



time, we have a pretty high probability of seeing them join (from one-third to, in some cases, three-quarters of them). We also know that we lose 37% of new members in the first year and more than 50% of new members by the end of their third year. Recruiting new members is a huge investment of effort by a chapter in focus and manpower. It can take as much as 30 to 40 man hours to recruit one new member. Have we ever asked ourselves why we don't make that time investment in keeping them? My guess is that it doesn't take that much manpower to retain them. What it takes is attention and empathy.

And how do we lose those 37 percent in the first year. My fraternity 'little brother' joined a chapter in another area of the country just a year ago. He has been a singer since our days in college and I was thrilled to find out he had become a barbershopper. Today he is one of the 37% from 2010!!! What happened? He joined the chapter and once he had joined, the support stopped. No one coached him through the first several months of his participation in a new life style. No one told him what to expect. No one called him when he missed a meeting or two. The chapter told him that they needed leads and he should sing lead. He is a bass. After a few months the singing was physically taking a toll on him. Finally, he ended up going to the doctor who told him he had to stop singing for several weeks or face more voice issues. When the rest was over he returned asking to sing bass and was told "No. You need to sing lead." Then he volunteered to be chapter secretary. No coaching, no assistance, just give it a shot and you will learn. The duties were a little overwhelming – especially for a new member. At the end of one year (one month ago) he said that he didn't need this, resigned as secretary, resigned from the chapter and told the chapter why he was leaving. For him he is still singing but with another community group and not barbershop. Our loss.

Another friend, a long-time barbershopper (23 years), had moved in retirement to a new area of the country and joined a chapter in that area. He has been a member of that chapter for about 10 years. This past year he had some physical problems including surgery. During that time no one from the chapter called on him to see how he was, no one let him know that he was missed, and no one called to wish him well, a speedy recovery, and a quick return to the chapter. He felt cut off and unwanted. He has made the decision to drop his membership. Our loss.

There are a hundred stories like this. But what do they tell us? We need to learn from each one of these. WE EACH need to learn from each one of these stories. Being interested in our members and developing relationships with our members is not the responsibility of our chapter presidents or of our vice-presidents for chapter development. It is the responsibility of each one of us. So challenge your members and your chapter's leadership to take up the baton of membership growth and each do their part. It is essential to us to ensure that we will have barbershop for our children's and our grandchildren's generations.

I am trying to do my personal part in my chapter. Can we count on you and all of your members to do their part in 2011?

I think we can.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alan". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.