



Quartet Series, Part 8

by Brian Philbin

Managing the Quartet

Okay, you have a quartet! You have prospects of performing in competition or for hire. You have a coach or two and you're on your way to growing as a musical group. However, there's still work to be done. The details of what has been said in previous parts of this series are important, and so the group needs to get organized in order to continue to progress. The last part of this series delineates individual and collective responsibilities for managing the quartet.

Traditionally, every quartet has had what is referred to as a contact man. This fellow usually cultivates hired performances, gets the quartet to and from performances, and makes sure that everything goes according to plan. Not only is he the quartet manager, but he also wears many hats outside of singing and performing with the quartet.

The quartet manager's duties and responsibilities are many and varied. For example, he may:

- Make contacts for shows (call or write);
- Inform the quartet of dates for shows and possible shows;
- Write, sign and send contracts for various engagements;
- Publicize the quartet (write/submit press releases for publication);
- Produce business cards;
- Write and maintain the quartet bio, and send out photos and bios as required;
- Make contact with the chapter publicity chairman;
- Write, respond to, and manage quartet mail and e-mail;
- Create and maintain the quartet calendar with all four members' schedules and other barbershop and chapter events;
- Make travel accommodations/arrangements;
- Gather information for quartet DBA (includes getting, completing and processing the necessary forms, placing ad in newspaper, and completing other DBA maintenance);
- Open and maintain quartet checking account;

- Submit expenses for reimbursement, receive income and pay bills;
- Maintain expenditure records for all four members as well as the quartet and keep track of member expenses;
- Troubleshoot glitches at quartet events;
- Schedule coaching sessions;
- Arrange flights and accommodations for coaches, and initiate and publish itinerary for coaching sessions;
- Manage all outside (non-barbershop) events;
- Purchase all materials as required;
- Schedule photo sessions;
- Keep the quartet informed of directions for events;
- Maintain current information on quartet members (phone, address, etc.);
- Maintain the quartet Web page, if applicable; and
- Correspond with arrangers as required.

These are just the basics. If your quartet is seriously dedicated to co-managing responsibilities, it is important that you decide early on who has what jobs and split the work up in an equitable manner. Although many of the aforementioned duties are directly related to the quartet manager, there is no reason that one member needs to be responsible for everything. Many of the duties can be easily divided up, for lack of better terms, between a quartet treasurer and a quartet secretary. Other duties may arise that don't fall under the premise of those already mentioned. It is up to the quartet to decide who is most comfortable doing what.

The quartet manager should be someone who is good with people, keeps good records, handles details well, and is capable of being prompt with time-sensitive material. He should also be comfortable on the phone and during face-to-face contact when handling sensitive issues and interfacing with clients.

The quartet secretary, on the other hand, should be someone who is capable of communicating directly and closely with the quartet manager — someone who can keep good records and do some of the legwork. Booking accommodations and travel arrangements for the quartet and coaches requires the members' schedules and knowledge of what is potentially occurring in the quartet. The quartet manager has this information and can share it regularly with the quartet secretary.

The quartet treasurer should be someone who can balance the checkbooks — someone good with numbers who can report income and disbursements to the quartet, handle reimbursements for expenses, etc.

Outside of all these jobs mentioned, each member should make the effort to:

- Write down all pertinent information and keep it handy;
- Keep track of printed materials given or sent;
- Notify others immediately of changes in availability, location or reachability;

- ❑ Carry and give out business cards;
- ❑ Show up on time and contact others if arrival time changes;
- ❑ Come prepared (includes bringing and caring for uniform, accessories, etc.); and
- ❑ Be accountable for items you commit to, and be involved in all of the administrative decisions that must be made for the quartet.

There is nothing more difficult than making a decision for a group that doesn't pay attention to what is done and how tasks are completed. The involvement and opinions of the members will help those with responsibilities make decisions based on consensus rather than by attrition. Ultimately, the direction of the quartet is based on the group's ability to manage its affairs in a unified manner.

The division of responsibilities among the quartet members will keep everyone involved at every level of quartet activity, provide further unity among the quartet members, and encourage increased cooperation and communication. Of course, if you decide not to go this route, there's always the tried-and-true Hollywood method of giving all the responsibilities to one guy and paying him an extra 10%. In my opinion, that's not the best way to go. I could be wrong!