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It's easy to talk about what you love to do

What are we waiting for? Yes, we all know that Operation Harold Hill is coming and that the goal of the program is to help local chapters achieve their own membership recruiting and retention goals. But if your chapter is just sitting on the sidelines right now thinking that you will "really get started" in January or February, you are missing the most important time to get ready for next year. We all need the rest of this year to get prepared.

Your personal elevator speech

A couple of months ago, I described for all of you the process from which evolved the "I SING" button. It was then that I told you that the button was intended to be an opener, providing the opportunity for you to spend 10 to 20 seconds of your life with someone else in generating any interest in barbershop singing with them. It is, as I mentioned, the barbershop recruitment "elevator speech." Since then, I have been asked by several people during our All Chapter Visitation Program how they can create an elevator speech. Unfortunately it is simple—so simple you don't need to really practice. I have not met a single barbershopper who does not love what he is doing and what he is singing. Ask him why he loves singing barbershop or devoting so much time to his "hobby" and he will tell you, emphatically and with passion. Use your MP3 recorder, cassette recorder, or a friend and try it. Then take what you just said and condense it to 10 or 20 seconds. There it is—your elevator speech.

Ask a barbershopper why he loves singing barbershop or devoting so much time to his "hobby" and he will tell you, emphatically and with passion. Now just do it in 10-20 seconds.

When I first experienced (at Midwinter in Las Vegas) someone asking me what I sang when they saw the I SING button, I told her that I sang barbershop harmony with a 70-man chorus in Connecticut, that it has provided me with some of the most memorable and personally rewarding moments of my life, and that I looked forward to each Monday night's rehearsal to be with some of my closest friends doing what we all love to do. That's it. It took 10 seconds. And she asked me more questions that let me give her more information such as that there were two choruses right there in Las Vegas and she could find them both on the internet at *www.barbershop.org*. You see, she wanted to talk her husband into going to one of them. I don't know if he visited or joined, but at the least there is one more person that knows something about the Barbershop Harmony Society.

I asked Christian Hunter, VP for Membership in the Mid-Atlantic District if he had an elevator speech to share. His response:

"Wow, you see, I am an off-the-cuff guy and it all depends on the elevator. Case in point: Afterglow this past Monday night at a local joint, five of us sitting there looking like we don't belong. Over 25, not with a date, and more interested in conversation than the dreadful Jaguars-Ravens game on the big screen TVs. Waiter, sharp-looking 30-year-old guy, asks us, "So what brought you guys out tonight?" Bingo, door open. "We're singers, we have an a cappella chorus that gets together about half a mile from here. You don't happen to sing, do you?" Tom, the waiter, responded, "Funny you ask that, I sang in a 12-voice madrigal group in high school and church, haven't sung for a while but really miss it." Long story short, we may have sold three tickets to our upcoming show and may even have three new singers for my chapter. I have his contact info and am following up. When the door is open, you just pounce, set the hook and hope to reel him in. Yes, it really is that easy. True story, I have witnesses."

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The important point is you won't get hurt by asking someone if they sing. *No one* gets offended when you ask them if they sing. *No one* looks at you like you're nuts (except your wife). *Everyone* takes it as a compliment that you asked. So why in the heck are we so embarrassed to ask? We all need to get over this hurdle. You won't be embarrassed, I promise you that.

Let's share our elevator speeches to discover the possibilities. If you have one (or two or three), share them on our blog *www.barbershophq.com/?p=1847*. If you think that reading others will help you formulate your own elevator speech, go to the blog and read away. In preparation for Operation Harold Hill, let's share what we each know so that those that want to learn can take advantage of our experience. Knowing what is out there already is essential. In the words of Harold Hill, "You've got to know the territory."

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