

## Setting High Standards For Your Chorus

**Objective - to provide directors & chorus leaders (members) concepts and techniques that will assist them in how to build and maintain a culture of high standards for their chorus. Exploring the unlimited possibility of achievement for choruses of any size.**

The barbershop world has many successful choruses and there are many reasons for success and not one formula is the answer, in my opinion. The key is finding a system, or set of principles that work for you and your chorus.

Pat Summitt, the extremely successful and former Women's Basketball Coach at the University of Tennessee said ***“Long-term, repetitive success is a matter of building a principled system and sticking to it. Principles are anchors, without them you will drift.”***

Three key factors in building and maintaining a culture of high standards for a chorus.

1. Know your chorus personality, culture and identity.
  - What kind of chorus are you?
  - Identifying your chorus culture
2. Where do you want to go?
  - Strong Administrative and Musical Leadership
3. How do we get there?
  - Have visions, expectations and goals.

### **1. Know your chorus personality, culture and identity**

1. Core Values - Are the guiding principles that dictate behavior and action.  
This can be established in a chorus goal setting session.
2. Affirmation Statement - An affirmation is an announcement in present tense of some condition you want to create in the future.
  1. Start with words “I Am” or “We Are”
  2. Use the present tense
  3. State in the positive
  4. Affirm what you want, not what you don't want
  5. Make your intent clear

*Harmony From the Inside Out* - Jan Carley

3. Establish a “safe” environment - *Choral Charisma*, Tom Carter. Creating a safe choral environment where everyone is respectful and supportive of one another. In this setting, then singers will feel safe. When they feel safe, they allow themselves to be vulnerable and connect with each other and the music on a deeper level. This cannot be done in an atmosphere that is filled with judgement,

ridicule or condescending attitudes/behaviors. Is your rehearsal a safe environment?

4. Take action - like all choruses (all groups) there is a small core group that tends to be more active than others. We should lead by example and new members quickly fall into the pattern of doing what needs to be done.
5. Develop "servant leaders" -- have leaders that are truly there FOR the members and for the good of the unit...no one is into power for powers sake or puts on airs or wants special treatment. The leaders make it clear we are both responsible FOR and responsible TO the chorus, and we try to live to that.
6. Know your singers - Know their names and something about them. *People don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care.* Treat them with respect.
7. Provide opportunities for time together away from rehearsals for social events.

## **2. Strong Administrative and Musical Leadership**

1. Chorus Management Team (Board) is proactive and supports the Music Team and the musical programs in the chorus.
    1. BOD/MGMT TEAM - BOD - Does the director attend board meetings?
      - Music should go on unimpeded.
    2. Music Team - You can't do this alone. Surround yourself with people that will challenge you, support you and that you can trust. Not "yes" people.
      1. Responsibilities, how often do they meet?
      2. Does your music team members know their responsibilities?
        - Develop and implement programs in the chorus that promote individual growth for our singers, and for the chorus as a whole.
- Does your BOD & MT ever have joint meetings?**
2. Financial commitment to actively manage the budget to a goal, rather than capturing whatever happened. Being good stewards with the money we have and using it wisely. Not that MONEY is the cornerstone of anything in the chorus, but it is the mechanism by which we get things done.
  3. Commitment to have great coaches, giving the impetus to continue raising the funds needed to be a successful chorus.
  4. Commitment to educating the director and other leaders.

## **3. Have visions, expectations and goals.**

1. The musical leadership should always seek new ways to challenge your singers and help them grow.
2. Value your past and your traditions, but don't be afraid to add new ones or adjust if things aren't working.
3. Constantly nurture the skills/talents of new members... there is a great mix of newer and older members in almost every aspect of a chorus -- they give us "fresh eyes" but also maintaining your connection to the past and using the expertise we have.
4. Ask everyone to give 100%, but recognize that everyone's 100% is not the same.

5. Be willing to say "I was wrong" and "I made a mistake" -- whether it's someone on the risers saying "yup, that was me" or a member of the MT or CMT saying, "I missed this deadline and I need your help" -- we rarely have people hiding mistakes (which only makes them worse) or blaming others. This means we have created a safe place where you can bring your best effort, even if it doesn't always get the best result....at first.
6. Have a level of expectation that chorus members will come to rehearsal prepared. The members will chosen personal responsibility.

When you establish goals as a chorus, letting your singers provide input, then they will have more buy in and ownership.

### **Pat Summitt's Definite Dozen**

#### **1. Respect Yourself and Others**

- There is no such thing as self-respect without for others.
- Individual success is a myth. No one succeeds all by herself.
- People who do not respect those around them will not make good team members and probably lack self-esteem themselves.
- When you ask yourself "Do I deserve to succeed? make sure the answer is yes.

#### **2. Take Full Responsibility**

- There are no shortcuts to success.
- You can't assume larger responsibilities without taking responsibility for the small things too.
- Being responsible sometimes means making tough, unpopular decisions.
- Admit to and make yourself accountable for mistakes. How can you improve if you're never wrong?

#### **3. Develop and Demonstrate Loyalty**

- Loyalty is not unilateral. You have to give it to receive it.
- The family business model is a successful one because it fosters loyalty and trust.
- Surround yourself with people who are better than you. Seek out quality people, acknowledge their talents, and let them do their jobs. You will win with people.
- Value those colleagues who tell you the truth, not just what you want to hear.

#### **4. Learn to Be a Great Communicator**

- Communication eliminates mistakes.
- Listening is crucial to good communication.
- We communicate all the time, even when we don't realize it. Be aware of body language.
- Make good eye contact.
- Silence is a form of communication too. Sometimes less is more.

#### **5. Discipline Yourself So No One Else Has To**

- Self-discipline helps you believe in yourself.
- Group discipline produces a unified effort toward a common goal.
- When disciplining others, be fair, be firm, be consistent.
- Discipline helps you finish a job, and finishing is what separates excellent work from average work.

## **6. Make Hard Work You Passion**

- Do things that aren't fun first, and do them well.
- Think big, work small.
- Plan your work, and work your plan.
- See your-self as self-employed.

## **7. Don't Just Work Hard, Work Smart**

- Success is about having the right person, in the right place, at the right time.
- Know your strengths, weaknesses, and needs.
- When you understand yourself and those around you, you are better able to minimize weaknesses and maximize strengths.
- Be flexible.

## **8. Put the Team Before Yourself**

- Teamwork doesn't come naturally, it must be taught.
- Teamwork allows common people to obtain uncommon results.
- Not everyone is born to lead. Role players are critical to group success.
- In group success there is individual success.

## **9. Make Winning an Attitude**

- Combine practice with belief.
- Attitude is a choice. Maintain a positive outlook.
- No one ever got anywhere by being negative.
- Confidence is what happens when you've done the hard work that entitles you to succeed.

## **10. Be a Competitor**

- Competition isn't social. It separates achievers from the average.
- You can't always be the most talented person in the room. But you can be the most competitive.
- Influence your opponent. By being competitive you can affect how your adversary performs.
- There is nothing wrong with having competitive instincts. They are survival instincts.

## **11. Change Is a Must**

- It's what you learn after you know it all that counts the most.
- Change equals self-improvement. Push yourself to places you haven't been before.
- Take risks. You can't steal second with your foot on first.

## **12. Handle Success Like You Handle Failure**

- You can't always control what happens, but you can control how you handle it.
- Sometimes you learn more from losing than winning. Losing forces you to reexamine.
- It's harder to stay on top than it is to make the climb. Continue to seek new goals.