

I HOPE I GET IT: SELLING THE RIGHT TUNE

BY

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Abstract

This thesis is designed to look deeper into the issues that affecting the five a cappella groups within the UA a cappella community. Six focus groups and a comprehensive survey were conducted to better determine what issues actually exist within the community and to determine how to best solve those issues. Marketing, awareness, member backgrounds, and audition processes are examined by these studies. In order to understand the issues and find the proper solutions, the studies were conducted with roots in consumer behaviors. An inside look into the minds of the consumers, the people auditioning for an a cappella group, is needed to properly understand the roots of, and to fix, the problems the a cappella community currently. In doing so, the community can become aware of what needs to be done to improve in the future. Understanding the consumers and their relations to the group has proved extremely crucial to the future success of UA A Cappella. The following breakdown of research and analysis, as well as concluding recommendations will allow each of the groups within the community to make the necessary changes to pursue great success far into the future.

Executive Summary

The University of Arizona has a thriving a cappella scene. Started in 2008, the UA A Cappella community began with only one group, CatCall A Cappella. Today the community is comprised of five different groups including Amplified, CatCall, Dolce Voces, Enharmonics, and Noteriety. Each of the five groups are greatly involved on the university campus as well as the Tucson community and beyond. They perform at campus events, participate in and plan state wide a cappella festivals, compete in international competitions, and much more.



2016 serves as a turning point for all five groups. The community has grown significantly over the past few years and so have each of the groups. Now is the time to focus on the nitty gritty trouble spots; issues that each of the groups currently face. Members of the community want to do more to improve group relations, to build the community, to connect with people outside of the groups, to attract more auditioners, to improve awareness, and more however, before now members of the community were not sure where to start or what to do to make and impact and move forward in an effective way.

This thesis is designed to take a focused and deeper look into the issues that currently effect the groups within the a cappella community. Six focus groups and a comprehensive survey were conducted to better determine what issues actually exist within the community and to determine how to best solve those issues. Marketing, awareness, member backgrounds, and audition processes are examined by these studies. In order to understand the issues and find the proper solutions, the studies were conducted with roots in consumer behaviors.

In order to properly understand the roots of the problems the a cappella community currently faces, and to properly solve those issues, the minds of the consumers, or in this case the auditioners, were analyzed. Understanding the minds of the auditioners gives each of the five groups an inside look at where exactly the problems lie and how they can be fixed. In doing so, each of the groups can become aware of what needs to be done to improve in the future. Understanding the consumers and their relations to the group has proved extremely crucial to the future success of UA A Cappella. The following breakdown of research and analysis, as well as concluding recommendations will allow each of the groups within the community to make the necessary changes to pursue great success far into the future.



Introduction

Since 2008 the University of Arizona's a cappella community has grown significantly, from one group to five. The a cappella community at the U of A features one male group, two female groups, and two co-ed groups that perform at various events within the Tucson community. As the community grows it is important that the groups work to better understand the community that is being built as well as the way it is being built. A strong community finds its foundation in its members. Because of this it is extremely important to recruit new members that will support the group they join as well as the a cappella community as a whole. In order to properly recruit new members that will continue to build the groups and the a cappella community we must examine the behavior of the consumer, the potential members that audition for our groups.

It is important to understand what a cappella is in the eyes of the consumer, or in this case the auditioner; we cannot expect the auditioner to know if we as members of the a cappella community do not know. There is a misunderstanding within the community as to what a cappella is, and it has more of an impact than many may think. By understanding what a cappella is and by understanding what potential members believe it to be, we will be able to better communicate with auditioners before and during their audition process.

In order to communicate with and recruit new members we must improve the awareness of a cappella at the University of Arizona. We cannot communicate with and recruit strong potential members if they are not made aware of the UA groups and their auditions. In order to communicate effectively we must determine how to use the best outlets for communication with auditioners or potential new members. Finding the best outlets and using them effectively will allow our groups to improve awareness of UA A Cappella in both an effective and efficient way.

While we must know how to communicate with potential members, we must also know who to target. In order to do so, we must better examine what makes an ideal member, doing so by examining the music and performance experience of our current members. It is important to remember that different groups have different goals and will therefore need to use different measures to recruit the auditioners that will best fit their groups. Doing so will greatly improve the recruiting process of potential members.

New ideas keep the community strong and help it grow. It is important to formulate new ideas that will help the groups, and the community, grow and strengthen as a whole. In this study, it is important to examine the new ideas our community members have for consideration and implementation.

These issues and ideas will be addressed by this study with hopes of creating new best practices that will allow the groups to better understand the minds of the consumers or potential new members so that the community and its members can continue to grow and prosper well into the future.

Objectives

- Explain what a cappella is in the minds of auditioners in order to better understand how to communicate with them on the topic of contemporary collegiate a cappella.
- Develop an understanding of what types of experiences, whether music or performance related, potential members should demonstrate in order to be successful in collegiate a cappella within the UA A Cappella Community.
- Identify issues with awareness of the UA A Cappella groups and their auditions and provide recommendations to solve the issues.
- Identify best practices for improving awareness and auditions in order to improve the audition experience for both auditioners and the groups for which they audition.

Methods

Focus Groups

Six focus groups were conducted in order to gain a better understanding of the thoughts and behaviors of the students auditioning for our groups within the UA A Cappella community. These focus groups were comprised of a mix of members from five of the University of Arizona's a cappella groups; Amplified, CatCall, Dolce Voces, Enharmonics, and Noterietty. Participants were male and female UA A Cappella group members aged 17 to 23 with their membership in an a cappella ensemble ranging from less than one year to more than four years.

Two of the six focus groups were differentiated from the other four. These two groups were comprised of a cappella members that either auditioned for, or were members of, more than one a cappella ensemble. In total, 26 a cappella members participated in the focus groups; eight participants were part of the two multiple-auditioner groups, while 18 participants were part of the single-auditioner focus groups.

Participants were asked about topics related their experiences with a cappella as well as their experience auditioning for one or more of the UA groups. Discussion topics were categorized into five main categories including understanding what a cappella is, past music and performance experience of our group's members, awareness of collegiate a cappella among auditioners, current members' auditions and the audition process they went through, and their experiences within the UA A Cappella community.

Survey

In order to better quantify and understand the minds of potential members, current a cappella members from Amplified, CatCall, Dolce Voces, Enharmonics, and Noterietty were asked to fill out a survey. This survey focuses on issues that were brought up within the focus group, including new practices to follow in the future. Members were also asked about their past experiences, their awareness of a cappella both professional and collegiate, awareness of the auditions in which they participated in, their experience throughout their audition process, and their thoughts about current audition practices. A total of 59 responses were collected and analyzed in order to better understand the thoughts and behaviors of students and their auditions so we may develop best practices for each of our groups so they may improve in the future.

Research

Focus Groups

Part of an a cappella group's success is its members. In order for a group to grow and remain successful, it must recruit talented members who are not only themselves talented, but are also a good musical fit for the group and match well with the group's personality. Gaining these members can be a challenge for any group; successfully obtaining these members is heavily reliant on the success of the group's auditions, the process in which prospective members must participate in order to be considered for membership.

Awareness of A Cappella

One topic studied in the focus groups was the participants' awareness of a cappella, whether professional or at the University of Arizona. More important was the discussion of the participants' awareness of the UA A Cappella groups and their auditions before they became a part of their group.

On a professional level, a majority of participants mentioned they became aware of a cappella by watching shows like the Sing Off or movies like Pitch Perfect. Many members also mentioned their awareness of professional a cappella groups such as Straight No Chaser, Rockapella, and Pentatonix. For some members, these shows and groups inspired some participants to become involved in a cappella both in high school and at a collegiate level. On a collegiate level, many students lacked awareness of the groups at the U of A.

Many members were not aware of the a cappella ensembles on campus until they happened to see a group perform, heard about a group from a friend, or saw a flyer advertising a cappella auditions or other a cappella events on campus. That being said, it is important to note that some members came to the university with knowledge of our groups and the expectation of their auditions; "I actually Googled the groups before I got here...I found some videos on YouTube, but the first group I saw perform live was CatCall." Some students are searching for a cappella ensembles at schools before they even get there; for others, they look for a cappella opportunities once they arrive on campus. In either capacity it is important that we work to improve the awareness of collegiate a cappella on the U of A campus.

More specifically, participants were asked which UA groups they were aware of first. Approximately 20 of the total 26 participants said they had either heard of or saw CatCall perform first. Participants either heard of the other groups after learning about the UA's a cappella community, or they didn't hear about the other groups until after they joined their group.

Improving Awareness of Collegiate A Cappella at the UA

Many of the participants mentioned they had trouble finding adequate information about the UA A Cappella groups. Some participants recall having issues with online searches, others didn't hear about auditions until it was almost too late; for some it was too late, "I had learned about Dolce's auditions on their club page, but they had just passed...I had to wait until the following semester to join." More than one or two participants mentioned they had this issue. It is currently too difficult to find out about auditions on campus as they are either too early in the semester so they're missed, or because it was difficult for prospective members to find information about auditions. In many cases, prospective members didn't find out until just days before the auditions; "The first time I had auditioned I had found out the day before from my CD...I wasn't very prepared, but I went anyways. The second time I auditioned I was really looking for it so I was more prepared." Multiple participants mentioned stories

similar to this. Either they found out the day of or the day before and rushed to prepare, or they “just went for it.” It is likely that many more people encountered similar situations; in some cases this could lead a qualified potential member, someone that could really benefit the group they are auditioning for, to have a poor audition and therefore miss the opportunity to be accepted into a group. This issue is quantified through later survey administration and analysis.

It is important for the UA A Cappella groups to improve the issue of last minute awareness within their auditioners; doing so could very well benefit the groups. While all six of the focus groups brought up this issue, the two multiple-auditioner focus groups formulated a potential solution to this issue within their discussion; a centralized website.

The idea is to create a UA A Cappella website that will serve as the a cappella hub for the U of A; support for this idea has been assessed by survey. It would feature audition information for all of the UA a cappella ensembles and would also branch off to each of their sites so potential members could learn more about the group, beyond their auditions. This website would allow for easier access to information for all of the groups, and would also allow potential members to become better aware of auditions so they can prepare more to have a successful audition. This site has the potential to improve each group’s recruiting practices significantly.

A Cappella in the minds of UA Students

A cappella refers to choral music and is the absence of instrumental accompaniment. This type of music has been used in many different ways since its start in religious music. Today contemporary a cappella is still vocal, but it is no longer used for just religious masses or in barbershop quartets. Contemporary a cappella has become extremely popular with creation of the Pitch Perfect movies and shows such as The Sing Off, Pitch Slapped, and Sing it On.

While so many people now know about and have heard contemporary a cappella, it is important to understand what contemporary a cappella is in the eyes of the students that are involved first hand with it. While these students interact with a cappella almost every day, it has proved important to understand what the members of the UA A Cappella community believe a cappella to be.

It is important to discuss and analyze people’s music preferences in the contemporary a cappella setting so that we may gain a better understanding of how a cappella works in the mind of both current and potential a cappella members. There is disconnect or misunderstanding about what a cappella is among our members. Is a cappella a genre of music or a style of music? The focus group discussions consistently displayed confusion about this issue as about half of the participants argued a cappella is a genre while the other half argued the opposite.

Interestingly, many participants would mention their favorite genres to sing a cappella, but would then argue that a cappella was itself a genre, thus creating a dissonance among what actually constitutes a cappella. Others would then claim that a cappella is more of a style of music, “It’s more of an art form or medium.” Overall, participants from multiple focus groups eventually came to agreement that a cappella is more of a medium or style rather than a genre. Knowing this will allow our groups to better understand their market for potential new members, and will allow them to create a better understanding of what a cappella is in the minds of potential members; doing so may allow auditioners to better understand how a cappella works in our setting, and will allow them to better transition into the world of a cappella at the U of A.

During conversation the groups also discussed their favorite genres of music and were then asked about whether or not there is a connection between their tastes in music and their a cappella ensemble. Many of the participants mentioned their activities or moods determined what music they would listen to. Musical tastes ranged from 80's rock to classical music, to the top hits of today. Many participants mentioned that their tastes in music have an effect on what they would like to sing with their group, "I do think my taste in music effects what I like to sing with my group, but I also understand that certain things won't work in an a cappella setting." Multiple participants brought up and agreed with this idea; some genres of music don't translate well to an a cappella setting.

When asked to describe their a cappella group through the use of genres almost everyone had an answer for their own group Dolce Voces, CatCall, and Amplified tend to sing more top 40 hits while Noteriety tends to sing more alternative music and Enharmonics sometimes brings a jazzy sound to their arrangements. Sometimes the genre of music depends on the person arranging the group's music, but other times the group may have an effect on what is arranged; even then audiences may influence what the group sings, "Sometimes doing what's liked by the masses is comfy so we stick with that." The music tastes of a group's members do have an effect on what the group performs, and so does the group's audience. In this situation it may be difficult to please all stakeholders. The arranger may not be happy with a certain song or genre and therefore may not want to arrange a certain song, even though the group may enjoy it. Other times, audiences listening to the group may not enjoy the genre of music sung by the group and may stop listening. In any case, groups tend to stick with what's comfortable for their audiences.

Based on conversations within the focus groups it is clear that there is a connection between the members of a group and the music they sing; they are more likely to enjoy singing the genres of music they favor. This idea was met with overwhelming agreement. We can conclude that understanding musical genres and their impact on a cappella, in more ways than one, is important to pay attention to; we must understand and pick the proper genres for our groups in ways that will correctly fit the a cappella style we sing them in.

Past Music and Performance Experience

A cappella ensembles, like any other music group, are made up of people of all different backgrounds and experiences. Professional, collegiate, and even high school level groups have members that have different talents that allow them to contribute to their groups in different yet meaningful and important ways. Because different people bring different contributions, it is important to gain an understanding of what the UA groups should look for in prospective members in order to best benefit their group as a whole.

Focus group participants shared their past music and performance experiences in order to better understand the level of experience necessary to join one of our groups. Overall, a majority, if not all of the participants had some sort of music and/or performance experience before they joined an a cappella ensemble. What differs between each participant is the type of experiences they've had and for how long they've had those experiences.

Experiences range from years of voice lessons to experience with marching band and even participation in high school barbershop and a cappella ensembles. Based on conversation within the focus groups, members do not need to have extensive experience with music or performance to be a part of an a

cappella ensemble, but the more experience a person has, the easier they are able to adjust to performing in an a cappella setting.

More experience does not mean a better or more qualified member. Multiple participants reported that they were prepared for the musical aspect of a cappella overall, including those that are even unable to read sheet music. Many participants were not as prepared to perform in an a cappella setting regardless of their previous experience, "I started playing piano at age five, I was in marching band and high school choir, but none of that seemed to prepare me; a cappella is stylistically different. You have to be independent and really know your stuff." Many members expressed their feelings of independence while in a group setting. Many find it easy to learn and sing the music, but performing in a small group setting is more revealing than many may think; they must work a little harder in order to adequately adjust to the requirements of performance.

Take for example performing in a 50 person ensemble, a choir that primarily performs classical music. In this situation, members are only one in 50 and the focus is more on the musical workings of performances rather than the visual appeal. The music in itself is enough to engage the audience; it is what works for this style and genre of music. In an a cappella setting, groups are much smaller and are therefore more exposed. While the music in this setting is just as important as the 50 person ensemble, the musical performance in a cappella may be more demanding as there may only be one or two people on a part as opposed to 12. Visually, people are much more exposed as there may be as little as five people in a group. Performers must be visually engaging in order to hold an audience; many new members are not used to this when they join and therefore take a little while longer to learn and adjust to performing in this style.

Across all six groups, participants agreed that having a technical understanding of music was not as necessary as many may think, as supported by the conducted survey and analysis. Many groups have multiple members that cannot read music. Some members have more than 10 years of experience with music and performing while others have had less than two or three years of experience. The members of all six focus groups concluded that we must allow and help new members adjust to singing and performing in an a cappella setting as a good majority of members mentioned that they needed to learn how to properly adjust, regardless of experience. When obtaining new members it is important to find people with adequate experience and talent, but it is also important to find potential members that will be able to easily adjust to the a cappella style of music and performance. As concluded in all six focus group conversations, a mix of past performance experiences that required the member to perform on a more individual level and the right attitude paired with adequate practice will allow for the best adjustment to performing in an a cappella setting. As seen in later survey analysis, a mix of experience is great, but there are certain experiences that constitute the best or most helpful experience for being prepared to sing and perform with an a cappella ensemble; it will be crucial to use this information when marketing auditions to potential auditioners.

Audition Experience

One of the main reasons for the focus groups was to gain a better understanding of the auditioners' thoughts and behaviors during the audition process. In order to understand this, participants were asked various questions about their audition experience.

Participants were asked why they decided to audition for the groups they did. The most common answer was "because of a friend." Many participants knew someone in the group, and that is why they

decided or were convinced to audition. For those that didn't know anyone in the group beforehand it was almost as if they were left in the dark to decide who to audition for; "I didn't really know much about any of the groups, so I took the shot gun approach." Those that lacked awareness and knowledge of the UA A Cappella groups were uncertain about who to audition for as they did not know which group would be the best for them while others only knew of one opportunity. This issue was also evident in their tactics for preparing for their audition. It will be important to improve brand differentiation in the future so potential members can better understand who they are auditioning for and how to audition for them in the best way possible. It will also prove beneficial for each group to understand how they really attract new members and how they can continue to do so in the future.

Whether an auditioner was in the dark or an auditioner who knew a friend in the group, many participants did not know what exactly to expect in their initial audition other than the notion they would have to sing a solo. Some participants relied on past audition experiences to try to figure out what might be required of them in their auditions; "I was expecting the audition to be similar to any other I had done...one of the auditions I did was not what I was expecting." Many participants assumed the audition would be like other auditions they had been through. Some figured it would be like their regional choir auditions in high school while others figured it would be similar to that of another type of music ensemble. Participants that did not know what to expect in their audition reported feeling more nervous about their audition than others.

An idea once again arose from the multiple auditioner focus groups as a solution to help improve auditions. The idea is to semi-centralize the solo audition process. Each of the UA groups would hold auditions at the time on the same nights and would utilize a central check in area. Representatives from each group would be present at the check in area and would help auditioners register for their auditions. This would also allow the auditioners to learn more about each group and what they will be testing within their auditions; auditioners would be better able to decide which groups would be best for them to audition for, and would allow them to feel more prepared and relaxed for their auditions; both solo and callback. This idea of semi-centralized auditions, along with the centralized UA A Cappella website have been tested by survey; analysis shows all groups are in favor of the new website and would greatly benefit from semi-centralized auditions.

Aside from solo auditions, participants were also asked about their experience with their callback auditions, and overall the responses were positive. Based on the responses of the participants we now know that callbacks are very important in the decision making process of the auditioner, not just the group they are auditioning for; "Callbacks were what made me want to get into the group. Hearing the group sing made me super excited about the group." For many auditioners, callbacks are their first deep look into the group. It is their time to decide whether or not the group is for them. For some, this opportunity can either make or break a group for the auditioner.

When it comes to callbacks it is important to remember that while the group is looking to see who will be the best fit, the auditioner is also trying to determine whether or not the group will be a good fit for them. Callbacks that allow the auditioners to see firsthand what the group is like—their style, sound, and personality—are likely to appeal more to the auditioner.

The most common issues, whether a solo audition or callback audition, stem from a lack of awareness and understanding of what the group is looking for; people didn't know exactly what to expect in their auditions. Participants did not know what exactly was expected of them in auditions aside from a solo; many did not know there would be other tests for certain groups such as sight singing. Within the

callbacks, more direction should be given so auditioners know what they are being tested on. Each group is different and should test auditioners in ways that best work for each group, but auditioners should be made aware of what they are being tested on and what the group is looking for before they audition. The survey seeks to determine what potential members are expecting in their solo auditions and also seeks to determine what the groups should do in terms of tests for their auditions; this information will allow our groups to better understand how to effectively communicate with potential members so they may have a positive experience and be tested in the best way possible.

UA A Cappella Community

In order to determine how our community affects both current and potential new members, focus group participants were asked to discuss their likes and dislikes about the UA A Cappella community. Among all groups, participants agree that progress has been made in terms of strengthening the a cappella community over the past two years; "It's not about being better than one another anymore, everyone is supportive of one another. Now I would like to do more group things, I feel like I hardly know anyone in the other groups, but I want to get to know them." As discussed by the participants, the a cappella community at the University of Arizona has become a strong support system. At the same time, many if not all participants want more.

Participants discussed the success of our group relations and our festivals and community concerts, but they mentioned they would like to see more interaction between groups. The most common comment brought up was the idea that members simply want to get to know one another better; "I do think I've missed out when it comes to meeting people in the other groups, simply because they are in the other groups." A Cappella members have busy lives outside of their groups. It can be very difficult to find time to meet the members of other groups. Our members want more; it is important that we work to continue to improve our a cappella community in more engaging ways that will allow our members to intermingle and meet one another. The benefit to the community as a whole could be enormous.

Focus Group Conclusions

Based on the analysis of the focus groups it is clear there is room for improvement within the UA a cappella community. In regards to awareness, many potential members do not know how extensive the community is, nor are they properly made aware of auditions within the community. It has also become evident that auditioners may not be sure what to expect within their auditions nor do they seem to have enough time to prepare for auditions. We must also gain a better understanding of the effect and importance of prior experience of potential members and their transition into a cappella. Another important topic to test is new practices that could be utilized by the groups in order to improve awareness and audition experiences.

These issues and ideas will be quantified through the use of a survey that will be administered to all of the members across the entire UA a cappella community. Survey analysis will provide us with insight as to how potential members behave and consume UA a cappella, and will in turn allow the community and its groups to improve auditions and better cater to auditioners and the entirety of the audition process. Most importantly, our groups must use this information and take action to improve as we move into the future.

Survey Analysis

Past Experiences

It is important to properly communicate with potential auditioners. In order to do so, we must determine what makes a strong auditioner and group member. As discussed within the focus groups, it is important to have a number of different types of experience both musically and performance based. By understanding what makes a strong member, we can develop a target market in which to communicate with. Knowing and basing our target market on past music and performance experience could improve awareness of auditions through focused messaging, improve auditioner turnout, and improve the fit between auditioners and the group's they audition for.

Respondents were asked to mark their past experiences both musically and performance based, and from those were also asked to mark which experience prepared them for a cappella the most. They were also asked how many years of experience they had with music and with performance. 100% of respondents have had some sort of experience with music with 91% of respondents reporting they had five or more years of experience with music before they joined an a cappella group. 98% of respondents had some sort of performance experience before they joined an a cappella ensemble at the U of A and 85% of respondents said they had five or more years of experience with performance.

In regards to previous musical experience, choir was the most popular, but further analysis shows this is not the case for each group on an individual level. The mixed groups, Amplified and Noteriety, had a wider spread of "most helpful" experiences in terms of preparedness whereas the other groups, such as CatCall for example, showed that choir was the most helpful experience; all 11 of CatCall's members found choir to be the most beneficial.

In regards to previous performance experience, choir was once again the most popular with 89% of respondents saying they participated in choir, but unlike past music experience musical theater, was a closer second, followed by a close third and fourth of athletics and band respectively. A deeper analysis shows once again, certain groups do differ from one another; while choir is most popular overall, it may not be on an individual group level. Once again, the mixed groups proved similar to one another with a wide variety of performance experience proving beneficial. CatCall proved to be the differing group as the most popular performance experience was clearly from choir; not exclusively, but much more than other groups. The more popular prior experience the proved most beneficial for three of the groups, Dolce Voces, Enharmonics, and Noteriety was musical theater.

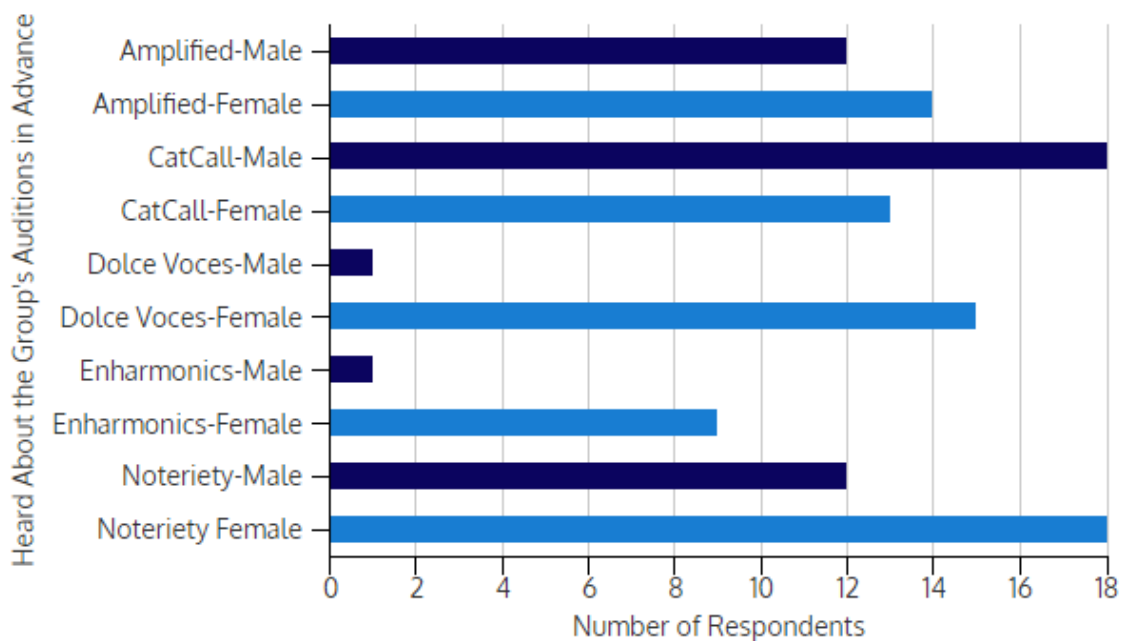
Regardless of the group it is important that auditioners have some sort of prior experience with both music and performance before they join a group. On an individual level each group must focus on what is most beneficial to their group in regards to prior music and performance experience. Amplified and Noteriety are very similar; both groups are comprised of members that have a wide variety of experience. In their case they may not need to focus on taking individuals with specific types of experience. The single gender groups, Dolce Voces, Enharmonics, and especially CatCall will want to focus on recruiting auditioners that have had previous experience in a choir. The same can be said for CatCall in regards to past performance experience whereas Dolce Voces and Enharmonics may also want to include musical theater as a prerequisite as well.

General Awareness

As briefly mentioned, turnout for auditions can be an issue multiple groups on our campus face. This issue stems from poor awareness among potential auditioners. Members of the UA A Cappella

community were asked about their awareness prior to auditioning for and joining a group through survey in order to define what exactly constitutes this issue and how each group can better work to improve awareness of both their group and their group’s auditions.

Approximately 63% of UA A Cappella members learned about a cappella, whether collegiate or professional, during high school. During that time, 30% of our members learned about the U of A’s collegiate a cappella scene. That being said, over half of UA A Cappella members did not hear about the UA A Cappella groups until they were freshmen on the U of A campus. Survey results show that CatCall is the first group people tend to learn about first, followed by Noteriety, Amplified, Dolce Voces, and Enharmonics respectively.



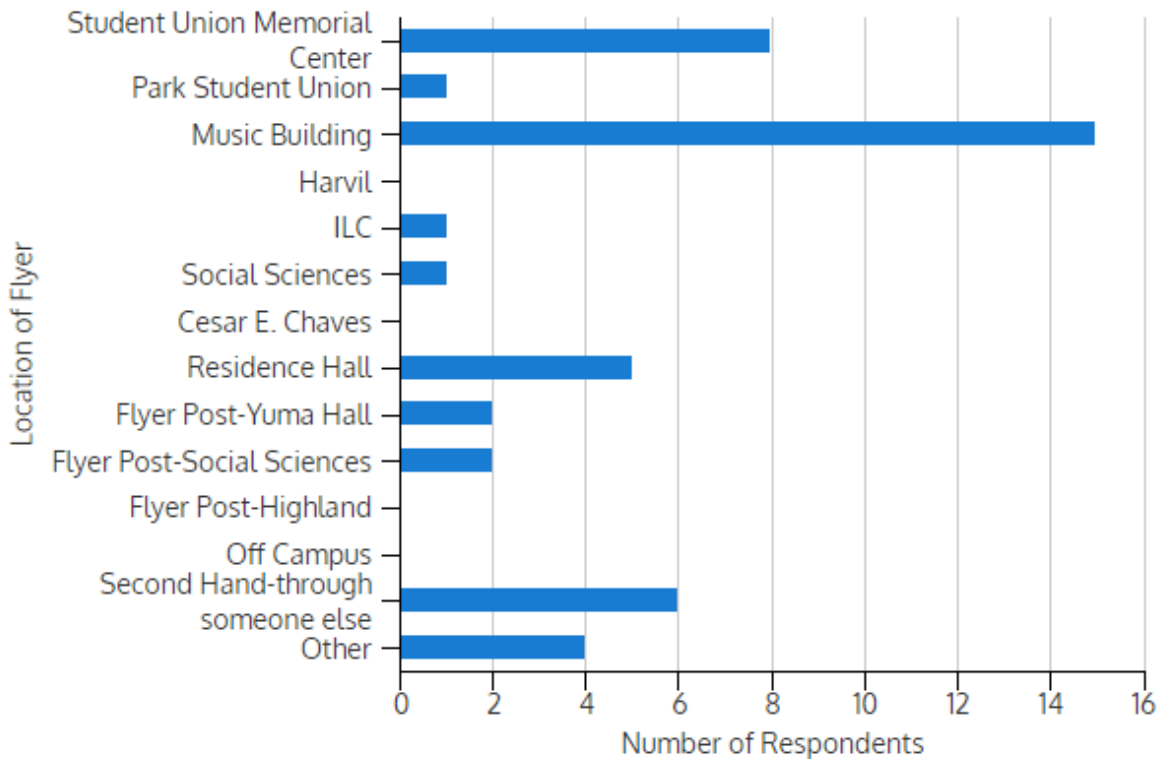
Further analysis by gender shows the following. There is no significant difference in awareness between gender for Noteriety, Amplified, and Enharmonics. For the mixed groups Amplified and Noteriety, this is good since their groups are comprised of both males and females. For CatCall and Dolce Voces, both groups also do well with awareness by gender; more females tend to be aware of Dolce Voces, an all-female group, and more men tend to be aware of CatCall, an all-male group. An issue is apparent for our other all-female group, Enharmonics. As an all-female group it is important to build a strong awareness among females, their target market for auditions. In the graph above they appear similar to Dolce Voces, however males and females are equally unaware, so it may prove beneficial for the group to focus on increasing awareness among more females rather than males in the future.

Outlets for Awareness

It is extremely important for each of our groups to recognize and understand the ways that potential group members become aware of the possibility of joining one of the groups. Different groups may advertise in different ways; these groups must determine which outlets work best for their group so they may capitalize on them. Respondents were asked to respond to questions regarding the different ways they may or may not have learned about their current group's auditions around campus.

Printed Flyers

Members were first asked to think back to when they were first auditioning for their group. The first question asked whether or not they had seen a printed flyer advertising auditions. 54% of respondents said they did not see a flyer. Of those that did see a flyer, just over half, 58%, saw a flyer in the Music Building. Further analysis shows there is no significant difference between the five groups or by gender. This may reveal an issue to the single-sex groups that advertise with printed flyers; they may not be as effective as we think which could mean the groups are wasting time and money on printing and posting ineffective flyers that reach beyond their target market.



Moving forward it will be important for each group to develop a strategic plan if flyers are posted or handed out; single gender groups will also need to focus on improving the awareness within the gender group that fits their ensemble. Each group must determine where to post; it may be most effective to post flyer only in the music building, and potentially the Student Union. Aside from posting, handing out flyers to people at events or club fairs that take place before auditions may prove more beneficial. It is also important to consider costs and time constraints. If a group does not have enough funds to properly create flyers, or if they do not have enough time to post and hand out flyers, it may be a smart move to focus on advertising channels other than printed flyers.

Online Advertising

Another outlet for audition and group advertising is social media and group websites. When it comes to social media, 51% of members said they saw audition information on social media; only 18% of respondents said they saw audition information on a group's website. Facebook is the most popular form of social media where audition advertising was seen as 90% of respondents who saw social media advertisements said they saw some sort of advertising in regards to auditions on Facebook. Noteriety had the highest response rate in regards to social media advertising; CatCall and Amplified were also top contenders for social media advertising. That being said, there really is no significant difference between the five groups; only half of the people that made it into a group actually saw advertising on social media, suggesting social media advertising should also be improved among all five groups.

Respondents were also asked about seeing advertising on group websites. 82% of respondents did not see advertising on group websites. In this case there is a statistical difference between the five groups. Noteriety differs from the single gender groups as their website with audition information on it was seen more than any of the other groups, a positive for Noteriety. That said, an issue still remains across all groups as only 18% of participants saw information on a group's website; an issue that must be solved.

It is important to recall the issue that was brought up during the focus groups. Many participants that did look for information by searching for groups' websites found it difficult to locate the sites; if they did locate a site, there usually wasn't information posted about auditions until later in the summer, after they had initially looked for information. This led to focus group members to suggest creating a centralized website. Further survey data will reveal whether or not the UA A Cappella community should move forward with the new website.

Word of Mouth

While word of mouth is not a form of advertising it can be considered a form of promotion in regards to the a cappella groups as this word of mouth is stimulated by the group. It is a very important and crucial way for potential auditioners to become aware of auditions. Among respondents, 77% learned about auditions by word of mouth. 65% of respondents reported they had learned about auditions from a member of the group or a friend. There is no statistical difference between the five groups; word of mouth is the most popular way people find out about auditions for each of the groups. However, there is a significant difference between genders. Females are more likely to use word of mouth to spread information about auditions than men. When moving forward it may be beneficial to find a way to capitalize on the word of mouth form of "advertising."

Further questioning and analysis of awareness shows that the groups do utilize and rely on word of mouth differently than one another, so much so that there is a significant difference for the groups in regards to who told people about which groups. Analysis shows current Amplified members heard about auditions by someone that was already a member of the group. A number of Dolce Voces members heard about auditions from roommates or floor mates. Enharmonics members found information from fellow classmates. Finally, Noteriety members learned about auditions from friends. CatCall did not have a specific mode that stuck out from the others; this could mean each mode is equally utilized. To any extent, each group should continue to utilize word of mouth in order to increase awareness of both the UA A Cappella groups and their auditions. Data shows Amplified may be doing a better job than other groups at identifying and contacting strong auditioners; Amplified may be a key in improving word of mouth across the community. Regardless, it will be important for each group to understand who they should target and talk to. This could be done by having a group marketing meeting to get everyone on

the same page; this will allow each member to best understand who to target, and could therefore help them to secure strong auditioners for their group.

Awareness and Preparedness

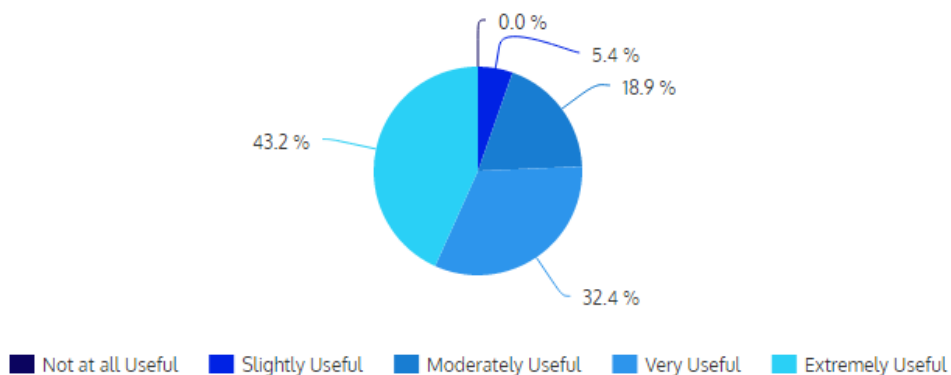
In order for auditioners to have a successful audition they must be aware of what will be required of them during their audition. This should include what they should sing for their solo audition, what they'll be tested on, and what the group is looking for musically. While a majority of respondents said they were aware of the genre they should have sung for their solo audition, a quarter of respondents did not know what genre to sing regardless of the group they auditioned for. While this is the minority, it is important for all auditioners to know exactly what is expected of them so they may prepare accordingly. It is also important to consider the idea that the number of people that did not know the proper genre may have been higher among rejected auditioners. Better communication before auditions will help solve this issue and could also help the groups develop a better idea of what an auditioner may bring to the group with a proper audition, and could also increase the number of auditioners that advance to callbacks.

Best Practices for Auditions

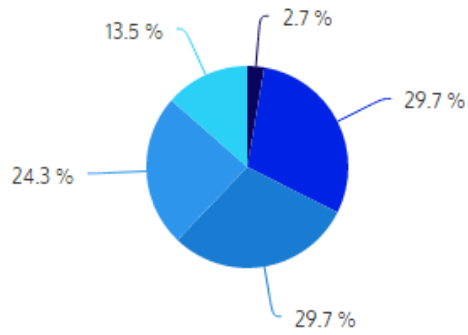
There are two sides to every audition, the side of the auditioner and the group's side. It is important for the group to understand the role they play in auditions as well as the impact they make on the auditions. Aside from being asked to think back to their auditions, participants were also asked think about their group's most recent audition process so we may gain a better understanding of how auditions work; what's important, and what needs to be worked on.

People auditioning for our groups undergo a couple of different tests in both the solo audition and the callback audition. Members were asked to rank the usefulness of various tests; tonal recall, sight singing, vocal percussion, and blending. Statistical analysis shows that all groups value and find useful the different tests in very similar ways, there is no significant difference between groups. The most useful test is blending followed by tonal recall. Sight singing and vocal percussion are viewed as only moderately useful, however, this is likely due to the idea that not everyone can beat box or sight sing, so usually only those that can are actually tested on it.

Usefulness of Tonal Recall

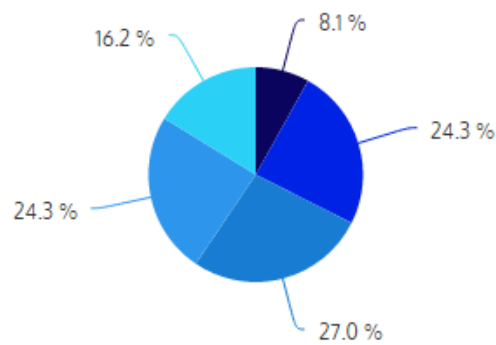


Usefulness of Sight Singing



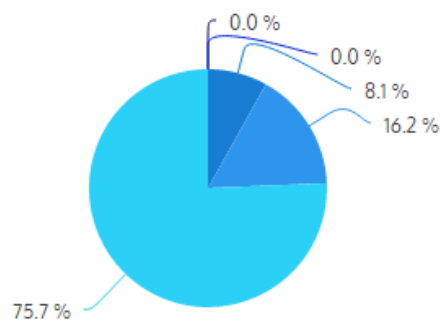
■ Not at all Useful ■ Slightly Useful ■ Moderately Useful ■ Very Useful ■ Extremely Useful

Usefulness of Vocal Percussion



■ Not at all Useful ■ Slightly Useful ■ Moderately Useful ■ Very Useful ■ Extremely Useful

Usefulness of Blending



■ Not at all Useful ■ Slightly Useful ■ Moderately Useful ■ Very Useful ■ Extremely Useful

It is more important to pay attention to the logistics of auditions. Participants were also asked questions in regards to their wait time before auditions as well as how their audition was conducted by the group. In regards to wait time, 79% of auditioners believe the amount of time they waited to audition was acceptable to some degree. That being said, there were still some that did not believe their wait time was acceptable. Further analysis shows Noteriety differs from the other groups; wait times for auditioners of Noteriety were more likely viewed as unacceptable. This is backed by the fact that Noteriety tends to have a larger turnout than other groups within the community. In the future it may be beneficial for Noteriety to plan accordingly in order to reduce wait times for auditioners.

Participants were then asked about whether or not they had the chance to meet members of the group, and whether or not they liked, or would have liked to do so. A simple analysis shows that people who audition for the co-ed groups get to meet members of the group while they wait to audition while people auditioning for the single-gender groups do not. This may be due to the audition setup that Noteriety and Amplified use.

Further analysis shows this is a significant difference and that an overwhelming majority, 96 percent, of auditioners that did have the chance to meet members while they waited to audition did like having the chance to meet members of the group. Next we consider whether or not auditioners would like to have the chance to meet the members while they wait. 63% of respondents that did not have the chance to meet members while they waited would have liked the chance to do so, the others, 36% were indifferent, however, no one said they did not want the opportunity, so it may be beneficial for the groups that currently don't allow auditioners to meet current members to figure out a way to do so.

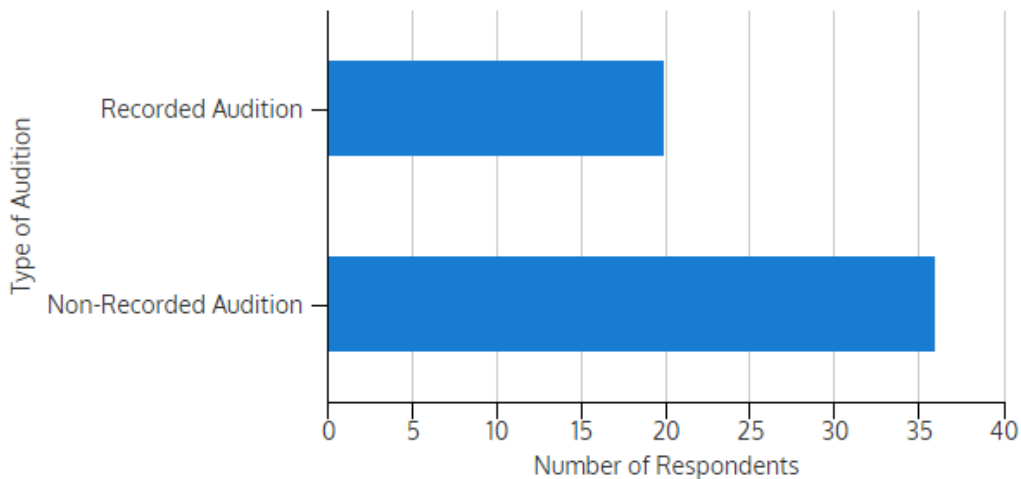
Finally, survey participants were asked about a couple of ways in which the audition was carried out inside the audition room. The focus is on recorded versus non-recorded auditions. In the focus groups there were mixed reviews about auditioning live in front of an entire group verses being recorded; survey analysis reveals a similar response. In the end it may simply depend on whether or not the member was recorded during their own audition.

30% of respondents auditioned in front of an entire group, and approximately 54% of auditions were recorded regardless of whether or not the audition was in front of the entire group. Many respondents, primarily those that did not originally audition in front of the entire group, disagreed that it would have been better to audition in front of the entire group and agreed that they felt comfortable being recorded, likely because they were recorded during their audition. That being said, when participants were asked which made them more comfortable, recorded or non-recorded auditions, 64% of respondents said they would feel more comfortable with a non-recorded audition. In order to understand this dissonance, it is important to look at differences between groups.

- It is better to audition in front of the entire group.
There is a significant difference between groups in regards to this question. Analysis shows that members of CatCall do believe it is better to audition in front of the entire group, which notably contrasts with the preferences of the other four groups.
- I felt comfortable being recorded.
Respondents were then broken into two groups; those that were recorded versus those that were not. Those that were recorded were asked whether or not they were comfortable with being recorded. A couple of respondents did say they were not comfortable being recorded,

however a 83% of respondents did agree they were comfortable. There was a significant difference between the five groups, but that is due to the fact that CatCall and Enharmonics do not record their auditions while the other three, Dolce Voces, Amplified, and Noterietty do. It can be concluded that members that were recorded were comfortable, regardless of the group they auditioned for.

- As an auditioner, which would make you more comfortable?
Interestingly enough, a majority of respondents did say they would feel more comfortable with a non-recorded audition. At first glance this creates dissonance between respondents and the answer given in the previous question where the majority of members were in fact comfortable with being recorded. This can be easily explained: members of CatCall and Enharmonics, who were not recorded in their audition, were included in this question unlike the previous. This is what caused the shift in the majority to feel more comfortable with non-recorded auditions.



That being said, analysis shows a significant difference between the groups beyond CatCall and Enharmonics. Members of Dolce Voces, a group with recorded auditions, also differed. This means that the members of Dolce Voces, much like CatCall and Enharmonics, are more comfortable with non-recorded auditions even though they record auditions. In the future it may be beneficial for Dolce Voces to either stop recording auditions as it may make their auditioners uncomfortable, or find a way to help auditioners feel more comfortable with being recorded while Amplified, CatCall, Enharmonics, and Noterietty should continue on with their current process.

Future Best Practices

This next section presents survey results in regards to actionable solutions recommended by focus group participants. Participants of the six focus groups were asked to discuss issues within the community in regards to awareness and the audition process. Based on those conversations new ideas and solutions for the future arose and were tested on the rest of the a cappella community.

In order to help improve awareness participants suggested a centralized website for all of UA A Cappella as a whole; a site that would contain various pieces of information about the community, including auditions. On top of that, participants also suggested a semi-centralized audition session where all of the groups would host auditions on the same night with a central check in and individual audition rooms, one for each group. Survey respondents were asked a variety of questions in regards to these ideas in order to determine whether or not these ideas align with the thoughts of the entire a cappella community. In-depth analysis could reveal these ideas may prove to be strong solutions to these issues.

Centralized UA A Cappella Website

Participants of all six focus groups expressed concerns with awareness of a cappella groups and auditions. Many members had issues finding information online for various reasons. They did not know what to look for aside from a cappella at the U of A as they did not know the names of the groups, some sites were hard to find are non-existent, it was difficult to find groups' YouTube channels and so on. The idea of a centralized UA A Cappella website arose and the idea was brought to all of the members of the UA A Cappella community.

First, survey participants were asked about issues with awareness in regards to general a cappella on the U of A campus, of individual groups, and of auditions. 93% of participants agreed that awareness of collegiate a cappella on the UA campus needs to be improved; 91% agreed that awareness of their group needs to be improved; 91% also agreed that awareness of their own group's auditions needs to be improved. Based on this, it would seem as though each of the five groups agree that awareness should be improved, but analysis of data reveals that there is a significant difference between the groups. However, the difference is one that even more strongly supports the idea that awareness needs to be improved on campus.

In order to better understand the issue it is important to also look at whether or not members believe auditioners are aware of each group and each group's auditions. Responses to these questions were spread among participants. Amplified reports that they believe potential auditioners are aware of their group. On the other end of the spectrum Dolce Voces does not believe potential auditioners are aware of their group; the other three ensembles fall in the middle, but lean more towards disagreement with the idea that people are aware of their groups. This indicates a clear issue with awareness and validates the conversations that took place during the focus groups.

Participants were then asked a series of questions in regards to creating and utilizing a centralized UA A Cappella website. It is important to understand whether or not the issue in focus is a result of the groups' issue with their own websites. Members of four of the five groups reported having an issue with their individual groups' website; CatCall is the only group where website accessibility is not perceived to be an issue. That being said, all five groups do believe a centralized website could benefit their group as they all believe it would help to increase the awareness of their groups. Creating a centralized UA A Cappella website is favored by all five groups and should be created in the near future.

Semi-Centralized Auditions

Another talking point that was brought up in the focus group discussions was the idea of improving the audition process. The idea actually arose from a conversation regarding the UA A Cappella community as well as audition turnout. Members agreed that the UA A Cappella community can still be improved and having semi-centralized auditions could help with that. They also believe doing something where all five groups are together for auditions to some degree would help improve auditioner turnout.

This would mean all five groups would hold auditions at the same time on the same day. They would all host auditions and advertise together in order to get more people to audition. The check-in for auditions would be centralized; an auditioner would be able to check in for auditions for which ever group(s) he or she would like, all in one area. They would have the chance to meet members of the groups and would also be able to learn more about the groups while they wait to audition. While check-in would be centralized, the actual audition would not be. Each group would still have their own audition room where auditioners would go to do their audition, rather than having a member audition for all five groups at once. In order to understand whether or not this idea would be good for the UA A Cappella community, survey participants who have been a member of their group for more than a year—and therefore have sat on the other side of the audition process—were asked various questions about whether or not they believe this process would help with turnout and the audition process as a whole.

When asked about their satisfaction with their group's most recent audition process participants were decently satisfied with their process, 78% were satisfied. 59% were dissatisfied with turnout. On the other hand, 81% of participants believe their process needs to be improved, including auditioner turnout. Further questioning and analysis show results similar to the ones discussed with the centralized website.

The groups, while slightly hesitant, do believe semi-centralized auditions could benefit their group and auditioners as the process may be easier as the groups could rely on one another; more importantly over 80% of participants believe it would also increase auditioner turnout. There is a statistical difference between one group and the others; much like the centralized website, Dolce Voces differs from the rest, but in a way that is more enthusiastic than the others—while the groups do agree this could help, the members of Dolce Voces more strongly agree.

As discussed, awareness of a cappella on the U of A Campus needs to be improved. Part of the solution could be the semi-centralized auditions. The idea discussed in the focus groups was the opportunity for auditioners to learn more about the different groups while they waited to audition. Based on survey analysis none of the groups disagree, however, the two mixed groups Amplified and Noteriety seem unsure about whether or not auditioners will actually be able to learn more; the three single-gender groups, CatCall, Dolce Voces, and Enharmonics all clearly believe it will be a good opportunity for auditioners to learn more. Making it a goal to help auditioners learn more about the groups while they wait to audition could help ensure people actually learn more about the groups.

A little over three quarters of respondents agree semi-centralized auditions could benefit the community as a whole, more so than just their own group. One group does differ from the others. While Amplified does not disagree that this style of auditions could benefit everyone, they do seem hesitant, unlike the other groups who do believe these auditions would benefit the community as a whole. That being said, 88% of respondents do believe this style of auditions would also improve the connection between the five groups as well, another benefit to also consider.

Participants were asked to mark their agreement in regards to whether or not they would like their group to participate in semi-centralized auditions. 68% agreed, however, this does not mean 32% disagreed. 23% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed. Again, this does signal some members may be hesitant likely due to uncertainty with a new process that has never been done before. Further analysis shows the two mixed groups, both Amplified and Noteriety may be a little more hesitant to move forward with the new style of auditions.

In order to determine whether or not all five of the groups should participate in the semi-centralized auditions it is important for each to weigh the positives and negatives for their group. Based on survey responses, these auditions could improve awareness of the groups, would likely increase auditioner turn out for all five groups, and would also improve the connections between all five of the groups across the community. In this case the benefits do seem outweigh the negatives regardless of group; semi-centralized auditions should be developed and utilized in the future.

Conclusions and Major Recommendations for the UA a Cappella Community

The UA A Cappella community would not be what it is today without the different groups and members in which it is comprised. In order for the community to improve, issues must be brought to light and discussed and solutions must be developed. It is clear there are issues within the UA A Cappella community that all five groups face. It is also clear that the groups are ready to do what is necessary to improve as a community in the future.

There are six large ideas or solutions that stem from two major issues that have arisen from the minds of the auditioners. The first major issue relates to awareness, primarily of auditions. In order to improve issues with awareness of auditions it is suggested each of the five a cappella groups do the following:

- **Make Better Use of Flyers**

Each group must work to become strategic when it comes to posting and sharing flyers on campus. Currently, flyers are not properly written or placed. In the future it will be important that each group work to better target their ads. Key information should be included such as proper genres of music to sing, preferred prior experience (such as choir and musical theater as previously determined), and what auditioners will be tested on. Better targeting and improved messaging will improve the effectiveness of flyers and will likely attract stronger auditioners for the groups.

It will also be important to better place flyers. In the future it will be best to place flyers only in the music building and the Student Union Memorial Center. Aside from that, it will prove most effective to hand out flyers to potential auditioners at large events or at the club fair. Doing so will not only allow for more impressions, but will also allow for members to make personal contact with potential auditioners; this could allow for members to better gauge who would make a strong auditioner as well.

- **Make Better Use of Social Media**

With about half of respondents reporting they saw audition advertising on social media it will prove beneficial to improve effectiveness of advertising online. Facebook is currently the most effective channel for marketing auditions, but there is plenty of room for improvements with Facebook and beyond. Targeted messaging, proper timing of ads, and attractive imagery across multiple social media channels could help improve effectiveness of online advertising.

- **Centralized Website**

Developing a centralized website will greatly benefit the a cappella community; with support from each group a new website would greatly help each group improve their awareness. As discussed, finding information about each of the groups and about their auditions is difficult for people that have never heard of the specific groups within the community, especially high school students and others interested in learning more about the group or about their auditions.

A new website run as UA A Cappella would serve as a landing page for interested community members and potential auditioners; those that do not know the groups would likely search “a cappella at the U of A,” and the UA A Cappella website would likely be a top hit. It will be crucial to create this site with that in mind. This site must serve as a landing page with information about the groups and about auditions, but it will also be important to ensure the website also branches off to each group’s individual website so that people have the chance to learn about each group on a more individual level.

Creating this site should be a team effort. Every group is in favor of the centralized website so each group must also work to contribute to the new site. Planning and plenty of collaboration is a must. This new website may be the key to improving awareness of the UA A Cappella community and group auditions by leaps and bounds.

Aside from issues with awareness, a second overarching issue arises within the audition processes of each of the five groups. Each group must fully understand themselves, who they are as a group, and what they are looking for in new members and find a way to match that to the people who audition for their groups. In this case, some of the audition process must be reworked. The following recommendations aim to help with this.

- **Face to Face Contact Between Members and Auditioners**

It is important to realize the needs of auditioners. The people who audition for the groups may not get a chance to learn about the groups or even meet the people they could be working with for years to come. Auditioners want the opportunity to talk with group members about the group and life within the world of a cappella. This allows the auditioner to see how they would fit into the group, and it would also allow the group to see how the auditioner would fit in as well. At a minimum, allowing contact between auditioners and group members would help reduce the negative impact of wait times and nerves; auditioners would likely be more comfortable and less nervous by having conversations with members before they audition.

There are many different ways to help provide more face to face contact with auditioners. Of course there is the fairly traditional idea of having a couple of members meet and talk with auditioners while they wait to audition, but there are many other ways to do so such as an a cappella mixer night or a pre-audition Q & A panel. These would be separate events that would take place before the actual audition. An event such as a mixer would be a great way for auditioners to learn more about each of the groups and to have their questions about auditions answered. Another way to provide effective face to face contact is through semi-centralized auditions as seen in the final recommendation.

- **Ensure Auditioners are Comfortable with the Audition Set Up**

Each group has their own style or system of auditions. Some groups record auditions, some don't. Some have the auditioner sing in front of the entire group while others don't. Regardless of style, it is important for each group to make sure auditioners are comfortable with the audition style. Perhaps the biggest take-away in regards to comfort with auditions is seen with Dolce Voces; the group records auditions, but analysis shows the people that tend to audition for the group do not feel comfortable being recorded. Each group, not just Dolce Voces, should do their best to ensure comfort with auditions. This could relieve stress and allow auditioners to perform at their best, therefore allowing each group to see the auditioners full potentials. Perhaps the simplest way of ensuring comfort is making sure the auditioners know what to expect prior to auditions. By knowing in advance they may have to sing in front of the entire group, or they may be recorded during their audition, auditioners will not be taken by surprise and made nervous. Instead, they will have the chance to better prepare themselves for their auditions.

- **Develop Semi-Centralized Auditions**

While the idea of semi-centralized auditions is met with some hesitancy from a few groups, this style of auditions will prove extremely beneficial to each individual group and the community as a whole. This style of auditions will allow each group to better showcase who they are and what they do to auditioners, and will also allow auditioners to learn more about each of the groups; another solution to having face to face interaction between group members and auditioners as previously mentioned.

Semi-centralized auditions will also help the community grow as one. Planning and coordinating this process will be a team effort, much like the centralized website, and will help bring members of the community together as they plan auditions. In the end, this new audition process will prove beneficial on both sides of the auditions.

The UA A Cappella community has done a great job developing itself to become what it is today, but there is always room for positive growth. Utilizing the information provided in this report will prove extremely beneficial if used properly and strategically. With the recommendations listed, each of the five groups will be able to better understand what needs to be done to improve upon an already solid a cappella foundation. There is potential for greatness within the community as the future of UA A Cappella is extremely bright.