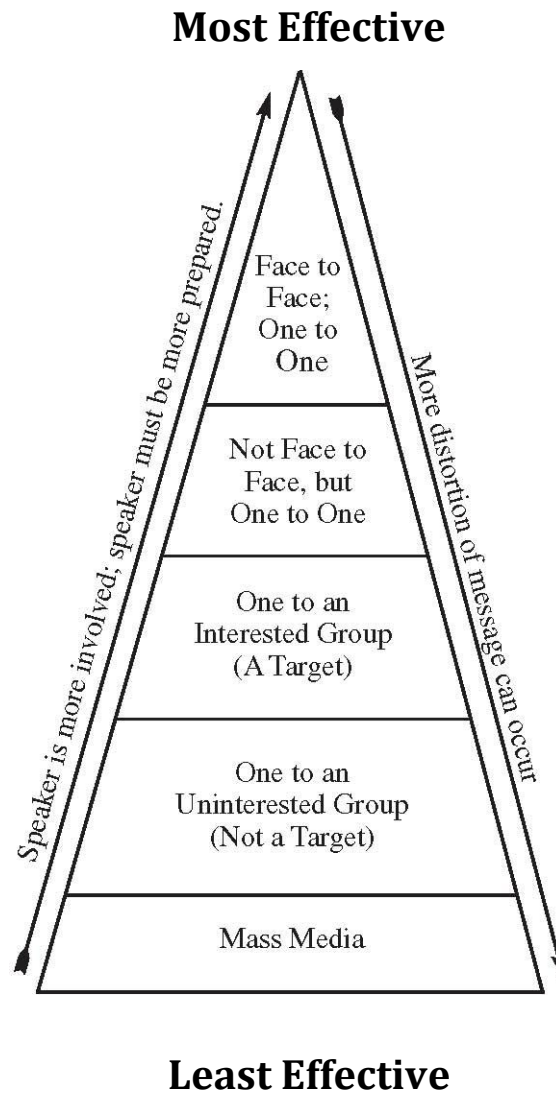


SECTION VII:
COMMUNICATIONS

THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS

The communication process can be depicted as a triangle that is divided into five horizontal sections, unequal in size, importance, and effectiveness. The top of the triangle represents the most effective methods to communicate and the bottom represents the least effective.



Important differences between the top and bottom of the triangle are:

- The closer to the top of the triangle, the more time, preparation and personal involvement is needed for successful delivery of your message.

- The opportunity for distractions or distortion to interfere with the listener's interpretation of a message increases farther away from the top.
- Dialogue occurs between the speaker and the listener only at the top of the triangle.
- Measuring results becomes easier the closer you get to the top of the triangle.

Inside, Outside, All Around Town

Within the chapter, the administrative committee, and the director and her music committee must use the communication process effectively in order for their messages to be received clearly. Messages can be sent by many methods to achieve the desired result, including:

- general chapter announcements at rehearsal
- email
- e-group
- chapter newsletter
- telephone calls outside rehearsal
- personal letters with specific instruction
- chapter bulletin board

When chapter leadership fails to communicate important messages repeatedly and frequently, an informal system - often know as "the grapevine" or just plain gossip - may deliver inaccurate, distorted, and sometimes harmful information that can dampen enthusiasm, diminish morale, scare off new members, and destroy existing relationships within the chapter.

Communicating outside the chapter is just as important. Performance opportunities and new members come from telling people in your community about your chapter and Sweet Adelines International.

You Are the Key

As chapter leader, you are the gatekeeper of the information you receive from internal and external sources. You are responsible for passing along the pertinent information you receive, while keeping sensitive information to yourself. The success or failure of your chapter depends upon a happy, productive environment.

Open, honest communication within the chapter and the communities it serves should be standard operating procedure. You are key in helping individual members prepare for musical and administrative positions within the chapter, the region and at the international level. Communicate truthfully, clearly, and often, repeating your message as many times as necessary to have it understood.

INTERNAL PUBLIC RELATIONS

Each chapter member is a walking, talking, singing advertisement for Sweet Adelines International. People with whom she interacts will believe what she says about the worldwide organization and her chapter before they will believe what the worldwide organization and chapter say about themselves.

Singer, Know Yourself

It is vital that chapter members have current knowledge about the organization - locally, regionally, and internationally. Members must have access to information about anything that affects their chapters including:

- short- and long-range plans
- budgets
- membership changes
- policy or procedure changes
- community involvement
- anticipated performance opportunities
- regional and international news

Keeping members up-to-date so they can be effective representatives of the organization and chapter is as good a definition as any of the internal public relations process. You are strongly encouraged to customize the *Member Handbook*, available in the Marketing Center online, which is a valuable information resource for new and veteran members.

Email – A Blessing and a Curse

Email is by far and away the most popular application on the Internet. Just about everyone uses email. Some users may send one or two messages a week, others dozens, and some send and receive hundreds every day.

This section will give you some guidelines for using email, as well as some pointers about email “etiquette.”

Keep It Short!

Few people enjoy reading on their computer screens; fewer still on the tiny screens in cell phones, PDAs and other mobile devices that are becoming increasingly popular. Email messages should be concise and to the point. It's also important to remember that some people receive hundreds of email messages a day, so they may only skim your message if it's too long.

There's No Such Thing as Private Email

Anyone can easily forward your message, even accidentally. This could leave you in an embarrassing position if you divulge personal or confidential information. If you don't want to potentially share something you write, consider using the telephone.

Formatting

Since reading from a screen is more difficult than reading from paper, the structure and layout is very important for email messages. Use short paragraphs and blank lines between each paragraph. When making points, number them or bullet them.

Use Concise Subject Lines

Be sure to properly title messages to help people organize and prioritize their email. A subject line of "Hi" is not specific enough – your message may either be deleted as junk mail or not be opened in a timely manner. Try to limit your subject line to five to eight words. And never leave the subject line blank.

Threads (topics)

Once you send that first email, you will probably get a response. If you want to reply to that response, just hit REPLY ... don't type a new subject line – this breaks the link (called a "thread") between the original message and your soon-to-be-created response. Without the link, it can get difficult for the users on each end to follow the sequence of messages, especially after several exchanges. This becomes an even larger problem when you are dealing with e-groups (more later) where several people may be replying to messages and trying to follow the thread of exchanged information.

NOTE: when you open your in-box, if you see a series of emails all with the same subject, take some time to read ALL of the emails relating to that topic – starting from the first one through the most recent. Don't start replying immediately after reading the first message.

Threads – Changing the Subject

If you change subjects, be sure to change the Subject line.

To, CC and BCC

- Use the TO: field for people you are directly addressing.
- Use the CC: field for people who are being included as an FYI only. Copy only those who need to be copied. Be sure to check that they weren't already listed on the original message – and if not, forward a copy of the original email to them for reference.

- Use the BCC: field (blind carbon copy) to include others in the conversation. As the name implies, these recipients are not visible to those in the TO: or CC: fields. Using BCC for all recipients is especially important when addressing a message that will go to a large group of people who don't necessarily know each other.
- REPLY ALL – Decide when it is appropriate to send your reply to everyone who received the message and when it's better to send your reply to the sender only.

Quoting

Have you ever received an email response with "I agree" and nothing more in the message? What if the response came many days ... and many emails ... later? Can you remember what the sender is agreeing to? When replying to an email question, the most effective method is called "quoting," where you cut/paste a snippet of the original message (the part with the question) into your reply message. For example:

>and do you agree with the proposal to hire Sue Smith as the emcee for our show?
Yes, I think she'll be great!

The ">" in front of the text indicates to the recipient that this is quoted material from his/her last email message. The second sentence is your response to the quoted material. The key with quoting is to include enough material in the quote so that it will be relevant to the recipient – but not the entire message again.

Attachments

Because of computer viruses, many people won't open attachments unless they know the sender. Even that can be a mistake because some viruses come disguised in email messages from someone you know. Do not send unannounced large attachments. Many people do not realize how large documents, graphics or photo files are. Get in the habit of compressing anything over 200,000 bytes (200K). There are several types of file compression software available for these purposes (for example, winzip for PCs or StuffIt for Macs).

IMPORTANT: Before sending attachments, be sure you have a good virus scanner software program so you don't unknowingly send viruses with your attachments. Get an active program that is always "ON." This will catch any viruses as they are being downloaded so they can immediately be quarantined and cannot infect your system. Update your virus patterns daily or every time you log on. These updates can be downloaded from the website of your virus software manufacturer. Most software has a scheduler to tell your computer to do this automatically. You need to ensure your system is protected from the latest viruses, which may have just been discovered since last you were online. New viruses are identified daily!

NEVER click on any attachment or an .exe (example: Happy99.exe, free stuff, click here or ILOVEYOU.exe) file attached within an email without making sure the attachment has been checked for viruses. **Even if the email appears to come from someone you know very well!** The attachment may be virus generated and plucked your friend's email address off another infected computer belonging to someone they communicated with. Or your friend unknowingly may be

infected and not aware of the virus on her system that has just spawned an email that has her name on it and is addressed to you. The email may look like it is from your friend just to get you to open it when in fact it is an email generated by a virus.

Check Your Spelling and Grammar

To be sure your message isn't compromised by misspelled words, always double-check your message before sending. Use a dictionary or a spell checker — whichever works better for you. While you can write in a conversational tone (contractions are okay), pay attention to basic rules of grammar.

Signatures

Unless your email address is well known to the recipient, always sign your email. Consider setting up an automatic signature in your email software so the same information appears at the bottom of every email you send. For example:

Sue Smith
Communications Coordinator
Harmony Chorus
ssmith@emailcarrier.com

You will sometimes run across a user's signature that contains a quote (as in “Don't just stand there... SING!"). If you want to add a quote, select one that is a reflection of yourself. Keep it short

Respond Promptly

People send an email because they want to receive a quick response. Try to respond to emails within two days – even if it is just to tell the sender that you received it and that you will get back to him/her.

Expecting a Response

Email is a conversation that does not require an immediate response (like a telephone). With email you send a message and then wait for a response. The response may come in five minutes or the response may come in five days. Either way it's not an interactive conversation.

Too many users assume that the minute someone receives an email, the person will read it. If you schedule a meeting for an hour from now and send an email to each attendee, the chance that all the attendees will read that message within the hour will be pretty small. On the other hand, if you schedule the meeting for the next day, the chance that they will read the message will be pretty high.

Receiving and/or Sending Confrontational Emails

In the world of email, a “flame” means you've received or sent a verbal attack in electronic form. Flame email is an insulting message designed to cause pain (as when someone "gets burned”).

Remember that it is very difficult to express tone in writing, and that often times, your “tone” can be misinterpreted. If the subject of your email is, in any way, sensitive or could be misinterpreted, pick up the phone instead.

Don't reply to an email message when angry, as you may regret it later. Once the message has been sent, you will not be able to recover it. Better to write your message one day and then re-read it the next day ... and then either send it or delete it.

Never Respond to Spam

“Spam” is the same as junk mail. It is unsolicited. By replying to spam or by unsubscribing, you are confirming that your email address is “live.” Confirming this will only generate even more spam. Therefore, just hit the delete button or use email software to remove spam automatically.

Avoid Using All Capital Letters

USING ALL CAPS MAKES IT LOOK LIKE YOU'RE SHOUTING! AND IT'S ALSO MORE DIFFICULT TO READ.

Use a “Smiley” To Make Sure That a Statement Is Not Misunderstood

Since there are no visual or auditory cues with email, users have come up with something called “smileys.” They are simple strings of characters that are interspersed in the email text to convey the writer's emotions (cues). The most common example is :-). Turn your head to the left and you should see a happy face (the colon is the eyes, the dash is the nose and the parentheses is the mouth).

Keep in mind, however, that it's rude to write something mean or derogatory, then place a happy smiley at the end of the sentence.

Wait To Fill In the “To” Field

To avoid accidentally sending your message before you're ready, consider leaving the TO: field empty until you are completely through proofing your email and you are sure that it is exactly the way that you want it.

Never give out phone numbers or personal information without confirming you are communicating with a reputable party. Never give out personal contact information of others without their specific permission to do so.

Don't Forward Virus Hoaxes and Chain Letters

If you receive an email message warning you of a new unstoppable virus that will immediately delete everything from your computer, this is most probably a hoax. By forwarding hoaxes you use valuable bandwidth and sometimes virus hoaxes contain viruses themselves, by attaching a so-called file that will stop the dangerous virus.

The same goes for chain letters that promise incredible riches or ask for your help for a charitable cause. Even if the content seems to be bona fide, the senders are usually not.

Before you forward an email that appears good-intentioned with an incredible story that instructs you to "read and share" with everyone you know, first check Snopes.com to see if the story is legitimate or a hoax.

Jokes and Other Unimportant Emails

Don't forward jokes to your family and friends without their permission.

A Strong Chain

It is important that members feel no communication barriers between themselves and chapter, regional or international leadership. You may have heard references to the Sweet Adelines International communications chain. The chain begins with the individual member, and is linked through the chapter to regional and international volunteers. Any chain is only as strong as its weakest link.

Recognize Contributions

Members want to be recognized for their contributions. They also want opportunities to serve. They deserve a nonthreatening environment in which they can offer suggestions, comments and criticisms. A successful internal public relations program will provide for individual recognition.

Effective Internal Relations Tactics

Following is a brief list of tactics your chapter can use to improve internal relations:

- Hold special chapter get-togethers outside rehearsal such as picnics, holiday parties, etc. where the bond among members can be strengthened.
- Post a chapter newsletter/bulletin on your chapter's website. The length and sophistication will depend upon the size of your chapter and its resources. This document should promote the atmosphere of common experience, feelings of belonging, identity, unity, and a source of regular, readable, accurate information. This could be placed in a Members Only section.
- Create a bulletin board where important notices, letters, and even photos can be posted. Ask a member of your chapter to assume the responsibility of monitoring the bulletin board. When information stays up too long, members lose interest.

- Promote member recognition programs such as member-of-the-month/year; best suggestion of the month; perfect or near-perfect attendance; invited the most guests; sold the most tickets. Use your imagination. You know better than anyone the kinds of member recognition that will promote the feeling of belonging. The award does not have to be expensive.

The list does not have to stop here. Any method benefits all if it brings chapter, regional and international leaders closer to members who sing on the risers.

Tools Available

Many tools are available from international sales that your chapter can use to make new and veteran members feel at home in your chapter and the organization.

Visit the Marketing Center online to access a wide variety of Webinars, publications, guides and handbooks that are valuable sources of information. There are many sales items that can be especially helpful in orienting new members to Sweet Adelines International.

Visit Online Sales to review the items that might be helpful to your chapter, especially in the Manuals/Brochures and Public Relations/Marketing sections.

Other tools that individual members should be aware of and encouraged to purchase are:

Judging Category Description Book
Copyright: The Complete Guide
Arranger's Guide
The Performer Prepares
Sight-Singing (book and audio tape)

Because international competition is an educational event, the annual audio and video recordings of chorus and quartet finals are as instructive as they are entertaining.

Duplicating any of the sales materials locally is a violation of the organization's copyright. This practice is larceny and drains your own resources.

EXTERNAL PUBLIC RELATIONS

The term “public relations” is so ambiguous that its meaning is not the same from chapter to chapter. In 1987, The Public Relations Society of America adopted a definition of public relations that even 100% of all professional practitioners cannot agree on: “Public relations is the management function that identifies, establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between the organization and various publics upon whom its success or failure depends.” (Even if you have your own definition of public relations, let’s agree in this guide that the PRSA definition is a starting point.)

The main reason why defining public relations is important in your chapter’s life is because public relations tactics, especially establishing mutually beneficial relationships with targeted publics, can shift the image of Sweet Adelines International and barbershop harmony from that of a mere hobby to that of a quality musical product.

It is to your advantage to create a strong chapter image in your own community. In the absence of a good-singing, happy chorus image, the barbershop stereotype takes over. What is the barbershop stereotype.” Though not the same in all areas of the world, one of the strongest images of barbershop comes from Meredith Willson’s musical and movie, “The Music Man.” As appealing as that image might be, it is not an image of contemporary women singing the art form with excellence.

The Truth, the Whole Truth and Nothing But

Public relations cannot be successful if the story you present to external publics is not truthful. You need to look within your chapter before you focus on forming relationships with external publics. If you skipped the section on internal public relations in this section of the *Chapter Guide*, please take a few minutes and turn back to it. A unified internal public is the basis for all external relationship building.

The amount of internal relationship-building that must be done varies from chapter to chapter. The following must be in place before you can truthfully go to external publics and build mutually beneficial relationships:

- musical quality
- excellence in music education programs
- a chapter atmosphere where members are valued as individuals and derive a sense of belonging and joy from their involvement with the chapter
- a chapter that makes a social contribution to its community

What Do You Want from Your External Relationships?

Some Sweet Adelines chapters enjoy the attention of the media that they have carefully cultivated, while others find their overtures to media repeatedly rebuffed. Keep in mind that barbershop harmony is a special interest that has appeal, but not necessarily universal appeal. In other words, you will attract some important publics and others simply are not going to be interested in your chapter. On all levels, especially local, you should seek to create greater awareness of your chapters as being part of a worldwide organization of women singers committed to advancing the musical art form of barbershop harmony through education and performance. Below are a few tips to help your chapter gain exposure:

- Get involved with other arts organizations in partnerships. Perform for and with local opera companies, community theater groups, community choral ensembles, gospel choirs, etc.
- Solicit members from other singing organizations in your community to join your chapter.
- Network with the convention and visitors bureaus, newcomers' organizations, service clubs, business and professional women's groups, schools, colleges, trade schools, and the opinion leaders and influential citizens in your area.

Please refer to the *Real Guide to Growth Membership Handbook*, available online in the Marketing Center under Training Library tab, for a wide range of information that will assist your chapter in building mutually beneficial relationships.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

The fear of writing and publishing errors keeps many of us from writing letters, memos, news releases, chapter brochures, show flyers, advertising copy, radio public service announcements, etc. It's just a fact that, try as hard as you may, errors are going to occur. Even so, if you are still not comfortable writing, delegate your writing assignments to someone who is.

Writing Effectively

Regardless of the type of document you are writing, you should always follow these principles of effective writing.

- Use short, familiar words. Use a short word instead of a long one when the meaning of the shorter word is as precise as the longer one. Your reader wants information quickly and easily. Short, familiar words hit harder. For example, write “use” not “utilize.”
- Use precise words. Consult a dictionary, thesaurus, or usage guide to make sure each word conveys its correct meaning.
- Use strong verbs. Action verbs strengthen your sentences, tighten your writing and convey a direct, straightforward message. For example, write “The quartet sang my favorite ballad,” not “My favorite ballad was sung by the quartet.”
- Drop excess words. Adjectives, adverbs and prepositional phrases slow readers seeking information. Throw out unnecessary modifiers. Write with nouns and verbs.
- Keep sentences short; try for a 20-word average. Balance long ones with short ones and vary the sentence pattern. Monotony in sentence length puts readers to sleep.
- Get to the point. Go directly to your subject, verb, object. Rambling sentences, packed with qualifying clauses, make your readers lose thought.
- Simplicity. Write to express, not impress. Avoid pompous phrases, generalities and jargon*.
- Let the facts speak. Use concrete terms rather than opinionated descriptions. Overwritten, flamboyant copy cries out for deflation. Write, “We laughed, sang and talked through the night,” not “A good time was had by all.”
- Be human. Don't hide behind an impersonal style. Give your readers some idea of the people involved, their personalities and mannerisms. Tie the story to the reader's experiences. Explain the impact of large numbers on individuals.

- Revision, revision. Read and reread what you write. If deadlines permit, see if you can rewrite your document at least once to improve it. Rewrites are usually shorter, stronger, faster and more readable.

***Beware of Jargon**

To communicate effectively, your words must mean the same thing to your reader as they do to you. As understandable as it may seem to you, audiences outside the organization do not understand much of the jargon that, internally, is common knowledge. When you write a news release announcing that your chapter is traveling to the state capitol for regional competition, your readers probably will not understand the term “regional competition.” Sweet Adelines jargon includes words and phrases such as:

- lock and ring
- Regional Coordinators
- tag
- summer music camp
- CAL

To avoid jargon, write your first draft as though you were telling a story to a nonmember. When you come to a term that is unique to Sweet Adelines or describes the mechanics of the art form, either explain it or delete it.

The Written Image

When Sweet Adelines get together, they represent the image of the organization - in restaurants, hotels, airplanes, at public performances, and on stage. When sporting your chapter’s name and insignia, or the name and insignia of the international organization, written material can have a similar effect of the image of the organization.

According to policy, members are entitled to use the organization’s name and official insignia, but permission must be obtained from the Director of Communications at international headquarters if the items on which the symbol, logo and/or name appear are offered for sale. (See *Policy Book*, Section XII, Div. A, 2, a for details.)

Examples of a Good vs. Poor News Release

When you provide information to the media, there are specific rules for format and content that you should follow. Review the Press Materials in the online Marketing Center for examples. The following example is a news release submitted by a Sweet Adelines chapter. Name of the chapter, its community, the theme, date of the show, and other participants have been changed to protect the identity of the chapter. However, spelling and obvious grammar errors are indicated with (sic) following them.

NEWS RELEASE

“SWEET ADELINES FLYING HIGH”

IT’S (sic) TIME ONCE AGAIN (sic) FOR THE SWEET ADELINES OF XYZ Chapter TO TAKE CENTER STAGE AND “WOW” THE SOCKS OFF OF POTTERSVILLE.

IN APRIL, XYZ CHAPTER WILL PRESENT THEIR 12TH ANNUAL COME ONE COME ALL NIGHT, AND WHAT A NIGHT THEY HAVE PLANNED OR (sic) YOU! NOT ONLY WILL THEIR ADORING PUBLIC BE ABLE TO HEAR THAT LOCK AND RING OF A BARBERSHOP CHORD, BUT THEY HAVE INVITED A FEW FRIENDS ALONG TO MAKE THE EVENT SPECIAL.

THIS YEAR THE BIG TOP CLOWNS WILL JOIN THEM ON STAGE AT THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE AUDITORIUM. THE CLOWN DIVISION WILL ALSO BE IN THE LOBBY BEFORE AND AFTER THE SHOWS MAKING “BALLOON ANIMALS” AND ENTERTAINING IN THEIR OWN UNIQUE STYLE.

A TALENTED CREW OF LOCAL ENTERTAINERS WILL BE ON HAND TO ROUND (sic) OUT A SIDE SPLITTING SKIT CALLED “SWEET ADELINES FLYING HIGH.” COME ON (sic) DOWN AND SEE HOW “CALAMITY JANE” HANDLES A NEW RADIO SHOW IN TOWN, GEARED TOWARD AN “ALL-BARBERSHOP STYLE.”

MAKE YOUR PLANS NOW, FOR SATURDAY - MAY 18TH AT 2:30 PM FOR THE GUILD (sic) COMMUNITY COLLEGE AUDITORIUM - TICKETS \$10.00. FOR INFORMATION CALL 555-1211.

PROCEEDS WILL BENEFIT XYZ Chapter AND THE BIG TOP CLOWN DIVISION.

ALL TICKETS WILL BE SOLD BY THE BIG TOP CLOWNS OR THE BIG TOP CIVIC CLUB (sic) AND WASHINGTON HIGH SCHOOL I.B. HONOR STUDENTS.

SO FLAG DOWN A CLOWN OR AN I.B. STUDENT AND BUY YOUR TICKET TODAY.

When: 2:30 p.m., Saturday, May 18, 2010

Why: Proceeds from ticket sales will be shared between the chapter and the club, which supports adult literacy programs in Pottersville.

How: Tickets are \$10 each. They may be purchased from any member of the XYZ Chapter, Big Top Civic Club, or Washington High School I.B. Honors Society. Further ticket information can be obtained by calling 555-1211.

It Takes a Written Plan

At the beginning of the fiscal year, the public relations chair should provide a public relations plan to chapter leadership. Among the items that should be covered in the plan are:

- publicity of chapter events/activities such as annual shows
- membership drive announcements
- public singing announcements
- special fundraising activities such as Valentine's Day Singing Greetings
- the chapter's preparation for and results from annual regional competition
- submitting articles to *The Pitch Pipe* and *Pitch Pipe Lite*
- results of the annual election of chapter leaders

Social Media Communication

It's evident that communication has expanded significantly in recent years. Who you communicate with and how you communicate has changed drastically through social media. When used effectively, social media can be powerful in building and developing relationships for your chapter internally and externally. To learn more about social media and how to build a successful social media communications plan see Section 2 of the *Real Guide to Growth* membership handbook located in the Training Library of the online Marketing Center.

VERBAL COMMUNICATION

The important thing to remember about successful verbal communication is that in order to G-E-T, you have A-S-K. The media cannot read your mind - nor can the chapter's members, regional leaders, headquarters staff, or international volunteers. Hinting, innuendo, and offhand remarks will not produce the results you want.

When speaking to the chapter, when talking to media, and especially when seeking a performance opportunity, it is important to use good grammar, strong eye contact in face-to-face communication, and an enthusiastic voice. The following interpersonal communication skills will help you as chapter leader to build strong relationships internally and externally:

- ask for what you want
- be a good listener as well as an articulate speaker
- follow through on assignments
- learn the needs of those you seek
- appearance and grooming (dress your face, body and even your voice for your audience)
- organizational knowledge