

# THE COMPETITION'S OVER – NOW WHAT?

## How to get re-energized and re-motivated after the big event

*By Jan Carley, Lions Gate Chorus, Region 26*

**T**he scene is a familiar one. You worked for months to prepare for contest — you sweated, obsessed, planned, rehearsed and then, in the blink of an eye, it is over. The applause has died, the costumes and makeup have been put away and you are back to your everyday life. For some of you, medals are hanging proudly around your neck; for others, the scoresheet analysis continues and for everyone, the memories live on, but what's this other feeling that comes over you — this feeling of “post-contest depression?”

Getting prepped for competition requires an intense amount of work, commitment, emotion, time and energy, and when it is all over, whether or not you achieve your goal, there can be a profound sense of “let down.” It is important to recognize and deal productively with this “let down” as it can reflect in individual and group apathy, drained energy, loss of focus, lack of motivation and uncertainty about the future. If you are a leader, you may feel these symptoms yourself coupled with a great sense of responsibility for how the group is feeling.

Understanding and working through the three stages below will help you and your group properly conclude the contest experience, acknowledge the journey that got you there, and help you move into the exciting and exhilarating stage of looking forward and building for the future.

### THREE STAGES OF POST-CONTEST RECOVERY

#### STAGE ONE: Reflection and Acknowledgment

It is important to openly acknowledge and allow expression of the feelings that you and your group may be experiencing (whether or not you achieved your competition goal). Emotions might be wide-ranging and contradictory. Accept that you may have conflicting or changing feelings of elation, disappointment or exhaustion that rise at different times of the day or week. You might feel hyper or you might feel like crashing. Just notice ... and acknowledge those feelings. Discuss the feelings with someone close to you. If you are the leader of a group, share with the group how you are feeling. Allow yourself to be vulnerable, and real.

When a goal has not been met there is often an initial reaction of searching for a reason that may result in blaming something or someone else outside oneself. This is part of the grieving process and precedes the stage where we accept personal responsibility and begin to move forward.

This is a time, as a chorus leader, that we must take a deep breath and not take our members' comments personally. Listen to them, consider them, but don't dwell on them — there is a difference between denial and

transcendence. Recognize that you also need to process and be sure to give yourself adequate nurturing time and space to replenish your energy.

If you achieved your goal, there may be an initial high, followed by a “crash” — or for some, the “high” may continue. Either way, there is an ending — one that must be acknowledged before you can move into a new beginning. Before you rush off into your next two years of exciting plans, shows, membership drives etc., take the time to properly celebrate your success. Keep your achievement and celebration top of mind, revisit the highlights, talk about your success, look at the photos, laugh and debrief. Keep the positive memories flowing.

#### STAGE TWO: Acceptance and Ending

According to the “transition model” coined by author William Bridges, one must adequately “end” something to have a new beginning. In fact, every ending signals a new beginning. The essence of the transition process lies in that statement. The ending is critical, because without a proper completion there cannot be a successful beginning. We must let go/or leave behind where we were in order to move ahead.

What feels confusing is that most transitions between an ending of one thing and the beginning of another are not necessarily a smooth progression from Point A to B. We must be cognizant that everyone in a group may be transitioning at different paces and as leaders, we must understand that although we may be mentally and emotionally ready to move on to the next great thing, our chorus members may not be.

There are two key questions to ask in the “ending phase.” We can consider these questions as a group and we must also ask the questions of ourselves, as we are each responsible for the pace of our own ending (and therefore, our new beginning).

##### 1. What is it time for me to let go of right now?

*(Be sure to spend enough time on this first question. Our tendency is to want to move forward without properly grieving.)*

##### 2. What is standing backstage, waiting to make its entrance?

*(This second question is critical to follow the first.)*

How do you then let go? William Bridges is big on ritual and on creating some specific way to acknowledge and grieve so that you can let go. There are many ways you can create a ritual and lots of resources online to guide you. The key point is to mark the ending officially and be sure not to rush through the ending. Until you complete — you won't move into the future as successfully (or as quickly).

*“What the caterpillar calls the end, the rest of the world calls butterfly.”*

— Lao Tzu

## STAGE 3:

### Re-ignition and New Beginnings

Now it's time to start thinking about what you want to create for the future. When you think of new beginnings, be sure to build on your past successes. What worked about the journey that just ended? What were the elements that contributed to your success? Remember those elements, because they form the foundation upon which your future can be built. When you plan the exciting things for your future be sure to keep your thoughts and discussions very firmly in the what you WANT for the future rather than what you DON'T want.

Before you set specific chorus goals, re-ignite your and your group's passion by creating a forum to hear everyone's voice as they dream of the future possibilities without limits. What is their biggest future vision? What is yours? What feels connected and aligned with the chorus vision?

The ways in which you and your group frame "success" when you then create your chorus goals can make all the difference to your post-contest recovery. As Jim Arns says, "It's a competition, not a festival," so if we ignore the concept of achievement in competition we are deluding ourselves. Ultimately, we all want to sing and perform as well as we

possibly can. However, the narrowly-focused direct linking of success with the achievement of a goal, or a specific contest placement, can hurt us. If your group mindset is one where you believe that you will be successful only if you reach your goal, you effectively negate all of the learning and living you had enroute to your goal. That sets you up for heartache and a lot of missed opportunities to experience the considerable ongoing joy of our art form.

Remember: Achieving a goal is a finite moment in time. *Success is a journey, not a destination.* ■

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Jan Carley, the Inner Coach of Barbershop, and long-time barbershop quartet and chorus singer, has transformed the singing experiences of thousands of barbershoppers worldwide with her signature "harmony from the inside out" coach approach. An internationally credentialed professional coach and author of Harmony from the Inside Out, Jan works with directors, choruses of different sizes and levels, chorus leaders, regional leadership teams, quartets and individuals to open up powerful possibilities and catalyze significant positive change.*

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### WHO SHOULD ATTEND AHA 2014? YOU!!!

Whether you are a singer, director, musical leader, choreographer, artistic director, veteran Sweet Adeline or newbie — there is something for everyone at this academy and you don't want to miss it! There is even a track for quartets so you can attend as a foursome and explore your ensemble performance! Check out the class schedule on our website and see for yourself! With so many selections, by now you are probably wondering how you could possibly fit so much AWESOME into a single weekend? But wait, there's more!

On Thursday, there are three additional "bonus" educational offerings. The first "bonus" opportunity is open to anyone interested in taking part in the Performance Packaging Boot Camp — this intense, hands-on experience will be exploding with creativity, energy and fun! The Boot Camp, facilitated by International Faculty members, Judy Pozsgay and Melanie Wroe, will provide participants the chance to write, stage, create, and ultimately perform an entertainment package! A one-of-a-kind experience! Enrollment is limited, so sign up today!

As if this awesomeness wasn't enough, the second "bonus" opportunity is an amazing Directors' Lab, led by Master Director 700 Jim Arns for front-line directors of choruses scoring at the B+ level and above, and Master Director Joan Boutilier for front-line directors of choruses scoring at the B level and below, designed for directors who wish to further enhance their directing skills. AND musical leaders — you are not left out, as the third "bonus" opportunity is a Musical Leaders' Workshop taught by International Faculty member Paula Davis, which will challenge you to improve your leadership abilities. Somewhere in there, you MIGHT have a chance to sleep!

### BESIDES YOU, WHO WILL BE THERE?

Not only will members of our incredible International Faculty be on hand to share their knowledge, and expertise in these areas, but also our newly crowned Queens of Harmony, LOVENOTES, will sing for us every day and serve as a demo group in some of the learning sessions.

We are particularly thrilled to welcome Guest faculty **Lisa Forkish** (<http://youtu.be/pyCoEQT0SvM>) to the team. Lisa will be with us all weekend long, teaching and sharing a professional's perspective on entertainment in the a cappella style. Lisa will no doubt inspire us all to be the most entertaining performers we can be, to barbershop and non-barbershop audiences alike. And, bring along some popcorn because in our "down time" you can also watch a screening of the movie *Pitch Perfect* with her, and listen to her inside scoop! Sing along too!

As we've already alluded, in addition to all the AHA learning moments, there will be time to "play." Saturday night will feature performances by our Boot Camp participants, some extra special surprises, and of course, a performance by LOVENOTES.

And if you have time ... go visit our beautiful headquarters building, which is a short ten-minute shuttle ride from the hotel. Our staff members are anxious to show off where they work for you.

We can't wait for us all to gather in Tulsa in July 2014 so we can learn, explore, play, and throw away the box together! Don't delay and sign up for AHA 2014 today! ■

*Your 2014 AHA Co-Chairs,*

**CAMMI MACKINLAY & JUDY POZSGAY**

### BOX? WHAT BOX?

**A** Cappella Harmony Academy in Tulsa, Oklahoma is going to be THE place to be for all Sweet Adelines in July of 2014. Why? Because your planners are not just thinking outside the box — we have thrown the box away!

This academy is an exciting NEW educational offering, unlike any that has gone before. It is a weekend packed with classes to spur your creativity, hone your performing skills, deal with performance anxiety, explore costuming and make-up trends, design exciting entertainment packages, learn emcee and microphone techniques, use comedy to enhance your performances and so much more. At its core, this weekend is designed to explore the possibilities that abound in the many aspects of creating entertaining performance packages. How handy that this phenomenal educational opportunity is offered just as we prepare for the wonderful changes being ushered in with the new Open Division at regional contest (which starts in 2014) and the revamping of the finals packages at International starting in 2015 in Las Vegas? Coincidence, we think not!