

Newsletters

In spite of the prevalence of electronic communication, it is still useful to have hard copies of union communications. These are good ways of making the union visible to members and even more so potential members when they are away from their screens.

A simple newsletter can be a particularly good way to reach non-members. You can ask your reps and contacts to distribute it to their colleagues, whether or not they are in the union, for information.

You can find a simple newsletter template, including prompts for your text, here:

<http://btu.web.ucu.org.uk/toolkit/newslettertemplate/>

Once a term, UCU will also produce a nationally coordinated newsletter with a space you to include your local story on the front page.

Here are some tips on putting out a local newsletter:

- **Make it regular** Set up a schedule for issuing the newsletter and stick to it. Once a month is probably best. This gives time to get articles written and it doesn't become a chore that everyone wants to avoid. The employer also knows that their actions will be reported to the membership.
- **Decide who will edit the newsletter** One person needs to be in charge of making sure that the newsletter gets published and distributed on time. This doesn't mean that this person writes the entire newsletter or that the newsletter belongs to that person. It is just their job to make sure that the newsletter gets written and published.
- **Keep it official** Remember that the newsletter

will be read not only by the union membership but by the employer. It will reflect upon the union and will be taken by most people as the 'official' union position on issues.

What should be in your newsletter?

Local issues and union campaigning

If you produce a monthly newsletter, it allows you to keep members updated on your priority local campaign or the big local issue.

A good local story includes the following:

- 1.** What management are doing—members look to the union as their source of authoritative knowledge on how management's actions will affect them.
- 2.** What the union's position is—this is your chance to state clearly the position that the union takes on the issue.
- 3.** What the union is doing—what action is the union taking in response and how the union aims to protect members.
- 4.** How members can help—what action can they take? When is the next meeting?

Other items you could include

- A message from your branch President or Chair—this more personalised message helps to humanise the union and encourage members to see it as something run by people like them.
- Any successes or good news stories—however

small they seem to you, this is important. We don't celebrate our successes enough.

- A message from a local rep or contact—someone who got involved can use a short message to explain what made them step forward, what they do, why it's important and what other members can do.
- Priority national campaigns—a short message on

a national campaign that the local branch is involved in.

- Details of how to join and how to get more involved.

Here are some good examples of newsletters:

- <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/users/ucu/letters.htm>
- <http://www.ucu.essex.ac.uk/newsletters/2012-10-newsletter.pdf>

This factsheet is one of a set that can be downloaded from www.ucu.org.uk/buildtheunion, and also includes: Using email effectively; Developing a branch website; Organising effective branch meetings; Using consultations and surveys; and Maximising participation in ballots and elections.

**BUILD THE
UNION**