

# Society for the Preservation and Propagation of BarberShop Quartet Singing in the United States

## MEMBERSHIP GROWTH MANUAL

This manual contains suggestions for Lodges, quartets and our general membership to share music, fellowship and fun with men of good character who like to sing, resulting in the acceleration of membership growth of SPPBSQSUS, Inc. (hereinafter "SPP") in each community.

Here are the main areas for consideration:

1. Lodge Development
2. Schools, Churches and Malls
3. Civic Events
4. Advertising
5. Charitable Work
6. Sporting Events
7. Top Gun Schools
8. Joint SPP-BHS-SAI-HI Events
9. Open Mic Events
10. Individual Invitations
11. Friends in Harmony
12. Advanced Dues Increase Announcement

1. **LODGE DEVELOPMENT:** The Lodge is the best avenue to add members to the Society. The SPP website lists the ten steps to forming a lodge. Those steps address the official business aspect of lodge formation, but they alone are not sufficient. A healthy lodge that is geared toward growth must have:
  - a. **DYNAMIC MUSICAL LEADER:** This key man must have adequate musical experience and charisma to consistently lead meetings that include chorus rehearsals, quartet development and recreational singing. He chooses the songs and arrangements, distributes them (legally) to members, prepares a schedule for each meeting, and conducts the chorus in rehearsals and performances. He may encourage participation in the musical leadership by other members.
  - b. **SPIRITUAL LEADER:** While SPP professes no specific religion, there is a spiritual aspect to a Lodge that must not be ignored. The Spiritual Leader must be a good communicator who sees that every member and every visitor receive deserved recognition. He interviews and introduces all the guests. He thanks those who contribute behind the scenes. He lets absentees know they were missed with a phone call, email, text or a visit. He arranges periodic lunches with one or more members. He announces illnesses, births and deaths in the families of members. This person can also be the Musical Leader, but not necessarily.
  - c. **LODGE BULLETIN EDITOR:** The email bulletin (the frequency of which coincides with the rehearsal schedule) gives members and prospective members an idea of meeting and performance schedules. It is

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a vehicle in which the Spiritual Leader announces illnesses, births and deaths of members, associates and family members, and mentions and thanks those who have done extra work behind the scenes. The Bulletin Editor keeps the Lodge roster updated to ensure the members can communicate with each other easily by phone and by email.

- d. **BALANCED MEETING SCHEDULE:** Many Musical Leaders spend all of the meeting time on chorus rehearsal and completely ignore the other two fun elements of the hobby – quartet singing and tag-singing. It is recommended that a Lodge spend roughly half of each meeting on chorus rehearsal, one quarter of the time on quartet development, one quarter of the time on tag-singing and/or woodshedding, plus a 15-minute break with a snack.
- e. **PUBLIC RELATIONS MANAGER:** This person need not be a member, but must have the skill and knowledge of social media which are free avenues one can use to consistently announce meetings, periodic performances, other events and cancellations. The attachment of photos and videos will enhance those regular announcements.
- f. **MEETING PLACE:** The first meeting is usually held at the home of one of the Lodge organizers, but soon thereafter, you will need a larger facility — a room at a business, school, church, clubhouse, hotel or civic center. Many times, such organizations will allow a Lodge’s wholesome activities at no charge or for a small rent fee. Usually, one of the Lodge members will have a connection that results in an invitation to use the room. Respect the security rules of the house, and be sure to clean up after each meeting. Of course, you should choose a meeting place that is centrally located in the community your Lodge intends to serve.
- g. **MEETING SCHEDULE:** Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays are the most common days for meetings. Some men have church obligations on Wednesdays and Sundays, and most prefer to keep Fridays and Saturdays open for family activities and performances. Evening get-togethers usually last 2-1/2 hours, starting at 7:00 PM. Whatever day and time you choose be consistent, as changing the meeting time or date may negatively affect attendance.
- h. **REPERTOIRE:** There are plenty of sources for songs and arrangements. It is wise to begin with Public Domain charts, so that payment of copyright fees will not be necessary. The SPP website already includes a “*Chestnuts*” Program, which will eventually include 100 free charts with part predominant learning tracks. Such audio learning tools are not required, but they can accelerate the learning process by helping ear-singers keep up with sight-readers. In addition to Chestnuts and other traditional barbershop arrangements, it is recommended that you include a healthy dose of patriotic and religious songs, as many performances in your community will come from churches and civic events. Of course, there are other sources for free arrangements. BHS offers some free charts to members and non-members alike. Some arrangers will directly share their charts of public domain songs at no charge. A

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Lodge can always pay a small fee per copy for copyrighted barbershop arrangements listed on Sheet Music Plus (or at BHS), or can pay a hefty fee to the publisher for a protected work not listed there.

- i. **RECRUITING METHODS & ETHICS:** All men of good character who like to sing are welcome. Invite inactive barbershoppers in the area to attend your meetings. They may become the core of your lodge, and you can expand it with new barbershoppers when you are ready. It may seem indelicate, but we are aware that members of other singing societies are failing to renew their memberships for a number of reasons. Our Society gives them someplace to go, instead of just “away.” Find a way to reach those fellows, so they will know that we exist. Our music, fellowship and fun are here waiting for them to join us. We offer them a respite from aloneness.
  
- j. **LANGUAGE:** Of course, we don’t use foul language in our meetings or in our bulletins. That’s not what we mean by “language.” Lodge #1 (San Antonio) Musical Leader Artie Dolt has impressed us with the use of certain words and the avoidance of others. We don’t “recruit.” Instead, we “give the gift of an invitation” to attend a meeting, and experience music, fellowship and fun. We don’t use the term “sing-out” or “gig.” Instead, we are looking for “engagements” or “performance opportunities.” SPP doesn’t sponsor chorus contests because we don’t want to motivate anyone to implement performance accountability standards. We hope every lodge will be open to every man of good character who likes to sing. Quartets are exclusive by nature, and quartet contests provide goals and fun for those who wish to excel in performance. The word “contest” just doesn’t compute for the Lodge chorus because our main focus is on fellowship and fun. The music is merely the catalyst for the other two.
  
- k. **ADMINISTRATOR:** Eventually, you will have your minimum of ten men who sign up as SPP members, and it will be time to start the process to become a lodge. There will be articles of incorporation, by-laws, ethics and other administrative necessities. Choose a fellow who enjoys that kind of behind-the-scenes work, to move the process along.
  
- l. **TREASURER:** Every Lodge member should be a member of SPP, dues for which are \$50 for a lifetime membership. There may be occasions when the SPP Board of Directors will put the word out that the organization needs more bucks. The Lodge, however, will need some scratch to get things going. Weekly snacks and bottled water cost money. Filing papers with governing authorities to set up a non-profit corporation often requires a fee. Some meeting places will require rent money. If the group wants to sing protected works, copyright fees must be paid. If the group needs learning tracks that are not part of the Chestnut program, they must be purchased. As the group matures, someone should be selected to collect startup money from the members. Eventually, the organization will need a bank account for deposits. Receipts will include Lodge dues, occasional donations, and fees received from performances. At that point, the by-laws will guide him. The Treasurer produces a periodic financial report for the Lodge members.

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2. **SCHOOLS, CHURCHES AND MALLS:** Sending a quartet to visit a high school produces Lodge visitors, who may become members of a barbershop chorus. The quartet may pass out free CDs to the students, and teach them some tags. Substituting for vacationing church choirs produces additional members. Regular performances at area malls, passing out cards and gathering prospects' contact information leads to visitors and members. A single person who visits high schools with nothing but recordings and sheet music to teach tags can produce members. That's how the champion quartet "4 Voices" came to be. Two of those guys are active barbershoppers to this day as singers, directors and officers.
  
3. **CIVIC EVENTS:** Bobby Gray described his Joplin "Tri-Statesmen" Lodge as a success when they participated in the City of Joplin's "Sesquicentennial" celebration in April 2023. They enlisted the aid of SPP that donated \$2,000, SPP individual members who donated another \$1,000, and Harmony Foundation that donated \$8,500. The money enabled them to bring in the then current BHS champs, **Quorum**, an SAI finalist quartet, **Duly Noted** and our own SPP medalist, **Saturday Evening Post**. They also brought in champion chorus director Dr. Jim Henry. They organized a barbershop clinic for 100 area high school students, and put together a chorus composed of local and out of town barbershoppers as well as local non-barbershoppers to perform with the quartets on a Saturday evening show. Great fun was had by all, and the Lodge gained four new members. At Ken Hatton's home in Decatur, AL, he and his wife, Kay held the third annual "Hattonland" barbershop bash on Memorial Day weekend which was attended by 30 quartet men from all over the country, and 15 of them brought their wives. In addition, the seven singers who were committed to our northern Alabama Lodge were in attendance. The 45<sup>th</sup> annual Alabama Jubilee was scheduled for that Saturday at nearby Point Mallard Park. Ken made an appointment to see the mayor, and asked him if the ensemble could sing some patriotic songs for the crowd. Mayor Bowling made it happen, and "The Fraternity" gave a 30-minute performance with a chorus of 37, including two quartets. As a result, the fledgling "hope-to-become-a-Lodge" gained seven new committed singers, doubling the size of the group. Twenty-seven weeks after startup, we now have (16) committed singers. The Joplin event had a budget of \$25,000, and took a year of planning. Our Alabama event had a budget of \$1,500, and took six weeks of planning. These two events had something important in common. Both groups invited experienced barbershoppers from out of town to help them put on a show that produced local growth. We will call it the "Barbershop Blitz."
  
4. **ADVERTISING:** Bobby Gray reported that print media, billboards, radio & TV appearances and social media are helpful in getting name recognition for one's Lodge. While production of new members cannot be attributed to a single such ad, such methods add credibility to the group, so that one-on-one invitations are more successful. That is true when selling a product or service, or else companies wouldn't spend money on them. Rational analysis is sometimes adequate evidence, but the Lodge has to invest the dollars and the time it takes to coordinate such ads with guest nights, meetings and performances. Of these types of ads, social media is the least expensive. An experienced person should be appointed to set up a Facebook page, a Twitter account, etc. Jay Giallombardo advises that a new app called MEETUP can help get the word out to a segment of the community. It costs about \$20 a month to advertise your group's dates on the APP. Jay also suggested that a "**Tag of the Week**" post on Facebook, that is shared by chorus members can have a

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positive impact. In Alabama, our upcoming performance attracted a local newspaper to do a story on us that contributed to the success of the event (which produced visitors).

5. **CHARITABLE WORK:** Bobby Gray advises that his bunch set up a scholarship for Missouri State University called the “Tri-Statesmen Barbershop Vocal Scholarship.” It produces recurring positive recognition for the Joplin Lodge, and produces help from the university with access to meeting places and performances, as well as opportunities to present barbershop to vocal music classes.
6. **SPORTING EVENTS:** Rob Seay related that his Chorus of the Chesapeake sings the National Anthem for Baltimore Orioles games once each year. They invite non-barbershop singers to participate with them. The newbies get free admission to the game, and are exposed to the chorus’ music and fellowship. Some join. There are major league, minor league, college and high school teams in most communities, where we can all do the same. The twist is planning ahead to include extra singers. Some of them have joined.
7. **TOP GUN SCHOOLS:** Cody Littlefield had suggested this as a growth tool at our last meeting. While this is not a way to attract new members, such a school can be attended by local observers who will be inspired by the organized quartets and coaches to start their own quartets. Such an event is seen as helpful to retention and to quartet development – not necessarily a part of our step-by-step program for growth. Referring this idea to Rich Gray, Chairman of Quartet Development. One can envision a mini-school with five quartets and five coaches attending – none coming from a great distance – and at a low cost.
8. **JOINT SPP-BHS-SAI-HI EVENTS:** Keith Richmond shared a report about a get-together that included SPP, BHS and SAI groups. A great time was had by all, and it contributed directly to the retention and growth of the Cloverdale Chordsmen. Martin Fredstrom mentioned a similar recurring event in Arizona, and Bobby Gray encourages such joint activities, as it appears logical that the friendly coming-together of all barbershop societies would encourage growth of all such groups. Remember that our policy is to avoid criticism of other singing societies, and to focus our growth efforts on sharing our music, fellowship and fun with non-barbershoppers.
9. **OPEN MIC EVENTS:** Rod McKenzie had suggested sending chorus and quartets to participate whenever an open-mic event is held in one’s community. We have no evidence that this has produced growth, but it is certainly worth a try.
10. **INDIVIDUAL INVITATIONS:** The late Jerry Orloff was the king of recruiting, with over 200 Man of Note awards. We spent time together on four trips to China, and Jerry shared the reasons for his success. He carried barbershop business cards at all times, and started conversations about singing with everyone he met. As a retiree, Jerry would talk with people on the bus, at the grocery, the drycleaners, the gas station, etc. The conversation would eventually get around to his barbershop harmony experience, and he would share his stories of fellowship and singing, followed by a direct one-on-one invitation to attend an upcoming

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chapter meeting. Jerry would give the prospect a card, and would gather his phone number and email address. Then, he would follow up to get a “yes” to his invitation, and would pick up the fellow and take him home after the meeting. Many ideas have produced members, but nothing we know about compares with Jerry’s success.

11. **FRIENDS IN HARMONY:** Artie Dolt’s San Antonio bunch has a magical story. He invited some inactive barbershoppers to his home, and 19 men showed up. They invited some friends, and those friends invited some friends, and within a couple of years, they had grown to a chorus of 130 men. The “Friends in Harmony” is SPP’s Lodge #1. Some of us have visited FIH’s meetings, and have followed Artie’s weekly bulletin with interest. In our estimation, it is Artie’s especially nurturing personality that makes the difference. He is not only a fine musical leader, but Artie also serves as the spiritual leader. He checks on the absent. He visits the sick. He “ministers” to his flock. He has done the same with a women’s chorus, now numbering 105 singers – most are new female barbershop singers.
12. **ADVANCED DUES INCREASE ANNOUNCEMENT:** We discussed the good idea Pete Carentz had about announcing any dues-increase in advance, to stimulate a rush of new member applications before the price goes up. That has worked in the past to create a bump in new members, but is up to the BOD – not the Membership Team.

**This manual was produced under the auspices of President Pete Carentz during the year 2023**