

Tips for Effective Communication * Region 15 Leadership Day 2/1/2020

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I am Region 15 Communications Coordinator, and have been a Chorus Communications Coordinator and Chorus Competition Liaison. And I work in book publishing, in marketing and operations. Those roles inform this list of tips. I hope you will find some ideas here that resonate with you, and can be added to your toolbox!

Communication is...

- Key to the success of any group endeavor.
- Writing, speaking, sharing, *listening*, being proactive, and following up.
- The tip of the spear. Many people are working hard for the chorus, but communication keeps the membership informed and involved.
- A way to avoid duplicate efforts, prevent confusion/frustration, and help people feel connected to a common cause and to each other.

HOW EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IS LIKE BARBERSHOP

- It's the shapewear under the costume, the foundation under the makeup.
- It delivers a message, merges a host of skills, and is ever-evolving.
- Elements layer together to form a whole. How communication is like our four parts:
 - BASS – Foundation / Method (weekly email, contest info sheet)
 - LEAD – Context, tone, style, delivery (what's this message about / why)
 - BARI – Logistics (who, what, when, where, why, how)
 - TENOR – Cherry on the sundae (call to action, respond to x by y)
- It requires balance!
 - Say enough to get your point across / Don't over-communicate
 - Put it in writing / Keep it live and offline
- There's no "I" in barbershop – it's about the message, not the messenger.

COMMUNICATION TIPS – In no particular order...

Timing

Plan ahead, share info in advance, provide clear schedules and due dates.

Set up standard intervals for chorus outreach (i.e. weekly email on Monday).

Communication is a two-way street. (Listen. And solicit feedback.)

People need to be heard / appreciated. Have clear avenues of communication back to chorus leadership.

"It all Greek to me"

Remember that our hobby carries with it a host of insider terms. For the benefit of newer members, you may need to provide some context or definitions.

Draft is your friend

Draft your message in Word or Google Docs, etc. before sending your email. This allows you to sketch an outline, come back to flesh it out, edit, spell-check, etc. If you draft in your email program, don't put recipients into the message until you are ready to send. That will ensure you don't inadvertently send before it's ready!

When in doubt, talk it out

Not sure how to word something? Not sure if you have explained something fully? Read it out loud to hear how it sounds, or share it with a friend or family member for feedback.

Questions: Ask them. Anticipate them.

Don't guess or assume – ask! And think about what you would want to know, and see if you can locate and provide all of that information.

Be proactive

Take the initiative. Reach out. Follow-up.

Help them help you

Set up resources to help the rest of the leadership feed you the information you need to share with the chorus. (Shared document where folks can post their updates, clear deadlines for getting you their updates, etc.)

Respect confidentiality. Privacy matters.

If it's sensitive or private, don't put it in writing. (All email can be forwarded!)

There's no "I" in barbershop

As noted above, it's about the message, not the messenger. Avoid using the word "I" since you are speaking on behalf of the organization, and sharing information from a team. ("I" makes things personal. Use it judiciously.) It's not about you. Be open to honest feedback. Don't editorialize. Don't take it personally or make it too personal.

Templates

Don't start from scratch every time. Make and use templates for repeatable information to save yourself time. (How you prep the agenda or minutes for a team meeting, how you draft the weekly newsletter, showtime sheet layout, contest info emails, etc.)

CC: and Reply All

Use carefully. Loop in all of the necessary people. But avoid over-use.

Put it in writing / Take it offline

After a live conversation, it can be very helpful to log the key points and follow-up items discussed in an email, to capture everything for all involved. Alternately, some sensitive things shouldn't be handled via email. Choose to discuss in person.

"Measure twice, cut once."

You can't un-send the email. Mistakes will happen, but you can limit them by taking the time to draft, read and reread (and maybe even enlist another reader) before you hit send. Especially on a dense or complicated message. Spell-check only takes you so far.

Be honest. Be tactful.

This one speaks for itself.

Know and respect your audience

Understand and honor differences and preferences across your membership. You are likely addressing members of various ages and longevities with SAI/your chorus – as well as other types of diversity. This includes different personality types! Being informed can help manage anxiety of the unknowns. Some members are happy to go with the flow, but others need more information!

Don't be a hero

You are not alone! Ask for help. Crowdfsource. Look for and utilize tools and assistance (proofreader, style help, another set of eyes, etc.)

Customer Service

Think of communications as “customer service” for your chorus. People come to you with issues or problems, looking for information or explanation, etc. Be responsive. Be available. And keep in mind that you represent the chorus in your communications.

Call to action

If there is follow-up required by the membership, be sure to provide a clear and concise “call to action” in your message. This should include any applicable deadline(s).

Avoid communication overload

Avoid bombarding your members with info. Compile information in to weekly newsletter. Use ad hoc emails for truly critical time-sensitive communications. And if you have supplementary information that some may want, but is not critical to the matter at hand, consider a link out to further information.

Hello? Hello??

There is nothing worse than radio silence when you email someone with a question. If you can't respond promptly, a quick “I'll get back to you” helps. It provides acknowledgement that the message was received. (Just be sure to eventually respond!)

Consistency. Accuracy. Trust.

Be a trusted resource, and source of consistent and accurate information.

Be clear and concise

- Stay on message. Keep it simple.
- Link out to more details
- Use bullet points
- Try a “table of contents” at the top of newsletter to help folks with “topline” info

Formatting isn't just pretty

Use bold, italics, underlining to call out key parts of your message
Lists and bullet points can help consolidate info-heavy messaging

Explore various methods

Live communication, email, website tools, Facebook groups, Slack – consider using several of these to drive home messages and be discoverable by your various members. (For example, include full info on contest in the newsletter and repeat the key deadlines in a post your private Facebook group.)

Take a Quick Minute to Prep Meeting Minutes

Take notes during team meetings, and schedule in time shortly afterwards for finalizing those notes. (Recap action items at the top with names attached. Share with team for review, and give a timeline for any feedback. Post a final version to your team's shared resources location. Share a curated version where the chorus can access it. You are working on behalf of the chorus, and your chapter is a non-profit – they should be kept up to speed on your efforts.)

Google Drive

Google Drive is a free cloud-based storage service that enables users to store and access files online. You can store chorus resources, manage access to those resources, collaborate online, and more. Drive aggregates several programs in one place – including Google Docs (like Word), Google Sheets (like Excel), Google Slides (like PowerPoint), Google Forms (a great poll-generating tool), and more. These tools are powerful and free!

HOW TO HELP REGION 15 COMMUNICATE WITH YOU AND YOUR MEMBERS

Join us on social media

- Connect with Greater NY/NJ Region 15 on Facebook and Twitter

Visit the Greater NY/NJ Region 15 website (www.sairegion15.org)

- Public site – Featured events, regional news, information on our choruses and quartets, etc.
- Members Only site – With login our members can access Regional Music, Regional Directory, and many other resources
- The Regional Directory is KEY to communication!
 - User Admins for each chorus (usually Membership Coordinator) should add new members to the directory, and code them each with these two roles: Member + Chorus Name. The attached roles flag members for inclusion on email lists!
 - Once the record is set up a Member can update directly.
 - Ensemble Content Managers for each chorus are able to edit their chorus or quartet page, and can add to “Our Recent News.” This news will appear on the ensemble page, as well as the “Around the Region” area on the regional homepage.