





**WHAT**

# MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE

**OFFERS YOUR SHOW CHOIR**

by Paul Brown

If you're the leader of a Show Choir or practically any other organization that involves people and activities (school band, orchestra, choir, drama, or dance), then you know all too well about the myriad tasks that can come up as part of keeping that group and its activities running smoothly. There are two key factors that, when done efficiently, contribute to continued success (and less burnout): The first is communication, and the second is information access.

## Clear, Efficient Communication

Clear, efficient communication both down and up the line is critical for getting things done and avoiding/preventing bottlenecks—and when something does go awry, efficient communication can help things recover quickly and get back on track. Having efficient access to needed information (in conjunction with good communication) helps to keep everyone and everything on schedule, and has the added benefit of reducing the number of emails and phone calls to/from the people involved in making something happen and—just as importantly—can also reduce expense.

Of course, as the leader, your primary responsibility to yourself is to delegate, so you don't have to do everything, and you hope your people are reliable. However, when you delegate, the keys of communication and information access become even more important. Task delegation is one thing, but what's the best way to keep all those plates spinning?

## So Last Century...

Remember the Yellow Pad? Index Cards? Phone trees? Whiteboards? File cabinets? All these tools and more used to be all that were available to someone tasked with

organizing and pulling off a successful event or performance, and some people still utilize some of those tools in their daily lives! Once personal computers, software, and email started to become mainstream, many people graduated to spreadsheets and emails—again, what many people still use today. In fact, depending upon the size of the group and the task at hand, these tools can certainly still be used successfully.

However, technology continues to change, especially in what's referred to as "information technology." Thanks to improvements in infrastructure and machine/electronics design, internet connection speeds to our computers and wireless devices have increased dramatically. Does anyone remember the 14.4k modem? Now, you can download an entire TV show in just a few seconds. Additionally, you used to have to load a software product directly onto your computer, and that was the only place you could access it. Many modern computers (especially laptops) don't even have a disk drive in them.

## A Changing World

These days, along with those increased connection speeds, there are cloud-based storage capabilities, as well as enhancements

to email—text messaging, mobile apps, and more—as well as cloud-based management software programs. These programs have the advantage of 24/7 access, to be able to enter or access data whenever it is most convenient. If there are mobile apps that complement computer access, so much the better!

There is one word of caution here though: A mobile app will typically not be as fully functional as a computer/keyboard for data entry. Finger-tapping numbers on a 2" (or less) wide-screen is not a recommended method for accurate data entry, regardless of 'autofill' technology. An app is fine for viewing information or making simple transactions, but can be very limiting for actual data entry. However, if your students and parents can pull up information they need on an app, that means fewer phone calls and emails to the treasurer, fundraiser manager, or director.

## Using Management Software for Information Access

Why use management software for information access? Perhaps the better question is, "Why not?" Especially if it is cloud-based. Yes, a specific program might take some dedicated time to learn, and there is

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probably cost involved in purchasing—but the advantages of 24/7 feature access by you and the people you delegate tasks to can far outweigh the inefficiencies and possible delays resulting from not having the information that is needed at critical times, or from those aforementioned emails and phone calls from irritated parents.

The key to choosing the right software application requires you and your administrative helpers to have a fairly clear understanding ahead of time of what features are needed to help accomplish the tasks at hand. Before you start looking at management software, sit down as a group and talk about your performance, festival, fundraiser, etc., and try to anticipate critical tasks and schedules in a “brainstorming” session. Then you’ve at least got an idea of what features will be important in a software product.

Some suggested questions to begin your brainstorming with teammates are listed here:

Do you need email and/or texting? Are there sending limitations? Will you handle finances? Are student financials involved? Do you need bank ledger and budget tracking, regular reports, and audit trail? Do you need to restrict access depending upon the task delegated?

You’ll also want to ask if you need a calendar, with volunteer signups and automated reminders. Will you have assets/inventory/library/uniforms/costumes, and need to track assignments? Will you need easy data upload of those same items? If so, would a mobile app be useful?

Next, would your parents and students (or members) benefit from access from their side of the product, either by computer or mobile app? Do you need to share/distribute documents to your people? Online document access can save a lot of money and paper.

Finally, are you doing one or more fundraisers? Is there physical product, or just catalogs? The product should have features that enable easy tracking of all transactions, whether product or money-related.

### All-In-One Software Changes Everything

Efficient communication tools and easy 24/7 access to information are both incredibly important to the success of your organization. If you are still using yellow pads or spreadsheets, or multiple internet resources, and struggle to keep everyone on the same page (whether helpers,

parents, or students), this is a strong option for you to relieve some of those headaches. Look into a cloud-based software system with email, text, and phone communication, as well as calendar/volunteer tool, task delegation, financial tracking, asset management, mobile apps, and access for teachers, students, parents, booster members in a one-stop shop. A product like this can be of great benefit to your organization, by helping the organization get things done with improved efficiency, better communication, and fewer headaches. The payback can come quickly, especially if you are tracking financials and asset assignments.

Come join us in this century. You will have a more successful program, and you will probably find yourself with more of that “personal time” that is so often elusive!

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