

Using email effectively

According to LRD research, across the trade union movement, email has become the most common way that branches communicate regularly with their members. Emails allow you to reach members quickly and cheaply.

How often should you email your members?

- Every two weeks at a minimum. The union's job is to project itself as active on behalf of its members and a source of authoritative information about what is happening in your workplace. If members become accustomed to not hearing from the union, their expectations and perception of it will drop too.

Tips for effective emailing

- If you want to establish a regular readership, give it a name like weekly bulletin or update, as in the weekly campaign updates from UCU.
- If you have an important issue and you need members to take action as a result of the email, say so. Give your email a compelling subject line. These lines usually determine whether or not people actually read your email.
- Put your main points in the first few lines of the email. This is the part that people are most likely to read.
- Break your email into short paragraphs, no longer than four lines each.
- Keep it short! Emails are not for making extended arguments. For this, use a newsletter or better still, a blogsite and link to it in your email, saying, 'read more here' and include the hyperlink.

What to put in your email

- Include very brief updates on local issues or action.
- Use language that your audience can understand and respond to and avoid the complex jargon of local bargaining if possible, for example.
- Make sure to include any action, you need members to take, even if it's just a notice of your next branch meeting.
- Mention your call for action twice: early on the email and at the end.
- Ask your members to forward the email on to interested colleagues as a way of encouraging people to join.

Sending your email

- If you don't have an email distribution list, make sure you protect the privacy of your recipients. Do not show all recipients in the "to" box, and use the "bcc" line instead. This way no one can copy the email addresses and misuse them.
- Keep you list up to date. Ask for an up-to-date membership list so that you make sure you are contacting all your members.
- Send a test email. Check that it is formatted correctly and that all the links work before you send it out.

Following-up on your email

- Plan your strategy. Be prepared to answer people's questions and queries.
- Don't bombard people with information; email only when necessary and appropriate.

MODEL EMAIL

UCU [institution] Weekly update: [subject line - your local issue or main headline]

Dear colleagues,

Welcome to your weekly update from [institution] UCU:

[Update on local issue - no more than two or three lines with key points.]

[A reminder about what UCU is doing - again no more than two or three lines]

[What members can do next - key meeting details or action taken to be taken.]

[Refer your members to your blogsite/ website or newsletter for more information]

[Any other local or national priority news - one or two lines at most]

And remember to pass on the online joining link to your colleagues:

<https://join.ucu.org.uk/>

Yours sincerely

Branch President/Chair/Secretary name