

# Eastern Region Management Team Workshop 26/7/15

*A summary by Mike Matthew (President of The Canberra Chordsmen) of the key points from the Sydney workshop, attended by about twenty executive management representatives of ER barbershop choruses and facilitated by Richard Reeve (BHA VP Membership)*

1. The focus of the workshop was on the five 'M's that are critical to the running of a barbershop chorus club: Music, Membership, Money, Marketing and Mystique. All five factors need to be considered when developing strategic plans or project plans to enable effective leadership and management of a barbershop club.

2. Each of these five factors had several components that clubs need to address to achieve an effectively run chorus; and the linkages between the factors also need to be considered (*hint: remember that any system is only as good as its 'weakest link'*).

## 3. MUSIC

- Need to consider repertoire; rehearsals; copyright; coaching; auditioning (for new members and competitions); development and accountability of MD; communication with members about auditions, riser etiquette etc (including communication from section leaders)
- With the repertoire, need to consider the mix of songs (up-tunes, ballads, comedy etc); the age and types of songs (especially with regard to likely audiences); how many new songs to learn each year; arrangements of songs; the suitability of songs to new and existing members
- Need to have clear roles for MD, assistant MD(s), Music Team, section leaders, librarian, visual presentation coordinator, rehearsal manager, coaching coordinator; feedback should be provided to assistant MDs when they conduct at rehearsals
- The Music Team plays an important role; ideally the Vice-President Music should not be the MD; the Music Team should be accountable to the chorus members through the Vice-President Music and the Executive committee; the Music Team determines who is to prepare each rehearsal structure and should map out an education plan for the MD and Assistant MD/Music Team
- **References:** documents on the BHA website including "Directing a Barbershop Chorus", "Music Vice-President Manual", and documents on the BHS website including "Contest and Judging Manual", "Music Team and Leadership Manual"

#### 4. MEMBERSHIP

- Key issues are recruitment, induction and retention
- **Recruitment:** need to consider methods of recruiting including advertising, 'learn to sing' or 'sing barbershop' programs, family and friends referrals, word of mouth, website attractiveness; planning for recruitment each year needs to address how many new singers are desired? what type and mix are desired? what are the demographics? when to conduct a sing barbershop program? how to market? etc etc
- **Induction:** need to consider the welcoming program; communication and information; *assign a 'buddy' to help new members feel welcome and to keep in touch with them over their first few weeks in particular*
- **Retention:** need to consider how new members and existing members can feel connected (*aim for consistent member engagement*); appoint someone to get in touch with members who are away for two or more weeks without notice; seek feedback from members after each performance; foster respect between Music Team and members

#### 5. MONEY

- A club might want to start with a consideration of what revenue it might wish to achieve in the planning period
- Cost/revenue issues to consider include membership fees, discounts for various groups (eg youth members), sheet music and other music fees, contest fees, advertising costs, salaries, MD education, copyright fees, coaching costs, uniform costs, costs of retreats and away trips etc
- Methods of raising funds (on top of membership fees) could include performance ticket sales, seeking grants and sponsorships, busking, sausage sizzles at Bunnings and so on (*we noted that Penrith chorus was sponsored by a League's Club for over \$5000 a year with free use of rehearsal space in exchange for putting on about 12 performances at the Club each year; also, several clubs conduct sausage sizzles at Bunnings and obtain takings of about \$1000 on a good weekend*)

#### 6. MARKETING

- The marketing 'mix' is built around the four P's: price, product, promotion and place
- **Product:** need to consider what product the chorus has to offer to the community, to sponsors, to (new) audiences, to existing and new members and to contest judges (recognizing that we can't be all things to all people); consider the quality and positioning of your product and ways to sustain and improve this quality so that the life cycle of your

product (and the chorus 'mystique') is enhanced over time

- **Place:** need to consider the location of venues for taking your product to audiences (should it be a central location with easy access and parking? are the acoustics suitable in the concert hall? etc etc); also, consider the convenience of the location for rehearsals; the chorus website can become a popular place to 'sell' product to customers
- **Price:** need to consider what we can charge for any concert performances (*many of the ER choruses charge for concerts*); also, consider the method of selling tickets (eg through Trybooking) and what discounts might apply to the ticket price (need to be aware of the customer's 'perceived value' of our product – if we over-charge or under-charge tickets may not sell)
- **Promotion:** need to consider a mix of marketing methods to promote our product including advertising, media releases, sponsorship deals, fliers, road signs, sing-outs, word-of-mouth etc; consider marketing the chorus product through some good quality videos of its recent performances on the website; need to foster a close relationship with sponsors so they keep coming back to us

## 7. MYSTIQUE

- The 'mystique' factor in a chorus could relate to any of the following: the camaraderie that exists between members; the commitment and attitude that members have to barbershop; the dedication that members have to attending rehearsals and performances; the community service we undertake (and how we are viewed by the community); the audience reaction at our performances; our sponsor support levels
- The mystique factor is linked to our on-going chorus culture
- Hint: design a feedback sheet for chorus members to complete after our performances

## 8. CASE STUDY 1 (discussed in a syndicate group exercise)

### Planning for increased youth membership in a chorus

- **Music:** How does our repertoire encourage young people to try us out? Do we need to broaden our repertoire? The addition of new songs in the repertoire can appeal to current members.
- **Membership:** Consider the current membership in terms of its mix and average age. Is there a need to conduct a drive for some more younger members? Does the club want to foster the establishment of a youth quartet?

- Money: Consider a budget for a drive to attract youth into the chorus, including discounted membership and uniform fees and a 'musical offering' to take to local schools/colleges to enable an entry into that facility (such as purchasing one or two musical stands or pitch pipes to take to the facility in exchange for allowing us to make a presentation to their students and allowing a quartet to sing to their students)
- Marketing: Consider placing one or two appropriate songs on the chorus website that would appeal to potential youth members. Arrange for a quartet (preferably a youth quartet) to visit colleges and sing a couple of songs, or to appear on a popular radio program that appeals to the younger audience. Consider how a 'learn to sing' or 'sing barbershop' program might appeal to younger people, such as placing road signs near schools and colleges.
- Mystique: Consider how the addition of more young people in the chorus provides an opportunity to showcase the appearance of the chorus (with snappier uniforms) and enhance the image of barbershop in the community in a way that retains the beauty of the genre but reaches out to the broader community and to younger people

## 9. CASE STUDY 2 (discussed in the whole workshop group)

### Deciding whether to accept an invitation to perform

- Music: Do we have a suitable repertoire for this gig/show? Do we have enough songs to sing? Are those songs appropriate for the expected audience? Is the venue suitable for our chorus? Do we have enough members available to sing, with an appropriate balance of four parts?
- Membership: Will the performance be enjoyable for our members? (don't forget the benefits of conducting a brief member satisfaction survey after the gig). Will the performance assist our recruitment goals - will there be some potential new members in the audience?
- Money: How much will we charge for this event? How much is being offered?
- Marketing: How can we use this performance as an opportunity to attract new members and new sponsors?
- Mystique: How can we use this performance to boost our reputation and the image of barbershop in the community?

## 10. FINAL WORDS OF THE WORKSHOP

Keith and Richard thanked those in attendance for their contributions during the day and invited them to send club 'success stories' to Keith Thornton (BHA VP Marketing) and Richard Reeve (BHA VP Membership) and as an article for inclusion in 'In Harmony'. Richard Wadick was thanked for arranging the workshop and those present agreed that regular workshops of this type would be a benefit to club executives/management teams.