

# *Vocal Delivery*

by Tim Marriner

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Auctioneers have a distinctive rhythmic chant that attract would be buyers to place bids. The chant varies depending upon the products being sold and the customers attending the sale. For example, a tobacco auctioneer sounds totally different than one selling fine art. The approaches are not interchangeable. The same holds true with square dance callers. The delivery of workshop material differs from that of a Saturday night festival. For some callers the choice is intuitive. The following will describe three delivery styles most widely used by callers today.

**Chanting** – With this style, the caller vocally uses the root key of the music being used with at least four core notes above and below the main key. It is mostly used with patter music in 2/4 signature time. The boom chuck sound allows the caller to vocally enhance the up beats as well as the down beats increasing his or her pitch to offer excitement during resolution or some surprise get out. Modulations should be used to avoid sounding like “Johnny One Note.” Rhyming schemes and filler words are often used with this style to enhance the delivery. Even without music the dancers are able to stay on rhythm by the callers’ cadence.

**Talking** – This delivery style is used often with workshop material or challenging choreography. It can be used along with other styles to offer degrees of vocal shading enhancing a word or phrase, even in singing calls. The dynamic of this style does not change much so it is somewhat void of extra filler words, sometimes referred to as “stripped calling.” This style is very effective with alternative music and many tunes with 4/4 signature time. It is still important to add some vocal energy with this delivery style to maintain some degree of excitement.

**Singing** – This is the delivery style mostly reserved for singing calls. The caller follows the lead melody of the music while delivering commands. Callers that use patter music with lots of lead melody can use this style. This delivery style does not lend much to teaches or workshops, unless one is trying to lighten the spirits.

Music subconsciously moves the feet of most dancers. The caller’s cadence should also contribute to that movement. If there is a lack of cadence in the caller’s voice, dancers are less likely to move collectively in rhythm. A great way to test if your delivery helps move the dancers is to turn the music volume off while calling to see if the dancers can continue to move rhythmically.

The old Sets in Order LP’s are a great source to hear various vocal delivery styles. Practice with the different techniques to determine what feels right for you with your vocal capabilities. Once you feel comfortable with your vocal style, record yourself and play it back to determine if you at least sound like a professional square dance caller.