

Stepping Up The Game

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Have Fun Doing What You Do!

What's going on at our chapter?

This is indeed a tremendously exciting time to be a part of all that is going on at the Stockton Portsmen Barbershop Chorus and the Stockton Chapter of the Barbershop Harmony Society. Last month, on April 14, 2018, the Chapter made history by being able to compete for the very first time at the Division Level as a Mixed Barbershop Chorus. The Stockton Portsmen Chorus earned a respectable score and received a favorable evaluation by the contest panel of judges. But, the best part of participating in that contest is that it *sparked an interest* for many to "**step up the game**".

People have many reasons to take up a new hobby, sport or activity: to meet new people; to enjoy the company of friends; for personal enjoyment; to "give a break" to our spouses or partners; and many, many others. But whatever those reasons may be, there seems to be some common threads that make people do something time after time. Scientific research shows that when people choose to practice a hobby, sport or activity they do it for two main reasons: 1) **because it is fun to do**, and 2) **because they hope to get better and better at doing it**. Having fun together with the desire to get better at something we enjoy doing is often referred to as "**stepping up the game**".¹

As singers who enjoy Barbershop music, we get together every week, at the same and the same place to **have fun and to get better at what we do**. Having fun and enjoying what we do is just as important as wanting to get better at it. When we have fun doing what we do, our bodies produce endorphins and other substances that our brains interpret as "*enjoyment emotions*". Such emotions can range from the subdued "*I feel good when I do this*" to the euphoric "*I absolutely love and gotta do this again*".

Enjoying ourselves at rehearsal can mean many things. We are glad to see our friends again; we truly enjoy their company; we enjoy singing with them, and better yet, we love "ringing them chords". Outside of rehearsals and performances, we also enjoy meeting our friends at social events and other gatherings. We enjoy attending another chorus' show, family picnics, etc. We celebrate birthdays, anniversaries and milestones, and in times of provide succor and emotional support to our "barbershop family" without hesitation. All these are characteristic behaviors of

“team membership”. We do these and many other things because we share similar tastes, values, ideas and aspiration. ²

Although Barbershop singers tend practice these precepts, there might be times when someone might feel as if they don't quite yet belong to the group. Someone who is shy or reserved may choose to “scope out” the landscape or “test the waters” in which they are swimming, figuratively speaking. We can all do our part to make others feel truly welcome as a valuable member of our chorus and chapter by adopting by:

- Greeting everyone at every rehearsal and other gatherings, and
- Avoid “cliques”, mingle with everyone, and
- If any differences arise, address them politely and in private, and Smile and be gracious, and
- Never be jealous of anyone, and
- Be kind and compassionate, and
- Be friendly and generous, and
- Genuinely express your feeling of concern and care for others, and (most important of all)
- Rejoice on each other's accomplishments

Barbershop singing is a true team activity. Whether you sing in a quartet, a small chorus that performs in the community or a large competition and performing chorus, the concept of teamwork is the single most important unifying factor that will make that team a successful group. Everything we do is built upon this. Each one of us has the power to make our team a little better every time we get together.

In the next installment of this series, I will discuss some ideas on how we can raise our level of enjoyment by getting better in what do. It is a gradual process – it doesn't happen overnight – but by learning and applying some basic concepts we can enjoy the gradual results of our personal and collective improvement as Barbershop singers.

It's great to be a Barbershopper!

References:

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