

## ***Conversation points when starting a new quartet***

Singing together can be such great fun! We believe that starting a quartet can be even more enjoyable when you all have aligned goals.

The purpose of this document is to help create open and honest conversation. The topics listed in bold and the following questions hold no judgment- just a way to start a dialogue. Finding the right answers is not the point; agreement is the goal.

Here are a few conversation topics to consider when starting a quartet:

### ***1) Interpersonal relationships***

- Who do you want to sing with? Are you friends outside of singing? Do you get along with everyone or are there some conflicts that may need to be worked out first? Do you need to be good friends with the people you sing with or is making great music together enough?

### ***2) General goals***

- What are you quartetting for? Is it for "fun"? Contest? To make some \$\$? To use for Chorus shows?

### ***3) Voice parts***

- Who should sing what voice part? Who has the range for tenor? Who's personality is best suited for Lead? Who is willing to grow into a new voice part for the good of the ensemble? How patient are the other members going to be as that process continues?

### ***4) Song Choice/Quartet Style***

- What songs do you want to sing? What level songs are you currently able to sing in good quality? (This is a tough one, but honesty is always the best policy.) What kind of songs would you like to be able to sing in the future? Are your singers brand new to BBS? Have you explored available arrangements? Do you know where to look? Is there a particular style you'd like to sing? What do you think about comedy?

## **5) Music Learning**

- How does each person learn music? Do you **need** learning tracks or do you simply like to have them? Who in the group can read music and how can they help others with the music? How long should it take your quartet to learn a new song? How many active songs should you keep in your repertoire at any one time?

## **6) Scheduling**

- How often do you want to rehearse? What is your availability for performances? What is your availability to travel for rehearsals and/or performances? If desired, does your schedule allow extra rehearsals when heading into a major event?

## **7) Style of rehearsals**

- What is your definition of a “fun” rehearsal? Do you enjoy picking apart one song for an entire 2 hours? Would you really enjoy singing through 10 songs per rehearsal? Do you like to sight read a bunch of music to pick out your next song? How would you feel about videotaping your quartet singing and then watching it back together in order to find areas of improvement?

## **8) Coaching**

- What do you think about coaching? How often would you like to work with an outside coach? How do you feel about internal coaching (other quartet members giving you constructive criticism on how you can improve)? Do you have a quartet family member who could act as a coach?

## **9) Contest?**

- What do you think about competing? What are your goals as you head into a contest? Winning the contest? Showing improvement in your scores? Getting to watch other ensembles? Getting coaching? Having the opportunity to sing on the Big Stage?

## **10) Outfits**

- What sort of performance outfits would you enjoy wearing? Casual? Fancy? Color preference? How many different kinds of outfits should your quartet have?

## **11) Financial**

- Let's be honest, barbershop can be an expensive hobby. Do you have the financial flexibility for travel? coaching? contest? outfits? new music? Would you be willing to pay out-of-pocket your portion for any/all of these things?

## **12) Levels of outside support**

- What does your immediate family think about barbershop and your interest in singing in a quartet? Are your family members super excited for you starting a new quartet or are they simply "willing" to have you participate? What sort of work flexibility do you have in order to take out of town performance opportunities?

## **13) Hanging up the pitch pipe**

- What will cause your quartet to break up? Sadly, reality is that every quartet breaks up and it is best to talk about how that might be caused when everyone is still very excited about the quartet and it's future.

## **14) Let's play the hypothetical game**

- Here are some hypothetical situations. We suggest that you discuss how each one of you might feel and react given the situation.

- a) You have been preparing to sing on your chorus chapter show. You have been working on a two song set for about a month now. Two days before the show, one of your members has an opportunity to go on a mini family vacation and wants to cancel the quartet performance.

- b) Your quartet has started a new song. You have been working on it for about 3 weeks and have decided as a group that you will try to be off paper by your next rehearsal. Your next rehearsal comes and one of your members states that they didn't have any time to work on the song and does not have it memorized.
- c) Your quartet is looking for new outfits for Spring Contest. Three members really like this one outfit and one member really does not.
- d) Your quartet is looking for a new song. Two members really like X song, but two members do not.
- e) Your quartet paid to bring in an outside coach. The coaching session went well....you all left feeling good and had your individual improvement goals clearly in mind. You agreed to focus on your individual improvement before your next rehearsal. Your next rehearsal comes and three members have clearly remembered their goals and have made some nice strides, one member has not.
- f) Your quartet is offered a really cool paying gig. It just happens to fall on your partner's birthday.
- g) Your quartet is offered two really cool paying gigs. One is on Saturday morning at 9:00 a.m. and the second is Saturday afternoon at 1:00 p.m. The two gigs are 2 hours away from one another. Your normal quartet rehearsal time is Friday evening.
- h) Your quartet is heading into contest season. Last year you placed 3rd. The quartet has been working hard, gotten outside coaching, and has one new contest song that you all love. You do your performance, it feels great. You get great feedback from your family and friends who were in the audience. You get your score sheet and your overall score has dropped by 35 points and you placed 7th.