

## Case Study 1

The director of a mid-size chorus is a music educator, a woman knowledgeable in music theory. Her singers become knowledgeable in music theory and the chorus consistently sings clean (if not exciting or inspired) barbershop. Appearances would indicate this chapter's administration is a sound management team; it gets things done.

But this chorus is not good at injecting some "fun" into rehearsals, or in recognizing people and giving deserved positive strokes. Members tend to feel unappreciated and disenfranchised, and frequently miss rehearsals. In one instance, a member put her heart and soul into chairing a chorus project. The project was successful, and those on the committee were pleased to have helped. But no one acknowledged this woman's effort, or recognized the individuals who made up her team. In another instance, a member felt she was "shot-down" a couple times when she put forth a new idea. She has since stopped trying.

### **What can this chorus do to keep members feeling good about themselves and their organization?**

- Need an "MJ" in their chorus.
- Who is the "MJ" of this chorus?
- Some members to get the ball rolling
- Take initiative – OWN THE CHORUS
- Team approach – Job shadow
- Social time off the risers
  
- Start Simple
  - One member is the "MJ"
  - Anniversary Date on Risers
  - Birthdays – Cards sent
  - Feature one member each month (week)
  - Member of the Month – voted on by the chorus
- Music is there – take next step
- Let loose – socialize (off the risers)
- Suggestion Box – for fun ideas
- Move
- Trust in Team

## Case Study 2

A large chorus is divided on its goals, and it is fragmenting the group. About 75% of the members want to win a regional contest at what they consider “all costs.” They are committed to doing whatever personal or chorus improvement it takes to accomplish this goal.

The other 25% aren’t as committed to the “win at all costs” mentality. They’d like to win a contest too (it’d be great, they say), but they don’t want to devote the extra time and effort it might take to do this, fearing they’d lose what they consider the “heart” of their chorus in the process.

### **How does this chorus retain members in an environment where there isn’t complete alignment on key goals?**

- All share same goal – winning
- Different levels of commitment or passion
  - Build the passion
- Expect all to give personal best or 100%
  - While understanding this varies
  
- Strategies
  - Large group evals/tapes
  - Encourage PVI’s
  - Encourage Regional Schools
    - Consider chorus paying for 1<sup>st</sup> Regional School for new member
  - Grow personal responsibility to practice with your instrument
  - Adapt to members’ needs

### **Case Study 3**

A 20-member chorus lost 3 key leaders in the last 4 months.

One moved away to another state. The second returned to college in order to complete requirements for a teaching degree, and is juggling a schedule that includes student-teaching, her family which includes 2 school-age children, and a part-time job. The third transferred her membership to the larger chorus across town.

These 3 ladies are missed on several levels... their leadership is missed, their voices are missed, and most of all, there's a void in missing their friendship. As a result, the chapter's morale is down. There are now fewer members to carry the load, and there is less money with which to function. The chorus recently took in 2 new members, but the board doesn't want to overwhelm these ladies with committee work or chairmanships this early in their membership. They want to keep the chorus moving forward, but some members are fearful they will be expected to take on additional responsibilities in order to get back to where they were 4 months ago.

#### **What can this group do to turn the spiral around, retain members, and begin re-building momentum?**

- Chorus meeting
  - Discuss current situation/challenges
  - Total transparency = trust = improve morale
  - Establish priorities
  - Reassure members re: part balance, may be asked to try another part
- Involve Regional Management Team
- Ask for interim volunteers
- Keep lines of communication open, esp. #2 & #3 (other membership options: associate, CAL, MAL, dual)
- Membership Drive

## Case Study 4

The Costume Chair and Director of a mid-size chorus come to the Board with a plan for a new costume for the next regional contest. It's a fabulous and new contemporary look that would go nicely with their new contest package. They expect for it to be made by a professional costuming company, and cost \$150 per costume. They also expect to contract for 10 additional costumes in varying sizes, for "future" members.

The Board members like the costume too, and think their members will love having something new and flashy to wear at contest. **BUT...** money has not been budgeted for new costumes this year, and they don't want to dip into the chorus' reserve funds to cover this expense. They'd been adding to their "reserves" for several years in order to buy new risers. At this point, new costumes would need to be funded solely by the members themselves.

The leadership worries about how members might react to this added expense. In the case of at least 8 members, \$150 would be a major financial hardship. Then again.... having a new flashy costume would be a "shot in the arm" for this chorus, and who wouldn't want to have something new to wear on stage.

### **How does the Board resolve this dilemma, and ultimately keep as much of the financial burden as possible off the members?**

- New Costume \$150 – \$0 Budgeted
  - Members pay a portion
  - Fundraising
  - Less expensive costume
  - Increase dues by \$X monthly for reserve fund
  - Postpone new costume plan
  - Require members to earn \$X in fundraising monies every year
  - Members to help sew
  - Purchase used from another chorus
  - Board is responsible for best interest of members (too much \$?)

## Case Study 5

A small chorus in a college town is having difficulty attracting new members. It has an enthusiastic PR Chair who's held the job for 12 of the 15 years she's been a member. She creates colorful fliers and frequently submits press releases to area newspapers. The chorus performs fairly regularly in the community, and is heavily invested in fundraising. They compete annually, and score in the C+ range.

This chorus holds two membership drives a year, and believes they project a warm, inviting, and welcoming environment to their guests. However, as it turns out, very few of their visitors actually join the chorus.

The PR Chair and the Membership Chair are discouraged. They can't understand why all their promotion has not produced more members.

The director is discouraged too, as she feels that was she to have more singers, the chorus would get higher scores in contest.

### **What can this chorus do to keep member morale high and attract new singers?**

- Partner with college for performance exchange
- Review musical selections
- Bring in musical coaches
- Use Regional Team as a resource
- Coordinate PR efforts with other volunteer(s)
  - Need "out of the box" thinking
- Select input from existing members, why they joined and why they stay
- Present BBS 101 for guests
- Plan on the audience to target
- Follow-up calls to guests
- Recheck/refresh style of costumes

## Case Study 6

A small chorus, having experienced regional musical success, has grown very quickly to mid-size. Two years ago it had 26 members. It currently has 49.

Everyone is understandably pleased with their success and growth; they've been able to work through the administrative and financial issues represented by this growth. **But.....** a vast majority of the "original" members are feeling overshadowed by the "new" folks. They wonder if they're as important to this chorus as they once felt they were? They also don't think the membership "knows each other" as well as it used to several years ago.

**What can the leadership of this chorus do to acknowledge that the concern of these members is valid? What can it do to reassure them of their importance in the over-all health and future of the chorus?**

- Mentoring newer members
- Clap for anniversary
- Keep musical interest up
- Acknowledge continued importance of ALL members
- TEAM building, rise & fall together
- Work on goals & expectations
- Recognizing & celebrating each others differences
- Social interaction – but organized
- Clear plan