

ROADMAP TO RENEWAL

A MANIFESTO FOR CHANGE



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Acknowledgements

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Unions 21

Unions 21 exists to support unions to increase their influence, impact and effectiveness within the world of work. We will do this by working with unions, supporters and stakeholders to create an open space for research, innovation and activity to assist unions to secure a better life for working people. This paper is part of its work on new economies, new workers.

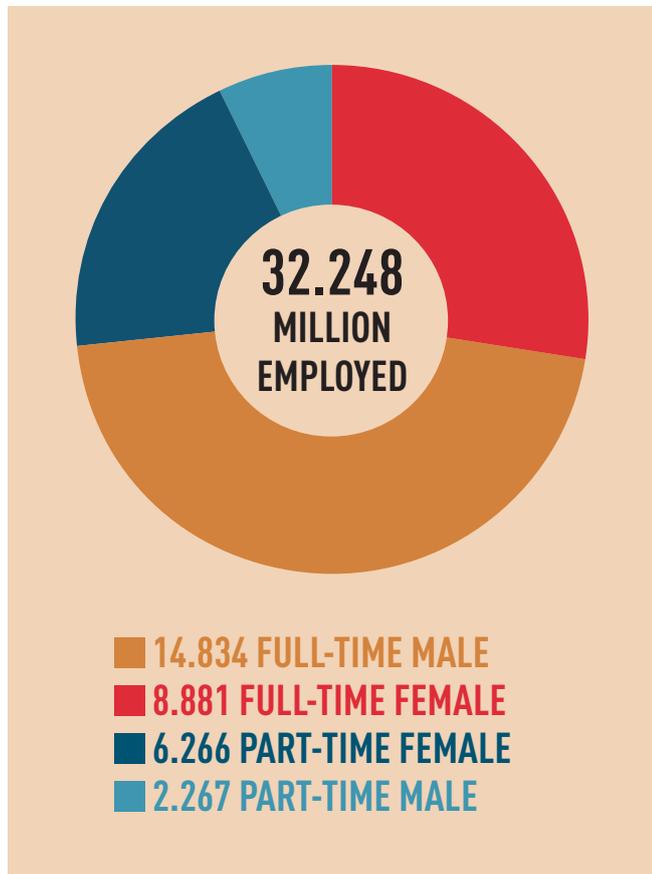
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Work in numbers



Average regular pay (excluding bonuses) for employees in Great Britain was

£482 per week

5.7M BUSINESSES IN THE UK:

5.6 M ARE SMES (1-249 EMPLOYEES) OF WHICH:

5.5M ARE MICRO-BUSINESSES (1-9 EMPLOYEES)

ONLY 0.1M LARGE BUSINESSES (250+ EMPLOYEES)

Union membership in numbers

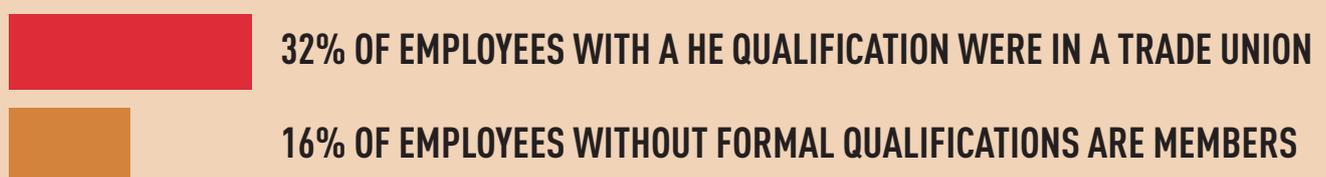
Membership



Diversity of membership



Education



Coverage



Trade union organisation

200,000 reps cover 29% of workplaces.

At workplace level 50/50 gender split however only 39% of senior roles are held by women.

60% of senior non-union representative positions at the workplace are women.

86% of reps are over 40.

98% of reps are white.

Only 9% work part time.

60% of executive reps had not been formally trained in their role.

Being the voice at work

15% of private sector workers are covered by an agreement.

59% public sector of workers have an agreement.

57% of employees in larger workplaces reported that a trade union was present, compared with 24% in smaller workplaces.

Average regular pay (excluding bonuses) for employees in Great Britain was £482 per week.

Union wage gap: 15% in the public sector, 8% in private sector.

Reaching out

Just over half of all reps are male/female.

Women hold 39% of senior union positions but 60% hold senior non-union representative positions at the workplace.

- 86% reps are over 40
- 98% of reps are white
- only 9% work part time.

Most effective way of reaching potential members: face-to-face communication, and ideally via trusted colleagues who are already union members.

58% of young members from Unions 21 unions joined because of a workplace rep.

Top three positive union experiences for young members:

- spoken to rep about an issue you had
- signed a petition
- been to a union meeting.

Top three negative experiences were:

- spoken to rep about an issue you had
- been to a union meeting
- taken strike action or similar/ used a union hotline.

Making a start on the roadmap

When the official trade union membership figures for 2016 were released this year, it gave unions great pause for thought. After a period of almost stasis and even a little increase in private sector membership, we experienced the largest decrease in membership since the official statistics were compiled in 1995.

It seems that once again, as we did in the 1990s, the union movement is facing a set of crossroads where our survival is put front and centre. Countless articles and academic papers tell us we're too old, we're too stuck in our ways, we're just, not frankly, cool enough. We're are too focused in the public sector, we are now predominantly for higher waged professionals and our influence in the labour market in terms of wages and conditions has diminished. While there is a lot of truth to the criticisms that we face as a movement, there is a lot that is being done that should give unions the chance for hope when it comes to union renewal. Can we say that unions such as Equity are failing when they are able to grow membership in a highly precarious labour market? How can we say unions like ASLEF are doing a bad job when members have seen considerable betterment of conditions through concerted industrial strategy?

Yet, despite the glimmers of hope that are around us, we cannot escape the truth – we are not where people are.

But, it's easy to say what we're bad at, much harder to give realistic solutions.

We need to recognise that there is no silver bullet. It will require hard work, difficult change and financial investment to build up our movement. We cannot rely on other circumstances to change, we must rely on ourselves. In marshalling the change that we need, we must underscore that need with the reality that there cannot be a one size fits all model.

Every union has its own pressures and scenarios, from the relative newness of unions of the AUE and PDAU to historically established TSSA and ASLEF. This individuality and sovereignty should be respected whilst recognising that collaboration is going to be vital to our survival and a commitment to the sharing of knowledge, ideas and, in some respects, resources will be crucial.

Unions 21 has been working with our supporters to explore how unions are operating now which can help shape future practice as well as areas for development. Regardless of union structure, there will be four main capacity focused priorities for unions which will enable growth and renewal:

1. Recognise the role of leadership to enable change.
2. Make the persuasive, everyday case for collective voice/bargaining.
3. Shape structures to reflect and support the needs of (potential) members and reps.
4. Collaborate and invest for the future.

1 Recognise the role of leadership to enable change

The union movement relies on union reps, activists, shop stewards and deputies. The paid and unpaid time put in by reps keeps a union running and the role is the cornerstone of our operations. Above all other benefits and services a union can offer, having an effective, relatable and trusted rep at work is crucial to the views of others in the value of a union. Therefore, above all else, unions must see the growth and development of reps as a defining part of our resurgence.

Build from the ground up

There is a real case for unions to invest in the recruitment, development and retention of reps regardless of whether we are based in the public or private sector. Understanding that the journey from member to activist is holistic and a continuum. Very few people are born reps just as much as they are born union members.

Gone is the time when we could offer attractive facility packages – how time is being used will now be under the microscope like never before. This means that our offer to members needs to invoke a sense of volunteerism and community engagement again. We need people who can and are willing to undertake union duties and activities from the small to large scale on limited time. But this will take trust and flexibility.

Trust from reps to their local and national unions that they will be developed and supported. Trust from local and national unions to reps to undertake the necessary day to day building of relationships with colleagues. Alongside this unions to be flexible and welcome a helping hand however small and find ways to not overload people.

Union structures and rule books need overhauling so that they can allow for short bursts of engagement in a variety of interests which encourages more than just those invested as stalwarts in the movement. Equally so, we need to persuade those with multiple hats share the load.

Focusing on reps means continued investment in our education programmes, delivering them from bite sized snippets through to online courses. All the while refocusing on the necessary skills we need to build a union from the ground up.

Disciplinary and grievance training is important but we need to ensure reps are confident to undertake 1-2-1s, talk to groups of people and build up other reps in the workplace.

Online learning will be important, but within a blended offer which also considers coaching and mentoring schemes, gaming and 'on the job' learning. Designers of learning programmes will need to be conversant in all areas of learning and work with union colleagues to ensure quality provision. We will also need to make it easier to transfer between unions as reps.

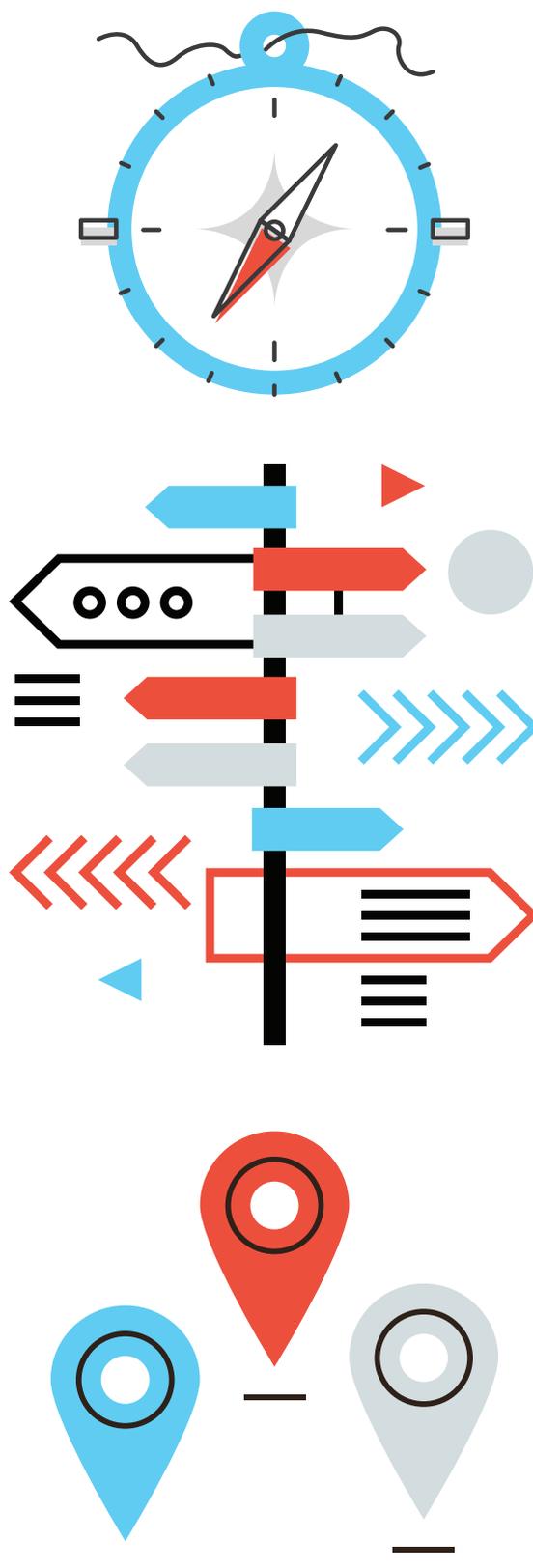
The value in learning together as a union family is an important part of breaking down barriers and creating bonds across the movement. This can be difficult in the current formulation of trade union education, but unions could consider the value of inter union sectoral approaches rather than automatically go for union specific training.

Ensure that lay leaderships have the right training and development

The role of the national executive is fundamental to the direction and allocation of resources. This is a huge responsibility and we know that only 40% of lay leaders have been trained in governance, let alone anything resembling financial planning or strategy. This lack of training can mean at best ineffective oversight or at worst, inaccurate decision making based on presumed rather than realistic knowledge. Unions will need to place resources in the best place for growth and representation while at the same time take calculated risks.

Engaged and knowledgeable executives can also empower union leadership teams to make the creative and necessary changes needed for either union survival or growth. Sometimes these risks will not go the way we want, but adaptation and evolution is necessary for survival. Unions must therefore invest in properly structured development for their lay leaderships which is integrated in reps programmes. Ideally, the content would focus on key areas to enable them to move a union forward such as governance, management, strategy and resource allocation.

Creating a climate of innovation and risk taking, away from political point scoring is necessary for success. Coupled with this, we should encourage our executives to network between unions to get a sense of shared difficulties and perspectives.



2 Make the persuasive, everyday case for collective voice/bargaining

It has been clear for a long time that the UK economy simply isn't delivering for many workers. It isn't productive enough, doesn't spread wealth fairly, and thinks short-term, driven by the desire for quick gains for shareholders, rather than sustainable growth that benefits everyone. While it is obvious to us that unions are a key part of the solution to these problems, not everyone recognises this. Yet collective bargaining is part of the answer both for fair shares and improving productivity across the economy.

Reimagining collective bargaining for the 21st century

Reinvigorating collective bargaining is central to the future of trade unions, especially in the private sector. Not only because of abstract arguments about rights or justice, though both are vital, but from the practical problems facing the UK economy and our role in addressing them. This isn't about turning back the clock to the period of closed shops and unresponsive trade unionism. It is about adapting and reimagining collective bargaining for changing work patterns and worker expectations on issues such as flexible working, equal pay and technological change.

Prospect's recent report with ResPublica made the case for a new bargain between government, business, and unions to expand collective bargaining and improve productivity. The report has many recommendations, from enhanced collective bargaining rights and a 'Work 4.0 council' to employee voice deals and support for unions to become 'lifelong learning banks', all aimed at tackling the central problem of productivity.

This aspiration shares many of the characteristics of the German co-determination model whereby firms over a certain size are legally obliged to recognise employee voice in two ways. First, they must establish a works council, secondly they must permit a certain percentage of the places on their supervisory board to be made up of employee representatives, normally drawn from the works council (the percentage of seats ranges from one third to a half depending on the size of the firm).

Trade unions then organise within firms to recruit members and win seats for their representatives on the works council and then on the board. In making our case we are on solid ground. A recent ACAS study found a strong link between productivity enhancing measures and collective bargaining through trade unions. This finding has been reinforced by studies from Gallup and from Norway as well as by the government's own research in 2007 that estimated that the productivity gains delivered by trade union representatives were worth between £3.4bn and £10.2bn to the UK economy every year.

So what needs to happen? Firstly, we need to make a concerted case to government to recognise the vital role of employee voice and collective bargaining as central to a modern, sustainable economy. This could include a formal role for unions and employee voice in Sector Deals, on skills policy and productivity. Secondly, we need a public policy commitment, expressed in statute, placing obligations on companies above a certain size to accept and cooperate with independent employee voice on core employment and work space issues such as pay, conditions, working environment and skills. Unions need to consider that policy should start at a company level, and where suitable build to a sectoral approach. For example, sectoral arrangements may work best in areas with low – skilled, undifferentiated labour.

In more structured or complex environments, the company focus allows for arrangements to be developed that work with the terrain of the organisation, this adaptation gives employers 'their' say but against the fundamental requirement that the 'voice' is independent, effective and wide in scope. What better way to deliver this than through a collective, consensual relationship with a representative union.

Thirdly, unions must be provided with access and develop the capacity to engage with workers in order for this to work. It is not about automatic enrolment, workers should still have choice about whether they join a union, but it also cannot be about closed doors, where businesses are able to prevent or discourage union membership or where they can confer or withdraw 'recognition'.

We also need to work together to think through the challenges of how unions can recruit new members and the capacity of reps to engage and support a wider bargaining agenda.

We have a long haul ahead if we are going to overturn what has been decades of decline in worker voice and influence. With Brexit ahead this is the union mission and it's never been more important to win this argument with and for working people.

Making the wider case for collective bargaining

When talking about union density, Sweden (along with other nordic countries) comes up top. Yet, it is a county where unionisation is rapidly declining, especially amongst young workers.

Between 2003 and 2013, membership dropped from 80% to 70% coverage. Even more worrying is that membership amongst its young people (16-24) stood at 40%. Collective bargaining coverage still remains high with over 90% covered by an agreement.

In order to see how it might raise the profile of unions with young people, The TCO (The Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees) undertook research on how much young workers (defined between 20-25) understood about how their workplace rights and benefits were agreed. 25% of those surveyed did not know whether their workplace had a collective agreement or not and 50% of young workers did not know about the content of collective agreements, including in relation to an annual salary rise or other benefits such as support for parental leave. Similarly they were unaware that the popular, special employer subsidy for certain kinds of sport/physical activity (friskvårdsbidrag) also arose from collective agreements.

In response, the TCO created a campaign to raise awareness of the Swedish autonomous employer-worker collective bargaining. #likeaswede was the result, with a short video campaign where a rich Beverly Hills character decides to opt for the lifestyle choice of living 'like a Swede' with a central role for collective bargaining. By highlighting the process of gaining better conditions, the unions hoped to raise awareness of their role and existence. TCO monitored the impact through views and survey results after obtaining a baseline of knowledge. While engagement went up, the target audience were still unclear on how the benefits of '#likeaswede' were achieved. This led to a second video, 'Business like a Swede' which followed both the boss and the workers around a fictitious workplace, as they did 'business like a Swede'.

There was a clear message on the need to have two partners in workplace decision-making which leads to a happy and healthy workplace and successful business outcomes. This follow-up was more successful with higher views and digital engagement. More importantly, the campaign had engagement with policy-makers and other influencers and markedly increased the level of knowledge and understanding about the Swedish model among young workers. There has since been a follow up where AI bots unionise.

#likeawede focused on the process that resulted in making workplaces good places as opposed to union membership in isolation. This central message puts unions as clear partners in the Swedish business model and one to be protected and involved in going forward as opposed to other campaigns we have seen in the UK which focused on either wins from the past or what individuals can get out of their membership.

Online learning will be important, but within a blended offer which also considers coaching and mentoring schemes, gaming and 'on the job' learning. Designers of learning programmes will need to be conversant in all areas of learning and work with union colleagues to ensure quality provision. We will also need to make it easier to transfer between unions as reps.

The value in learning together as a union family is an important part of breaking down barriers and creating bonds across the movement. This can be difficult in the current formulation of trade union education, but unions could consider the value of inter union sectoral approaches which recognises constraints in sectors rather than automatically go for union specific training.

Understand potential new forms of voice/bargaining.

Moving forward, unions are going to have to consider the fact that collective bargaining is evolving. Firstly, how we are bargaining and secondly what we are bargaining over.

How we are bargaining can be laid out with in the way that 'living wage' has crept into our common parlance in relation to wages. Starting in London, Living Wage campaign claims to have won over £210million of additional wages, lifting over 70,000 families out of working poverty.

Currently, 1,033 employers (both unionised and not) display the badge which demonstrates the organisation's commitment to its staff. The movement remains cynical over 'shiny' innovations which tend to mimic and yet reduce employee collective voice and this is justifiable. However, we do have to understand and recognise the rise of what Professor of Industrial Relations, Ed Heery calls 'civil regulation' of employment relations. In other words, standards created by civil society which are adopted by employers. This can be looked at as another form of collective bargaining, one that may have a union involved, but equally a union may not be present. Unions will have to consider how to engage and influence civil regulation and even bring it to the fore in order to achieve wider goals.

In Germany, IG Metall has been working across borders on the Fair Crowd Work initiative which gives platform workers easy knowledge on workplace rights and standards. It has recently created a crowdsourcing ombudsman with eight European crowdsourcing platforms and the German Crowdsourcing Association (Deutscher Crowdsourcing Verband). The Ombudsman will resolve disputes between crowdworkers, clients, and crowdsourcing platforms and oversee the enforcement of the "Crowdsourcing Code of Conduct" which has also been adopted by the platforms. This Code of Conduct covers approximately two million worker registrations and sets minimum standards with respect to working conditions and relations between workers, clients, and platforms.

The other aspect we will have to consider is what, in a more fragmented and data driven society we will bargain for. When workers have to wear wristbands during work which collects data – who owns it and how do workers benefit from the harvesting and use? Coupled with this, how do we negotiate for the algorithms that will determine shift patterns or even HR functions? Unions are going to need to invest in the skills needed to undertake that work from rep through to research department.

3 Shape the union to reflect and support the needs of (potential) members and reps

Realistically, no one is going to completely disband a union and very few unions will be starting from fresh (at the moment). It is, to use an expression, 'pie in the sky' to think that there will be immediate dissolution and then reformation of unions. And that's not necessarily going to solve our problems anyway. Instead, unions need to think about how to adapt to the needs and wishes of members now and in the future. Change is a difficult process, but one that needs to happen in order for the movement to survive.

Beneath the activist layer: understanding your membership

In 2016/17, the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (CSP) commissioned an independently managed multi – methodology research project across the whole membership to seek insights into the values, motivation and perceptions of members. In depth telephone interviews were undertaken with 65 members drawn from all countries and regions, across different sectors of employment and with different levels of engagement with the CSP. The interviews informed a survey of a stratified sample of members, going out to over 12,000 members and had over 1,000 usable returns. This sample size gave a 99% degree of reliability for the results within a 4% margin of error. Using both qualitative and quantitative findings gave a rich set of insights into the views of members, allowing for real evidence to inform decisions rather than relying on the views of either CSP staff or activists alone.

The big difference with the insight work that had been undertaken before, was the depth and range of insights provided. In general, members are highly motivated to help patients. CSP members are tribal and joining the CSP reflects their commitment to their profession. They value the protection they get from their membership including employment and legal protection as well as professional liability insurance. They look to the CSP for support for career development and, crucially, for a strong public voice. They experience "white noise" from communications but value the regularity of contact. The research confirmed some suspicions staff had, but were not 100% sure about. For example, it showed that only 1 in 5 members was aware of the union's main campaign which has led the CSP to do more research into what factors encourage members to get involved in campaigns, resulting in some significant changes. A new campaign, developed with yet more member research, will replace it.

From this, the CSP are also trying to create opportunities for those members with limited time to be involved, and are making it clearer the time commitment for different activities. The union feels it has a better understanding of drivers for joining which are being incorporated into recruitment messages more clearly.

Member awareness of the services they get from the CSP was very limited. Although they value the sense that they can access a range of services, they did not have a detailed knowledge of what exactly they could use or how to access services. As a result, the message and design of the services package is changing so it is more memorable to members. Interestingly, some of the services provided are not as important to members as had been assumed. They were also very clearly less important to the membership than they are to senior lay activists.

Create service packages and structures which reflect members needs right now, not thirty years ago

What would you do if you needed to create a brand new union? This is what faced the FNV KIEM in the Netherlands when they began a project to raise membership and organising in the video game, VFX and animation industry.

It began by working with Tilbury University on a piece which explored the developments, working conditions and needs of workers in the creative industry, focusing on application developers, 2D/3D animation and game professionals and pop musicians. The sector is characterised by low pay and long working hours (working 60 hours a week is common and there are even those who work 100 hours per week). Overtime is routine and student internships are barely paid.

Focus groups were held to get a sense of the priorities on which the union should focus, and how to attract new members. What came out was:

- The union would be clearly grounded in the sector.
- Membership of an organisation was important, not just to support or donate. The group wanted a sense of belonging.
- There needed to be provision of advice such as fee, tax and work contracts.
- Needed to be seen as a strong and visible advocate for the sector and workers
- The organisation had to be digitally advanced.

The union would need to build its legitimacy on trust and value, moving away initially from conflictual debates such as working hours, and adopt a positive approach to helping the industry grow.

After co creating with workers a name, logo and identity for the future professional organisation, the Animation Guild was launched during KLIK! (the Amsterdam Animation Festival) in November 2015. The organisation is in the early days of its development and has set up working groups focusing on developments in the labour market and the industry, communication, education and business development.

4 Collaborate and invest for the future

There is place for competition, it can spur on innovation and change but equally so we need to recognise the place for collaboration in overcoming challenges we all face.

Sharing of functions in small craft unions

The big challenge for smaller, more craft or professional orientated unions are that resources can be stretched. It takes the same time to write an email to 300 members as it would 3,000.

One of the hardest areas to manage is how to efficiently and effectively offer the traditional trade union representation that members need – especially in the more highly complicated cases where continued employment and professional reputations can be at stake and the need for union membership most obvious but where the number of instances will, proportionately be less numerous the smaller the union.

Smaller professional and craft unions tend to copy the similar combination that bigger general unions use, hoping to strike the right balance of local volunteers for everyday representation; numbers of representatives who will take on these complex cases; and bought in legal help (or in-house trained legal experts). This model is inherently inefficient as the cases are prone to peaks and troughs. Get the balance wrong and a union can end up in a toxic situation.

However, Napo and the Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP) have been working towards the sharing of resources to the benefit of both unions. The unions are not competitors but their members do have a lot in common – public sector professionals under increased pressure with higher workloads; and recruitment and retention difficulties in sectors (justice and education)

where other more populous interests have first and loudest call on available resources and media attention – in schools or prison crisis educational psychologists or probation staff are not many people's first reference point even though they're usually deeply rooted in most people's potential solutions.

The AEP's membership has been hugely resilient and membership density remains very high but the relatively moderate number of serious cases combined with their geographical spread made managing these effectively very challenging. Napo had for many years used an innovative National Representative Panel for complex cases where members potentially face dismissal: screening cases to see if they meet a qualifying criteria; then allocating the cases to experienced (some actually otherwise retired) National Representatives. Napo had an efficient model that was popular with members and proven to work. By offering to share the model with the AEP, Napo gained access to a bigger pool of potential panel members.

This move has required careful consideration from both sides and the creation of protocols and arrangements for allocating cases as well as managing administrative support, indemnity support and any overseeing any claims and payments. Cases and systems were heavily piloted before they became operational.

Despite the differing professions, test cases showed that NAPO could represent AEP members as reps could identify common references (as general unions have demonstrated). Equally, softer benefits are already emerging – a formal partnership in one area giving rise to informal co-operation around other areas of mutual interest and potential mutual benefit, e.g. shared discussions about how member communications are run and managed; how representatives are recruited, supported, trained and developed; how they interact with regulators and where, when and how solicitors are engaged; etc. These conversations are informed and helping to shape future thinking and planning in the respective unions, whilst each remains entirely independent outside of the shared National Representative Panel.

Be smarter operating internationally

While shipping has always been one of the world's most globalised of industries, the increased rise of multinationals coupled with rapidly changing technology, meant that when looking for ways to work smarter, NUMAST (UK) and FWZ (NL) sought a radical cross border union. Prior to merger, an initial federated structure based on five key concepts and priorities was created. This federation became the test run for merger in 2009. What both unions recognised was that their experience of working as part of an existing federation of seafaring unions paved the way a successful merger. Since Nautilus International was founded, it has expanded to include Swiss inland shipping.

The creation of one union has made it strong, autonomous and united in the defence of the interests of its members in a global industry with a global labour market. This has allowed the union to negotiate on behalf of 49 nationalities in a landmark three year pay deal with Shell International Shipping Services fleet. The position of the union internationally has meant that it has been able to create the conditions for a return to centralised collective bargaining as the agreement sets out core terms and conditions for all officers in the fleet, irrespective of nationality.

The ITF and IMEC (International Maritime Employers' Council) helped to develop a standard set of consolidated terms and conditions for all officers, with an annex for each country reflecting local variations on salary levels and elements such as bank holidays and pensions. The new handbook also recognises Nautilus as the leading body for negotiation. The managing director with Shell Ship Management said the company began the process of seeking the agreement because it wanted to simplify the 'time-consuming and costly' negotiations for the 'plethora' of different nationalities employed. For the union it's meant the return to international centralised collective bargaining and the expansion of the federation and future cross border mergers are the future and discussion proceeds with a strong UK influence but not restricted to a UK centric policy

Recognise we're in a new data age

Most often, when unions talk about digital innovation, it refers to the impact that digital technology has on our campaigning and organising work. However, the new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) should be a wake up to call to unions that we are in the 'age of big data'.

The recent, well-publicised Facebook data breach raises important questions about the ethical use of personal data. This is no reason to defer examination of trade union data management – far from it: it is a cautionary tale of a cavalier attitude to data security and privacy. We must take it as a warning that our business-as-usual approach to data collection and handling is not going to cut it for long. But the data age presents opportunities as well as risks. Data and what we do with it, will be the most important development for unions. If technological development is the new "perennial gale of creative destruction", the union movement needs to stop battenning down the hatches, and start building kites.

The new regulation was engineered with social networks and cloud service providers in mind. However, every organisation that holds personal data must be compliant by May this year. And as every organisation does hold personal data, that means unions. Consider case-handling, research, negotiations, communications and organising – trade unions hold a rich wealth of personal data. Not only do we generate more data than ever before, but the decreasing cost of storage has allowed us to keep it.

In business, personal data is being used to tune and sell targeted advertising. Retailers, for example, monitor individual and collective behaviour, predicting demand, adapting services seasonally and geographically, and tailoring their offer to each customer. Through a loyalty card, supermarkets know all about what we like, when we like it.

As organisations fighting for survival in a changing world, we must not lose sight of the opportunities that data presents. We are having to audit our data holdings anyway, so why not reflect on how we might better use them? We all know that the Facebooks and Tescos of the world are surfing the wave of big data. Even the Girl Guides have a data analyst. How many unions can say the same?

So, we have some catching-up to do. The promise of data analytics is huge: reviewing our services and identifying emerging gaps; targeting organising opportunities; shaping new models of membership. If big data can help us prevent the stagnation of the trade union movement, we owe it to our members to give it our best effort.

Unions need to talk about data strategy. We need to explore how data-driven optimisation can work within the ethos of the movement, and the skills and tools we need to implement it. Therefore we need to start hiring data analysts, managers and scientists who can help create the data storage we need and who can help us use that data properly. Secondly, we need platforms that can clearly help us to interpret data and plan strategies.

The change to a data-driven organisation that diagnoses and predicts its changing environment, puts adaptation and adjustments on the front foot will undoubtedly be hard but unions must wake-up to the possibilities of data and analytics if we are even to survive the future of work, let alone shape it for the benefit of our members.

Continue to share best practice and new ideas

Unions 21 has already begun to show how we can have a collaborative approach to research and development within the movement. It is important that unions have a safe space where our challenges and possible solutions can be discussed. No union is without its challenge either internally or externally. A problem shared is a problem halved and our commitment to unions is to continue to create an agile organisation which assists unions to be an effective voice at work.

Reaching our destination

‘Social movements emerge as a result of the efforts of purposeful actors to assert new public values, form new relationships rooted in those values and to mobilise the political, economic and cultural power to translate these values into action. They differ from fashions, styles or fads in that they are *collective, strategic and organised*. They differ from interest groups in that they focus on allocating goods than on redefining them but also in changing the rules.’

Marshall Ganz, Senior Lecturer in Public Policy, Harvard University former organiser for the United Farm Workers.

The growing inequality we face in our economy shows the need for unions is just as great as when the Tolpuddle Martyrs first came together and when unions met in Manchester 150 years ago. Back then, unions fought against precarious work, women were tackling unequal pay and protection from harassment; the Living Wage was a public demand. Unions operated in a hostile political and legislative environment. The odds were against us and yet we made it through to gain a period of relative power and influence. It was never at the levels that some union confederations enjoy today in other parts of Europe, but it was achieved. It is important to remember this history so that we realise that we have experienced situations like this before. But we cannot be slaves to it, trapped in structures and culture which reflects another era. Instead we should try to invoke the spirit of Marshall Ganz.

Unions 21 seeks to enable unions to be collective, strategic and organised to be a key partner in the world of work. The ideas held in this pamphlet offer unions practical priorities and ideas for achieving this. They are not by all means the final four but they are key steps on the roadmap. They offer an achievable pathway which is free from waiting for the return of legislation or a government that gives us what we want. It is far more responsible and realistic to plan for the fact that there will be no knight on a white charger coming to save us from the situation we are in. What we can do then, is harness the strengths and experience we have and reshape ourselves for this century's work and workforce.

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