



## Need a new leader? Think talent, practice, and balanced harmony

By John A. Gentle, DLP

RECENTLY OUR CHURCH CHOIR DIRECTOR retired and a search was immediately undertaken for an interim as well as a full-time replacement. Within a few days, our outgoing director and pastor selected an interim director while a group comprised of choir members and parishioners were sent off to find the full-time replacement—all was well, or so it appeared.

After the first couple of rehearsals and services, the difference between the outgoing director and the new interim director was apparent. Tempo and feeling were changed to songs we knew, and the difference between the new director's accompaniment music and ours were not reconciled. All of this led, of course, to confusion within our choir and the congregation.

The old director had, over time, reverted to playing the piano, but become very adept at conducting the choir through a series of unique cues as he played. The new interim director turned out not to be a "director," but a very nice person who could play the piano and help us learn our parts to the songs during rehearsals. During the church service, however, our choir was on its own as the pianist concentrated totally on playing the piano accompaniment.

However, how a song was practiced during rehearsal was not always how it was played during the service. Four measure introductions surprisingly became three, songs with four verses suddenly ended after two, and songs with three verses were repeated without any advance notice. The critical musical direction, precision, balance, and feeling had been lost, and the congregation joined the choir in the confusion.

In the meantime, the search committee, charged with finding the permanent replacement director, was listening to the music at different churches. Undoubtedly, and perhaps superficially, they were listening to the music selection, how the person sang or played, observing how the choir was conducted, and how it interacted with the director.

While these observations will be helpful in sorting

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out the candidates, the critical characteristics we're looking for in a new choir director will ironically be the same as those needed for your new logistics leader. These include understanding the critical balance between technical talent, vision, and foresight; analysis and problem solving; judgment; leadership; and interpersonal skills.

As with all teams, the director must recognize that the role is not all about the skill that the leader possesses to play or sing, rather it's about team performance and the need to achieve balance.

Choirs need a good mix of choral basses, tenors, altos, and sopranos to deliver a balanced sound. A choir director, like a logistics leader, needs to assess the artistic talent of the choir and the interests of the congregation in order to select the appropriate program that not only satisfies the vision, but conveys the appropriate message and feeling—and can be artistically executed by everyone. Picking music that no one can sing or understand is alienating and will be short lived.

Executive selection committees must be cognizant of the big picture. They must avoid talented, self-centered individuals and focus on finding a person who understands that the position is not about them, but about the program, its mission, the team, and its ability to consistently deliver superior balanced performance with the appropriate feelings.

Recruiting teams in search of people to lead logistics and supply chain operations must avoid the temptation to hire a person who does not understand the fundamentals and interdependencies of its elements or the keys to leading and managing the internal team.

If the company is committed to promoting from within, then the best approach is to find a team player of talent and vision that enjoys the challenges of logistics. Then the challenge is to methodically nurture that person through warehousing, materials management, and transportation with a focus on team, process fundamentals, and relationship management before advancing that person to ultimately lead the supply chain.

No one likes the sound of a group that can't sing in tune or a director who acts like a one-man band. Think talent, practice, and balanced harmony. □