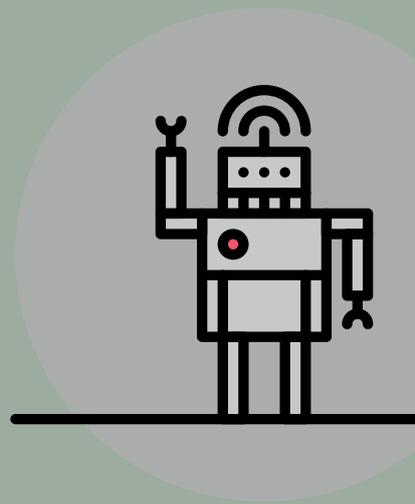


# BUILDING TOMORROW'S UNIONS



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# INTRODUCTION

Patrick Wintour

**It is generally accepted that we better understand the world, and our own lives, looking backwards than looking forwards. It is what makes prediction difficult, especially about the future – an observation, generally attributed to the Danish physicist Niels Bohr.**

The task of forecasting is nowhere more difficult than in forecasting the future of work. Wise politicians do not predict mass unemployment or a jobs bonanza since their words can come back to haunt them.

The British trades unions, often accused of being reactive and conservative, have not always been so cautious. In fact they have been at the forefront in Britain predicting sometimes near apocalyptic transformations.

In 1978, for example, Clive Jenkins, the general secretary of ASTMS, at the time Britain's largest white-collar trade union, was predicting the 'collapse of work' leading to a 'leisure shock'. Aided by his brilliant researcher, Jenkins argued that the pace of technological change, driven by the microelectronics revolution, would render millions of workers redundant.

Western economies were therefore faced with a painful choice – recognise that work had to be equitably shared or face the social dislocation of mass unemployment. If the work-sharing option was chosen, Jenkins argued, the policymaker's task was to equip people with the capabilities to fill increasing amounts of leisure time.

Jenkins got it half right. He was correct that computers were about to transform the world of work, and automation would lead to job losses especially amongst easily programmable routine tasks. But he was entirely wrong that it would lead to a 20-hour working week, a leisured society or mass unemployment.

If anything the 35 hour week is further away than ever, as technology increases productivity, and incomes, in the West.

But technology has not been an unalloyed good. Work has intensified. The once solid boundaries between work and home have become ever more

blurred as the smart phone and computer makes it impossible to shut the office door behind you. Work can find you via email and mobile on the tube, in the car or even in the cinema. It feels like the modern professional worker no longer works 9 to 5, but instead 5am to 9pm.

The new world of work is not just invasive of time; it can start to be invasive of privacy. The most tech savvy firms, such as Uber, can monitor the performance of their workforce. Sensors linked to resource flows, warehouses, road systems, factory production lines, the electricity transmission grid, offices, homes, stores and vehicles, make it possible for managers to monitor their status and the efficiency with which the workforce is responding to fluctuating demand.

Technology means certain kinds of jobs are going to flourish, and others disappear. Person to person services and occupational services relying more on creativity, context, adaptability, task discretion, social skills and openness to change are likely to survive.

Estimates vary about how many jobs are likely to be made redundant by this next industrial revolution. One 2013 study – by Frey and Osborne – argued as many 47 % of US employment will be subject to substitution, 39 % in Germany and 33 % in the UK.

Jeremy Rikin, author of "the marginal cost society" and one of the gurus of the third industrial revolution featuring at Davos warns the revolution has started in creative industries. "A digital generation is producing and sharing music, videos, news blogs, social media, free e-books, massive open online college courses and other virtual goods at near zero marginal cost. The near zero marginal cost phenomenon brought the music industry to its knees, shook the television industry, forced



newspapers and magazines out of business and crippled the book publishing market.”

But technology is disrupting other industries including retail and transport. Whether it's selling your products on eBay, offering taxi services through Uber (perhaps renting out your car on easyCar Club the rest of the time) or accommodating tourists in your spare room via Airbnb, the way we make money is changing.

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**It feels like the modern professional worker no longer works 9 to 5, but 5am to 9pm.**

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The issue now is how far this zero marginal cost revolution can move from the on-line world and start to disrupt other industries.

The Resolution Foundation, one of the best labour market think tanks in the UK shows the hype around some of the trends can be over stated. The official statistics on the numbers classified self-employed or freelancers do not show a vast change as yet.

But there is evidence that wage differentials in computerized industries are widening faster than in many other industries, suggesting not only skill shortages, but also the need to reward those most that can adapt and update their skills.

And government statistics have never been very good at picking up changes in the labour market – the ONS has been cautious to the point of dilatory about the spread of zero hours contracts, and it felt like unions, and politicians identified a trend before

the statisticians.

The debate on how to respond to this new economy, and present exploitation is much more advanced in the US than in the UK. Alan Krueger, a former chair of the White House's council of economic advisers, and Seth Harris, a former labour secretary have argued the new labour market represents a challenge for unions. They argue a hybrid category of “independent worker” is needed to accommodate situations in which an “employer” exerts control over much of what a worker does at the same time as the individual retains the right (like the self-employed) to work as much or as little as they want, when they want.

At the very least, it's likely to require new ways of looking at traditional policy tools around employment (and consumer) rights, income smoothing and pensions. These are classic issues for the trade union movement, and could make them ever more relevant.

# CAN WE HARNESS THE ROBOTS?

Christina McAnea, National Secretary, UNISON

**It wasn't only Clive Jenkins that got us thinking that the future would be more leisure time, Sci fi films and 'Tomorrow's World' offered a vision where robots would do mundane jobs and everyone travelled with personal jetpacks on their backs. Technology has indeed moved on but the increased leisure time seems as far away as ever.**

By 2020 it is possible that half the workforce in the UK will have been born after 1986 and therefore grown up in the digital and mobile era. The trends we see today – more older workers, more women and more migrant workers – seem set to continue. Most studies show that increased flexibility, more personal responsibility for employment, either through self employment or contractual work, and more cross sectoral and cross disciplinary working will grow but with that is likely to come more precarious and uncertain jobs, low wages, low skills and, without government intervention or public outcry, more use of zero hours and temporary contracts.

Automation was a key theme at Davos this year and is predicted to replace many jobs, with potential to widen the gap between those with professional and creative skills and everyone else. Technology clearly has the potential to replace the traditional organisation of business and public services, and even the very idea of an employer. This may also be the case for unions, as workers find other platforms and networks to look after their interests.

Technology may change the look of many jobs, even those traditionally “people” centred jobs such as healthcare and teaching. More online and computerised diagnostic tools are being introduced. The whole genome project in the NHS has the potential to transform treatment, and the future of personal development may lie increasingly in online and peer to peer training.

But we are still a long way from automatons which can help dress and feed and keep company with an older person with dementia or can show a young child how to use cutlery or interact with other children, or someone who can go shopping with a learning disabled adult and help them become

independent.

Yet they are and will probably be seen more and more as low skilled, and therefore will attract low wages.

The argument for seeing these as low skilled will continue in a society which does not value interpersonal and social skills against technological skills or formal qualifications. Yet an increased use of technology could and should mean that those very human and social skills become more highly valued not less. It should also be noted that the dramatic fall in pay and associated conditions, for some of these jobs, especially in the care sector, happened because of privatisation.

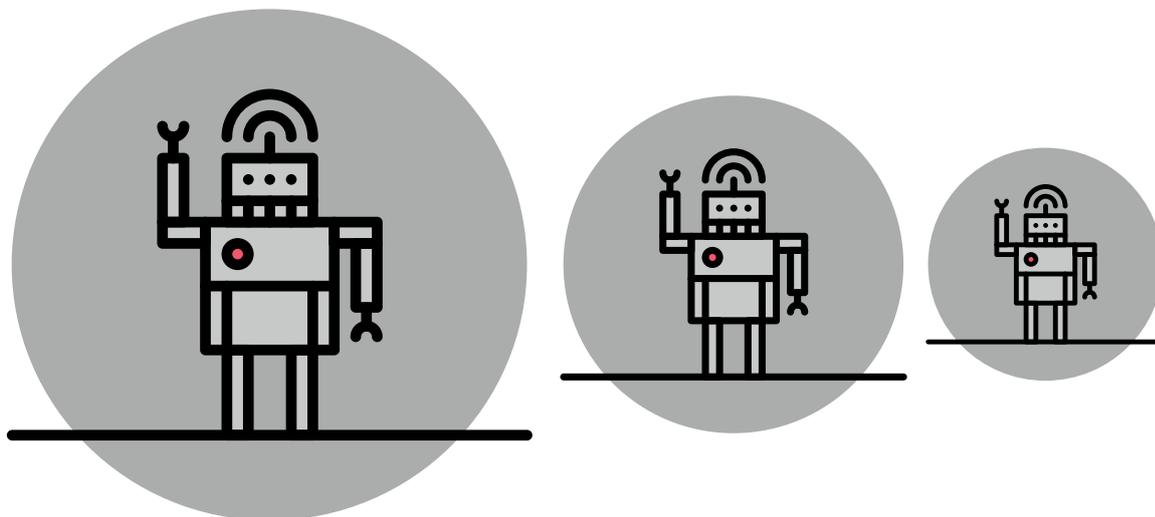
Although some studies suggest the UK labour market is looking like an hourglass, there is also evidence that polarisation occurs in times of rapid technological change but a more normal distribution returns as the “new” jobs become absorbed. But, what do any of these trends mean for unions?

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**It is critical not to make assumptions but to do research among members and potential members about what they want from a union.**

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Trade unions of course should exist to support all groups. The key surely is not to become a union only representing the squeezed middle group. If that is a union's base, our role must be to



help members adapt to the changes in the work environment and create sustainable jobs. This may well cause political problems in a union as the tendency may be to protect existing working practices even as demand for products or skills is falling.

Unions like UNISON will have a foot (can we have 3 feet?) in all camps. To survive, we need to be able to recruit and retain the higher paid staff but what is our offer to them?

In partnership with the FDA, UNISON has set up Managers in Partnership (MiP), designed to give specific support to senior managers in the health sector. Members pay a slightly higher rate and in return receive a service and representation tailored specifically to their circumstances. MiP has grown and has developed a strong voice for this group of staff by providing professional support and by speaking up for the role of managers and dispelling the myths, often created by politicians and the right wing media, about the numbers of managers, their pay and “perks”. Is this a model for other groups? Do we need to differentiate our offer to managerial and/or senior, professional staff? It is easy to make assumptions, e.g., they are less political, more self sufficient, have more difficult problems, but we need more evidence and testing to be clear on what the offer to this group should be. Increasingly in MiP some members seem to want to have a more active and even political role. The benefits to the wider union extend beyond simply increased members and funds. Senior and middle managers have a huge impact on workplace culture and the approach to industrial relations. Taking them into membership gives the union an opportunity to influence positively how these members manage and perform their work.

What about our lowest paid workers? They too

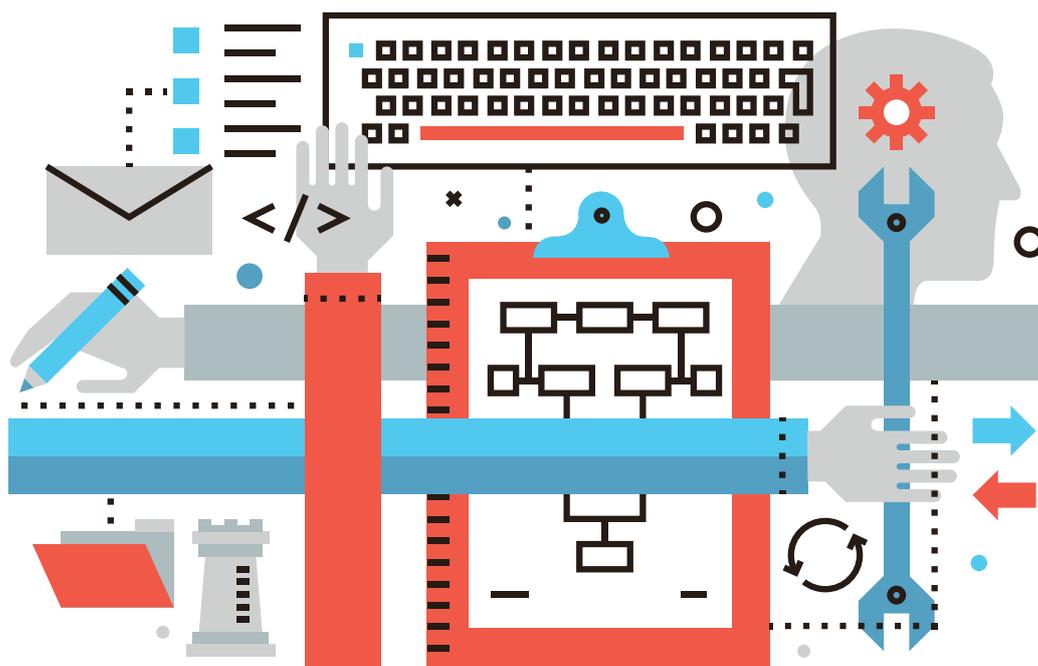
want professional representation and support and will often have very complex problems. Again it is critical not to make assumptions but to do research among members and potential members about what they want from a union. This group is likely to be characterised by more “precarious” working, less skilled workers and less access to training and development. One in 5 workers is still paid below the living wage and one third remain “stuck” in this group for over 14 years (HR Magazine).

Can unions offer a more non traditional membership? One that reflects and follows working patterns? If work and pay are variable, members could pay a minimum fee to join the union which increases when they are in work and in line with their earnings. When in work they can access full benefits including representation and legal support. Whilst this could be difficult to administer, could we do deals with employers or agencies to facilitate this? Could our systems become flexible enough to deal with this?

It is easy in unions to focus only on our existing membership base. Other groups seem too difficult – especially if more transient and mobile.

Unions will often do a cost benefit analysis when considering new recruitment initiatives. We prioritise increasing density in our traditional areas. Understandably as greater density brings greater bargaining power. But the role of unions is not just to improve and protect jobs, pay and working conditions for our paying members but to campaign for a fairer, more equitable society.

If we allow a precarious, low paid, low skilled “under class” of workers to increase and become the norm we increase the risk of employers and governments relying on this to maximise profits and continually drive down labour costs. This in turn will have an impact on other workers.



The traditional model we have relied on is to recruit members in workplaces/ sectors and use that collective strength to get recognition and improve pay, terms and conditions. Where we don't have recognition or bargaining rights we need to look at campaigning to change the way services and jobs are done and highlight the impact not only on the workforce but also on society and service users. UNISON has used campaigns like this over the past few years to highlight the disastrous impact government policies have had on critical national services.

UNISON's cleaner hospitals campaign exposed the widescale privatisation of cleaning services in the NHS resulting in growing concern over hygiene in hospitals and managed to reverse some of the worst cuts to these services. The scandal of the cuts in school meal services has now led to worries over childhood obesity and a belated recognition of the link between nutrition and education. There is now growing evidence that the lack of funding for social care (80% of homecare is now provided by the private and voluntary sector) is straining the NHS almost to breaking point. UNISON has produced an "Ethical Care Charter" and is using that to try and get a commitment to minimum standards almost on an employer by employer, contract by contract basis – even where we have no or few members – because raising standards for the workforce means raising standards for the clients and patients, which in turn has a beneficial knock on impact on their families and on other

public services.

We're now using similar campaigns across other areas: safe staffing in hospitals, regulation for care workers, minimum training requirements for childcare workers. These are campaigns which can reach out to potential members and demonstrate the relevance of unions even where we initially have no or little bargaining power. Unions should also be fighting to have a key role in shaping the training and development opportunities for workers, both to get skills recognised and fairly rewarded, as well as to increase access to new and additional skills.

While unions will always need to take care of their "core business" i.e. their mainstream membership, we also need to fight to improve opportunities and conditions for non unionised and hard to recruit workers, or in new and emerging sectors. If you look at back copies of the TUC handbook you'll see the names of unions that used to represent key crafts. Many of these no longer exist or have been merged into bigger organisations. Specialist craft workers are now specialised "professionals" and unions, even large multi sector unions need to carve out a clear identity for the different sectors they cover.

Perhaps unions will never recruit robots but we can use the emergence of automation and technology to develop a new offer.

# THE COMING DIGITAL REVOLUTION

Tony Burke, Unite Assistant General Secretary

A recent presentation by IBM illustrated the current impact of the digital world – called “The Digital Disruption Has Already Happened” – pointing out that the world's largest taxi company owns no taxis (Uber); the largest accommodation provider owns no real estate (Airbnb); the largest phone companies own no telco infrastructure (Skye, WeChat); the world's largest valuable retailer owns no inventory (Alibaba); the world's most popular media owner creates no content (Facebook); the fastest growing banks have no actual money (Society One); the world's largest movie house owns no cinema's (Netflix); the world's largest software vendor's don't write the apps (Apple and Google).

## What does this mean for unions and the world of work?

In November 2015, Andy Haldane, the chief economist at the Bank of England, put a figure on the number of jobs that would be ‘hollowed out’ as digitization and robotics is introduced: 15 million. He told a TUC conference: “Technology appears to be resulting in faster, wider and deeper degrees of hollowing-out than in the past. Why? Because 20th century machines have substituted not just for manual human tasks, but cognitive ones too. The set of human skills machines could reproduce, at lower cost, has both widened and deepened.” To put this into context, iPhone manufacturer, Foxconn, employing 1.2 million workers, says that robots will replace 30% of workers on their production lines in five years.

In 2013, Oxford University's Martin School conducted a report on the impact of future technology and attempted to assess the extent of the threat to employment through technological change. It concluded that 45% of jobs in the UK were at ‘high risk’ of being taken over by computers within the next twenty years – in two stages.

First, computers will start replacing people in areas such as transport, logistics, manufacturing production and administrative support. Jobs in services, sales, and construction may also be affected in this first stage.

The report goes on to say that there will be slow

down due to bottlenecks in technical areas such as engineering. But the prediction is that this will be followed by a second wave of computerization, dependent on artificial intelligence putting jobs in management, science and engineering and the arts at risk.

The most popular phrase for the digital revolution is Industry 4.0 – based on a simple explanation that Industry 1.0 got it all going in with machines powered by water or steam – creating the industrial revolution; Industry 2.0 developed mass production powered by electricity; Industry 3.0 was driven by the use of electronics and information technology and Industry 4.0 represents the new digital, cyber-physical connected age.

Unions will have a challenge to represent existing workers who lose their job to robots but also to address the influx of new jobs that will come into the economy.

In Germany the IG Metall union (engineering and manufacturing union) is now working on how the new digital age will affect their members and employment structures in a country with employment based on co-determination and tight regulation in the workplace. It is examining how workers will adapt and how the union can organise ‘click workers’ or ‘cloud workers’ who will be outside of their normal structures. In



terms of how these workers experience work, they are looking at how to deal with the new flexible working patterns; the replacement of human work; 3D Printing; the extended use of cloud computing and crowd sourcing; computer based support for decision making; paperless logistics and the optimization of production using 'big data'.

Equally they highlighting the dangers of the digital revolution of creating more precarious work; a race to the bottom in social standards; the elimination work through the use of robotics and the monitoring of behavior patterns and performance and individual flexibility – what IG Metall described as the 'dark side'.

In order to get ahead of the game the German Federation Of Industries, IG Metall and the Government developed – in 2014 – an alliance dubbed 'The Future Of Industry'. Each side has their own concerns. The employers say industry is facing a fourth industrial revolution, driven by the Internet, allowing for the physical and virtual worlds to merge. They want Germany to be ahead of the game. IG Metall says the technology must not control people. "Every second job is at risk and is putting employment, skills, training, flexible working and organizing new workers at the top of the agenda. The group has begun its work and working groups are now developing a 'consistent agenda of medium and long term prospects for industries future'.

So what about the UK? The Government began a consultation in December last year asking for ideas and comment – with lots of stuff about "setting the digital agenda" and the 'smartphone state". Unite submitted its own document drawn up by members working in the IT sector and called 'A Digital New World' which set out what unions need to be demanding from the digital revolution – skills; training and re-training to make sure low skilled workers do not lose out; avoiding the race to the bottom, decent employment rights. Whilst the Government boasts of the UK being at the front of the digital revolution little or nothing is being said about jobs and the impact of the digital revolution and how we protect workers who maybe displaced by technology.

The debate is now on and unions must not miss the opportunity to influence the way the digital revolution will go.

As in Germany unions will have to reach out and organize 'click workers' and workers who will have already adapted to new patterns and forms of work including flexible working patterns, self-employment or project workers.

Unions' bargaining agenda's will have to include employment protection, skills and retraining opportunities.

# TRADE UNIONS' ROLE AND FUTURE IN THE CHANGING CONTEXT OF EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS

Peter Cheese, Chief Executive, CIPD

**There has been a transformation in many aspects of UK employment relations over the past 35 years, and there has been a profound shift in the role and influence of trade unions.**

Historically, many of today's unions were born as a 'collective response to the evils of industrialisation'<sup>2</sup>, and in an era when manufacturing, mining and other large scale industrial sectors were the major part of the UK economy. In an economy more based on service industry, knowledge work, and the growth of small enterprises, together with a more mobile workforce, and many more flexi-working or contract working, its not surprising that the traditional 'collective response' has waned. Furthermore, many workers today are more willing and able to express their individual voice, and the employment relationship has itself become more individualised. Managers generally now prefer, and are encouraged, to directly engage with employees, and pay and reward strategies that focus more on individual performance are all part of this shift. Workplace conflict is also more likely in this environment to be expressed at an individual rather than collective level, and unions are now far from the sole channel of communication and involvement for people in the modern workplace.

Nevertheless, unions continue to play a significant and important role in many UK workplaces. Since their inception, trade unions have aimed to raise standards for working people, an objective that the CIPD can identify with given its own mission to improve work and working lives. The majority of our members who work with trade unions report positive working relationships in the main, and there are clear opportunities for unions to prosper in the future, but they need to adapt to the big demographic, social and economic shifts that are affecting the nature of work and workplaces, and the changes in the workforce itself.

## Demographics and the modern workforce

With the changes in the nature of work and employee relations, the demographic of union membership has become more polarised. Writing in 2000 to introduce the Economic and Social Research Council's Future of Work Programme, Robert Taylor noted that union structures continued to reflect a collective response and asked whether they 'can develop the organisational flexibility to attract private service workers, workers in small enterprises, the self-employed, part-time and temporary staff.'<sup>2</sup> Fifteen years on, this challenge still remains. Sectoral employment patterns, including the huge growth of the SME sector, mean that trade unions have little presence in large parts of the private sector. The typical profile of today's trade unionist tends to be female, indigenous, professional, relatively well-educated, older, an above-average earner and working in the public sector. But the public sector is shrinking and union density among young workers is now around 15%.

## Shared representation

With the steady growth of other means of representation in the workplace, one of the most significant challenges regarding voice for trade unions is being prepared to work with other indirect, non-union forms. While the Workforce Employment Relations Study (WERS) showed that the main way in which employees are represented at work remains via a trade union (29% of workplaces with five or more employees), the study also found that the prevalence of both stand-alone non-union representation and joint consultative committees (JCCs) stood at 7%.<sup>1</sup>



A 2005 Acas paper, *'Has consultation's time come?'* expressed tentative hopes that the new Information and Consultation (ICE) regulations could 'breathe life' into the employment relationship.<sup>5</sup> However, the paper's allusion to the 'vexed issue' of mixed union and non-union constituencies has proved prophetic, with a lukewarm response from both employers and unions. By not fully embracing the opportunities afforded to them through hybrid forms of representation and the chance for union and non-union representatives to work together via joint consultation, many trade unions continue to miss out on a wider potential reach in workplaces, as well as the chance to influence the corporate agenda.

## The changing forms of dispute resolution

Turning to dispute resolution, as the level of organised collective conflict has plummeted across the UK economy, so the level of unorganised conflict expressed at an individual level has risen – the WERS showed that just 5% of workplaces experienced industrial action compared with 41% of managers applying a disciplinary sanction and 29% of workplaces experiencing an employee grievance.<sup>1</sup>

Forms of alternative dispute resolution such as mediation can offer employers and employees an effective option for resolving individual disputes before relationships break down beyond repair. Our 2015 research on conflict management identified an appetite among employers to make more, and more effective, use of mediation at an early stage.<sup>6</sup> This appetite however has not always been matched by a willingness on the part of UK trade unions to support mediation, with some regarding it as an unviable alternative to formal

processes. Mediation offers the opportunity for union representatives to spare their members the potentially long-drawn-out and stressful experience of a formal process, and more consistently embracing the concept could improve the employment relationship for all concerned.

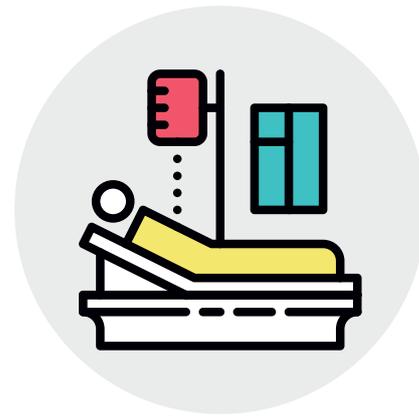
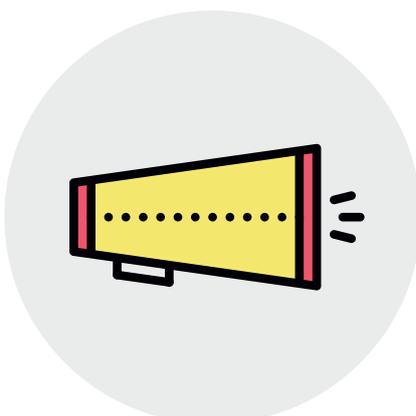
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**Unions have historically played a significant role in supporting the more collective voice and challenge to promote better work and working environments, and this is needed now as much as ever.**

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## Adapting to the shifting employment relationship

The shift from large, stable workforces that trade unions could most easily represent, in parallel with the decline of the 'standard' employment relationship and the more fragmented nature of contractual relations, is a major challenge for unions. Often, people working on 'atypical' contracts that are not full-time or when working for more than one employer, such as part-time or temporary contracts have a more distanced relationship at work. The growth in self-employment and number of homeworkers (up from 2.3 million in 1997 to 3.5 million in 2012<sup>7</sup>), combined



with the increased emphasis on outsourcing and use of contractors, that can introduce a third party to the employment relationship, makes it much harder for trade unions to reach significant sections of the labour market.

There is considerable scope for unions to be more agile in responding to the growing flexibility of the employment relationship, yet too often the rhetoric has been one of resistance to what they have often referred to as the 'casualisation' of work. Many more workers are choosing more flexible working arrangements or contract working, and employers are increasingly making use of these forms of employment to support a more diverse workforce and the shifting nature of demand in many of the jobs people do today.

Whilst there are practices and disciplines around how flexi-workers are managed that could be improved, these are often more about good management practices than they are about contractual relationships, and generally the evidence is flexi-workers are no more or less happy than other workers on more regular employment contracts.

Zero hour contracts continue to grow (now according to ONS data at almost 1.3m workers in the UK), and CIPD research amongst others shows that those working on a zero-hours or short hours contracts experience similar levels of job satisfaction, work-life balance and personal well-being to those on permanent, full-time contracts.<sup>8</sup> Findings from the ONS Labour Force Survey also suggest that the majority of zero-hours employees are reasonably satisfied with their working arrangements, with only a minority seeking additional hours in their current or a different job with more hours<sup>9</sup>. It is also true that there are some workers on these more part time

arrangements who would like to work longer hours, but more broadly these forms of working are long term shifts in the nature of employment markets to which employers and unions alike need to respond to.

## Shaping better working practices and workplaces

The reality is that the biggest issues in the workplace are less about the particular forms of contract, and a lot more about how people are managed, the workload or pressure they feel under, and the nature of their jobs and roles. Evidence from engagement surveys which on average point to around only 30-40% of UK workers feeling engaged, growing stress in the workplace, and concerns about wellbeing and the quality of jobs and progression routes are the bigger issues that challenge all of us.

Unions have historically played a significant role in supporting the more collective voice and challenge to promote better work and working environments, and this is needed now as much as ever. The UK has a high proportion of low skill low wage jobs with 1 in 5 workers impacted by the changes in the living wage. The underutilization and mismatch of skills in the workforce, continued challenges of real diversity and inclusion, together with lack of progression routes in many organisations are key reasons behind the UK being towards the bottom of the productivity tables for comparable nations. Without productivity growth, not only will the UK economy be underperforming, but critically wages growth will continue to languish.

The trade unions' contribution to building workplace-based skills and learning via their

When someone joins on-line they get an email thanking them for joining and a link to a new joiner's survey. We ask what the issues are at work, what they are looking for from Prospect, as well as how did they hear about us; for us, the key thing is then to do something with the results rather than have the attitude that it is nice to know information.

Mike Graham, Head of National Organising Department, Prospect

network of union learning reps demonstrates that they do have the ability to connect with people in the contemporary workplace more effectively.<sup>10</sup> Unions have traditionally also played a significant part in the development and evolution of good working practices and environments, and for example in protecting members' statutory rights in health and safety issues. Here are real opportunities for unions to support people in the more challenging and fast changing workplace of the future, by helping them into learning, supporting them, and ensuring they know their rights and have the means to address them.

## Looking to the future

Recent history shows that many unions have been slow on several fronts to grasp the significance of deep-seated changes affecting the workplace and change how they operate to retain their relevance in the eyes of potential members. Some elements of the trade union movement, such as the Unions 21 forum, have been keen to modernise and evolve 'in an ever changing world' and 'create a sustainable future for the trade union movement.'

This is essential in creating a long term future for unions and to ensure they play their part in creating better working opportunities and positive workplaces for all.

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**Case study: Louise McMullan,  
Head of General Secretary's Office, Equity**

## Atypical workers and employment

Only a tiny minority of Equity members work on full-time, regular, open-ended contracts with a single employer over a long period, so atypical working is very much our typical. Recruiting, retaining and empowering workers in private sector workplaces can be tough to begin with but when those physical workplaces only exist for short time, as is the case with many film and television sets, or workers are present for short but intense periods, it can seem nigh on impossible.

At Equity, we have developed a number of strategies to tackle these problems. The first is establishing a right of access to our members and potential members. Secondly we have had to adapt to how our industry has changed and remain relevant to our members in a digital age. Finally we are exploring new ways to maintain relationships with and between members who work across a wide variety of sectors – from theatre, to radio, TV, film and even video games and modelling – and with an emphasis on young and student members.

Gaining access to workers is often the biggest barrier to private sector organising. Access for Equity officials has been guaranteed through collective bargaining and is stipulated in clauses in our national agreements covering live performance, TV and film. With resistant employers, we call on our right to access any theatre on health and safety grounds.

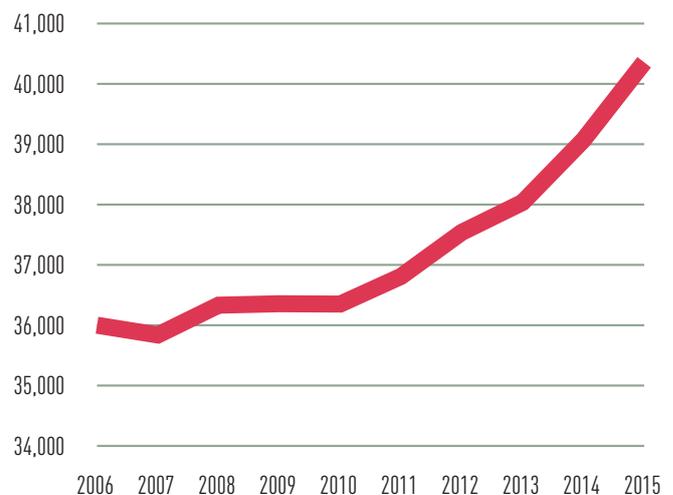
In theatre, it is established practice that performers and stage managers are called to a meeting, during the rehearsal period, to meet with Equity organisers. At this meeting issues are raised and discussed and members elect a Deputy (rep) to serve for the production period. This structure facilitates strong union density in the live performance sector – up to 90% in some areas.

In TV, radio and film there are different challenges including filming schedules and availability of performers. There are areas, however, such as soaps, where density is high and members and Deputies are very active. On a film set, Organisers often aim to speak to as many people as possible during a lunch break or knock on trailer doors to

secure one-to-one conversations. They then focus on follow up activity to establish a relationship and explore issues raised. In especially difficult areas, such as freelance audio work, progress is also being made by Organisers identifying leaders among active and engaged members, who then lead on self organising efforts through their own networks.

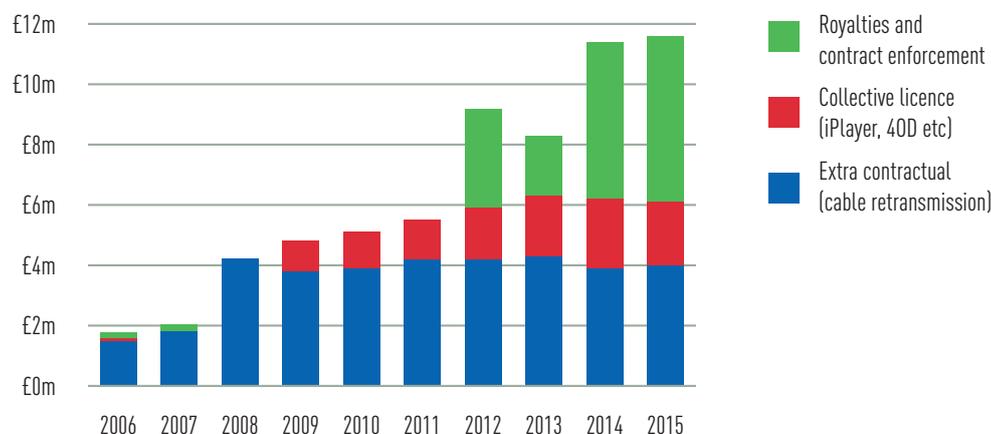
The result is that Equity has seen strong and sustained growth in the last ten years, and now has the highest membership we've ever recorded at just over 40,500 members.

**Total members in benefit 2006-2015**



Adapting to the realities of our members' working lives and continuing to be relevant is another challenge. Atypical working patterns and the insecurity of work in the entertainment industries are partly mitigated by the ongoing

## Monies distributed to performers arising from Equity negotiations and agreements



payments we are able to secure for our members, more commonly known as royalty and residual payments. Ensuring that workers share in the gains being made by employers making content available on digital platforms is crucial if we are to remain relevant to our members. Keeping up with new technology and ensuring that we can generate additional payments for performers through collective bargaining requires significant investment in terms of officials' time and union resources but has resulted in a dramatic increase in monies distributed to our members over the last ten years. Equity is also the first union outside of the US to conclude an agreement with Netflix for original content production.

Across the economy young workers are perhaps the group most affected by the rise in atypical work. Young performers are often told to expect to work for free for around two years after they complete their studies at drama school which causes many from underrepresented backgrounds to drop out of the industry.

As well as tackling low pay through initiatives such as organising in fringe theatre, where it's estimated that increased use of our fringe agreement generated payments to performers of over £500,000 in 2015, Equity has been working with its young and student members in order to better understand how they can shape the union.

After focus groups revealed that students feel alienated from the work of the union's branches but wanted some form of representation for their issues, we have been working with them with a view to establishing student networks. We have

also encouraged branches to host student specific events as well as re-orientate their offer to all young members, in the first instance by appointing branch level Young Member Liaison Officers.

In terms of outreach to young members, social media has been a key tool. Starting with advertising the union's services and using the hashtag #membershipmondays, which was in turn cascaded by the union's branches, we encouraged more young performers to join the union. Engaging and retaining these new young members however requires a relational organising approach, which is led by our young activists with the Young Members Committee leading.

As Adam Pettigrew, Chair of the Equity Young Members Committee explains: "We have noticed you really can't wait for people to come to you, as a lot of under 30s don't understand what a union is, let alone how it can benefit them and their co-workers, so we have been very actively trying to reach out by using social media, events and visiting places of training and work. We have taken things back to basics by creating a handbook for young members, and we avoid using too much jargon which we find can alienate and disengage our members."

The union movement can be slow to understand young workers, but this is a crucial time as many have become politicised and can be engaged initially through clicktivism and attendance at demonstrations. Paul Valentine, another member of the Young Members' Committee, believes that we can develop young members into long term activists by also looking to their political

education: "we often visit parliament to lobby or engage in meetings. Most recently we were there for a roundtable discussion with employers and politicians about increasing diversity in the creative industries. We're a highly active committee in the union."

Because they are not limited by responsibility for a specific industrial area, our young members can show leadership across the unions' policies and activities. As Adam puts it "the great thing about being part of the young members committee is the lack of knowledge about what has come before.

This means we question and look outside the box without even realising it."

This year the Young Members Committee is hoping to run a project on employment rights, which in the atypical working sphere involves educating young workers about their rights under national minimum wage legislation, their tax and national insurance status, pensions and welfare benefits. Exploring new ways of communicating including vlogging is also high on their agenda as well as identifying the next group of young activists in workplaces to succeed them.

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At Unison we value participation, empowerment and collective impact and is stronger for the key contributions of women, black, LGBT members and people with disabilities. Our internal structures are designed to give a voice to members and enable them to shape their union's priorities. It is important to make it as easy as possible for everyone to participate and particularly for those groups who face additional barriers and discrimination at work and in society. That is an attractive opportunity for members wanting to play an active role however we can't assume they'll join with the knowledge of all structures. All members need to understand our structures and take pride in them. New members have to find joining a union as welcoming as possible and a focus on activity is what will keep interest rather than forever dwelling on the minutes of the last meeting.

Whether it's as a school governor, volunteer or good neighbour we need to celebrate that fact our members express values inside and outside of work. We need to become more comfortable about talking about the value of unions outside of work to raise understanding and tackle myths. Unions should also adapt to connect people with shared community interests and not just organised through branches at work. Trade union members don't leave their union membership cards behind at work and many lead by example in their communities.

Clare Williams, Northern Regional Convenor and Chair of Regional Convenors Group, UNISON

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Case study: Simon Sapper, Assistant National Officer, CWU

## Moving a union to include young workers

The CWU's work with younger members resembles a construction project. In terms of our constitutional arrangements we have built a fabulous house. In terms of the events we run, the level of support, the quality and range of our communications, we have furnished that house with good quality, durable fixtures and fittings. How did this come about, how do we keep our house in good order, and what challenges do we face?

### The story so far

In 2000, the CWU was barely five years old and, activists in our Eastern No 5 branch – representing nearly 3,000 members across an area of nearly 1,000 square miles – had to deal with, in effect, the departure of essentially their senior leadership team. The immediate challenge was to fill the vacuum in order for the union to continue to have a relevance and influence locally. Up stepped a cohort of much more junior representatives. This was real skipping-a-generation stuff and probably not so much a skip, more along-jump. However, having taken up more senior roles, our members, led by Dave Westbrook, reflected that their experience was not as easy or as smooth

as it could have been or should have been. Although there had been youth work in the CWU or its predecessors beforehand, it had been very haphazard, unstructured and happened more in spite of prevailing structure and culture than because of it. So, the branch moved a motion at the Annual Conference that there should be a Youth Advisory Committee whose remit should be to coordinate and campaign on behalf of the then 28,000 members under 30 years of age. In the best democratic tradition of our trade union, top table opposition was well and truly turned over, and the rest, as they say, is history.



As the table below shows, development of youth structures snowballed:

Year	Step
2000	Creation of national Youth Advisory Committee.
2002	Conference agrees to an annual national youth event – the National Youth Education Event (NYEE).
2005	Establishment of a policy making Youth Conference based on regional delegations (max attendance 40).
2005	Regional Youth Committees and Branch Youth Officers introduced as mandatory requirements.
2006	Role of national Vice-Chair introduced. The Chair and the Vice Chair to attend the National Executive and the national industrial executives on an ex-officio basis.
2006	More industrial content introduced to the NYEE.
2007/09	UMF funded Youth Engagement Strategy. Establishment of <a href="http://www.cwuyouth.org">www.cwuyouth.org</a>
2008	Annual Branch Youth Officers' forum introduced
2009	Youth Conference changes to branch based delegations (Max attendance 220)
2011	Adoption of Housing as our first key national campaign. Strategic relationship with Crisis established
2012	Committee rebranded as CWUYouth to differentiate it from other advisory committees which have a more limited role.
2013	CWU Women's Under-Representation Working Party (we love snappy titles!) established to co-ordinate and support young female CWU members
2014	CWUYouth Day held at Annual Conference (the first ever themed day) includes first ever use of a twitter "Thunderclap" by a UK union.
2015	A CWU Youth motion on mental health is selected by the TUC Young Workers' Conference to go forward to TUC Congress. Dan Lewis becomes the first CWU recipient of the Congress Award for Youth

There were three principle reasons underpinning this success: The first was persistent championing by the four most senior officers. Second, a dedicated resource at a sufficient level at the union's head office and third, judicious planning of key events to draw in newly active members.

## The Re-engagement Challenge

The task for us has always been to persuade people to come and live in what we have built. The challenges of engagement have recently become more stark. Our house, it turns out, is built on shifting sands!

The proportion of young members in our union has fallen from a peak of 28,000 members aged 30 and under, (representing 12.8% of our total membership) to 19,776 such members (10.2%) in 2015. Our union is getting older at a time when we need to recruit ever more younger members. Therefore, whilst in many ways the CWU's Youth work to date has achieved great things, the current situation leaves no room for complacency and significant scope for further improvement.

Older reps sometimes criticise young activists for being unpredictable or inconsistent in terms of their union work. However, young peoples' lives can be less ordered than those of our older members.

Their employment is frequently more precarious. And youth activism has its own inevitable churn due to it being age-limited. The pool from which we draw our young activists is less deep than it used to be. These factors have precipitated a leadership-lead debate in the CWU that argues a change in the expectations and cultural norms is required. Implicit in this is a recognition that leaders inevitably model the behaviours that less senior colleagues imitate and CWU HQ must therefore show what in practice it means to prioritise youth engagement. The key “gap” in our youth work – the single thing that is within our own power to address – is uneven planning around youth activity, thus preventing the establishment of a consistent narrative. This realisation seemed strange given a well-established planning cycle of the NYEE and Youth Conference, or detailed project plans and report-backs for specific events such as a well-supported Youth Day at 2014 Annual Conference. However, all these events involve an audience – including our senior leadership and a variety of other internal stakeholders – that already “gets it” in terms of youth activity. Youth engagement simply does not figure sufficiently highly in the minds of most people on a persistent basis when outside of youth-specific events – and why should it without structural support?

In discussion with youth activists and internal stakeholders at CWUHQ, the same key points have been identified:

- a. The role of youth activists as a part of a progression plan for members to become IR reps needs to be reasserted. At the moment youth activity is sometimes not seen as either mainstream or a route to the mainstream.
- b. Young activists function more effectively when there is strong support, but such support is not yet sufficiently well or uniformly planned.
- c. Employer attitudes to unpaid, informal release have hardened, which reflects a tighter resourcing policy and a low estimation of the importance of succession planning in IR.
- d. The CWU Youth brand, whilst widely recognised, does not accurately reflect the target audience. So what is the remedy? It is not as revolutionary or disruptive as one might think. Put simply, we

need a “youth first” mindset. But just how do we achieve this? Our current project plan includes the following components, most of which are orientated towards increasing capacity:

- We have created a Headquarters youth Stakeholder Group to coordinate activity, share best practice and reduce duplication. This has addressed the impact of a tendency of working reactively in silos and being somewhat uncomfortable or unused to collaboration.
- A fresh initiative to re-identify the key industrial issues for our young members.
- An explicit personal invitation from new General Secretary Dave Ward to young members to tell us how they see their role in the CWU’s future in a series of tailored web-based discussion with around 50 invited youth activists – in part this provides the framework for a more open Q-and-A session.
- Maintaining and developing the Youth element in the recently agreed CWU-wide Mentoring Policy: Through this we will identify and publicise success stories.
- Being less coy about seeing youth activists as future leaders in the CWU, and offer an education and training programme to develop the necessary knowledge, and self-confidence. Branches need to develop (or redevelop) a “talent spotting” attitude.
- Using powerful new diagnostic tools to audit young reps in the CWU and also branch youth activity. This will feed into a review of branch structures, which will also to examine the issue of “blocking” of posts by retired members.
- To “tell it as it is” to branches – that without young reps we are a dying organisation – but to also encourage a greater sense of assertiveness in young members in challenging for positions.
- Describing something as “youth” excludes some people in the target age range. A rebrand could be allied with launch events to emphasise necessary new or revised messages. (Given the comprehensive range of branded material, this is not a cost-free option)
- We will make provision for three or four specific youth engagement projects in branches over the course of 2016/17. Bids for resource will

be encouraged, and assessed by an internal stakeholder group using practical, measurable outputs as the key indicators of success. Best practice would be recognised and rewarded.

- A more co-ordinated approach with our Equality and Proportionality work is important in its own right but also supports the involvement of young women, currently significantly under-represented, in the union's work.
- Regional Secretaries have a key role to play to ensure that Regional Youth Committees are up and running everywhere.

In the last quarter of 2015, we could already see encouraging signs of new activity, and most importantly of all, we ended the year with nearly 3,000 more young members than we started.

## Towards the future

All novel ideas struggle to become accepted, and even if they are successful in becoming so, a degree of refreshment is always needed. The current range of initiatives is perhaps not so very different from those that we started out with 15 years ago. But because we still have these challenges to meet, and because we haven't become ultra-firmly embedded in the mainstream, does that mean we have failed? The quick answer to that is 'No'. This is not a case of having to constantly re-invent the same wheel. The collective knowledge and experience – and therefore competence and efficiency, grows with each cycle. This leaves us feeling confident about being able to meet the challenges of our future, despite the very real and threatening environment.

Our objectives for the coming period straight-forward: Deliver the current strategic plan for youth engagement in the CWU, and play our role in creating and enacting a strategic plan for youth engagement across the trade union and labour movement.

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**Devonport Dockyard has been historically a male dominated environment and given the skills required to work there has a significantly high age profile. This creates problems for our union; we were only talking about shift agreements and we will lose membership steadily just through retirement.**

**Prospect representatives to meet with each new intake of graduates and admin apprentices as part of their induction process. This lasts an hour and we found an informal approach succeeded in allowing new employees to gain a good understanding of what the union in Devonport achieves for its members as well as highlighting the many benefits of being a member of Prospect. Many of the young employees sign up immediately, however some need a little time to think about it. So we crucially follow-up with a meeting a week or so later in order to collect forms. The follow-up meeting is critical and this particular initiative, is where we have seen a significant uptake in recruitment.**

**Del Northcott, Branch Secretary, Devonport Dockyard, Prospect**

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Case study: Maddy Radcliffe,  
Campaigns and Public Affairs Officer, MU

## Understanding what members want now, and in the future to shape the union



The MU was faced with the task, similar to other unions, to get more young members engaged in the union. Before embarking on this project we undertook research which threw out some interesting results and challenging ideas. Firstly, what do we mean by ‘young’ and what does that mean for how they approach being in the union and the issues they experience?

A great example of this was one member who had been working as a professional musician from the age of 14, reinforcing the idea that “young” is a broad term as we use it in unions. This member could spend 20 years classed as ‘young’ and while the basic issues may be the same – pay, respect at work, secure employment, rights as a worker – how those issues manifest and how we experience them are not the same. This does not mean that we don’t use the term anymore, just that we are mindful of making assumptions about what this really means.

That said, we needed to find out more about how this underrepresented group of members viewed the union, and their relationship with the MU.

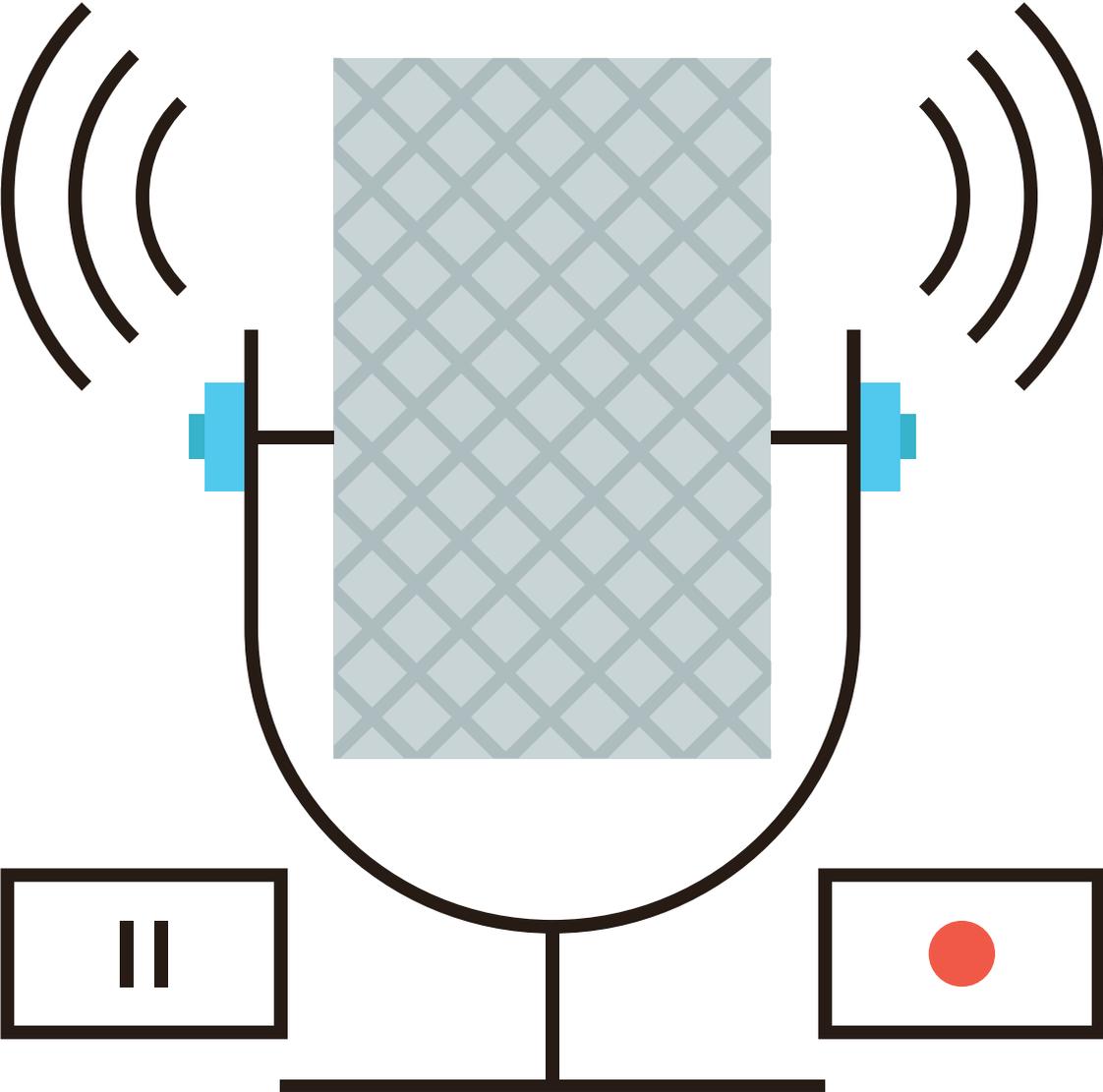
We asked a group of young people what they wanted from their Union. The answers were universal; help, protection, career advice, to fix things when they go wrong, and to make life easier for working musicians.

We then asked how they felt about their relationship with the Union. These discussions revealed a number of common points of contention. Firstly, that traditional models of organising don’t work well for many young members. Not only because common issues manifest in different ways, but because they can’t interact with the Union in the ways unions are used to. For example, workplace noticeboards. People may not work

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Discussing communications in our research, it was interesting to hear that as much as people valued social media and believed we should be on there to participate in debate, they valued the MU's printed magazine more.

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in the same place for very long. Meetings are a struggle. Say you're a young music teacher hired through an agency, miss one class and you could lose that job and in an industry where reputation is everything that is a problem. Not that long ago, meetings were held in pubs over a pint in the evening – might sound good to some, but a pub isn't a safe space for everyone. There's also a lack of young people on committees and we've heard tales from across unions of members feeling that issues they raise are not always heard. So the way trades union are used to working does not work for everyone.

Yet, another fact to come out of our research is that people want to get involved, they just don't know how. They haven't been asked and feel intimidated by rooms of people with whom they do not feel they share common ground. My favourite moment doing this research came from a young member upon meeting us. Their response? "I wasn't expecting someone who looked like you". In another instance, perhaps more damagingly, a young member spoke of raising an issue at a meeting only for the others at the table not to understand. It's a disconnect that eventually leads to disenfranchisement as young people sit out. If they feel excluded now, how can we expect them to lead the Union in the future?

At this juncture it's always worth highlighting the assumptions often made about young people in our sectors. Many, for example, assume that young people must be on Twitter. Discussing communications in our research, it was interesting to hear that as much as people valued social media and believed we should be on there to participate in debate, they valued the MU's printed magazine more. In an era when people are sending less and less in the post, it made them feel cared about.

Ergo the ways people like to assume young people talk and behave are not necessarily true.

Running alongside this is the change in relationship between union and individual, observed across the board. Why that relationship is not as fundamental as it perhaps may have been, there could be many reasons; no-one around them cops to being a union member, no history of it in the family, no experience of having to rely on a trade union to make the bills, or an inaccurate picture of who and what trade union is (not helped by an increasingly polarised political environment). Maybe they just joined for the cheap insurance, maybe we've been usurped by YouTube as a source of advice, or maybe those of us doing the organising have been exposed to too much talk of a trade union 'golden era' which never really existed.

If true, none of these issues are young members' fault, but ours as a movement. The onus is therefore on us to break those cycles and remake them into something better for all our members, and those who need us but have not yet joined. How we do that is the million-member question, but we can't answer it if we don't have all the facts and knowledge to hand.

**Case study: Jon Skewes, Director for Policy,  
Employment Affairs and Communications, RCM**

## Really understanding our members and stakeholders

**How do you know what your members want? Or indeed,  
what other people you seek to influence think of you?**

The ways in which unions and professional bodies get and use feedback or evidence are myriad, ranging from feel and experience of senior officers, to conference resolutions, to complaints, engagement and campaigns. These techniques all have their limitations. Rule of the shoutiest is rarely the best way to gauge the often complicated expectations, hopes and wishes of members. It's even less effective with stakeholders – whether those we negotiate with or seek partnership with, the media or government.

The RCM, like a number of other membership organisations, uses a variety of mechanisms to gauge opinion, to improve services and to seek to influence internally and externally. Like a more limited number of unions we also use detailed market research to give us a picture of how members view us, what they want and see as important. We look at promoters and detractors, competitors and collaborators. We segment our membership in terms of demographics and how they feel about the RCM. Finally, we look at the key findings and how we might be able to satisfy them by doing things differently or sometimes by communicating more effectively.

In particular the research looks for 'moments of truth' – realisation of significant views by a member based on their experience. We use a technique for this research which is widely used – the net promoter score. A measure of success for us is that score increasing significantly from one time period to the next. Our score initially was fairly good but nowhere near the Apple Corporation.

We were able to identify areas of activity with high importance but low performance in the view of members as well as those areas members identified as important and thought we were doing well. For instance our legal assistance scheme

was cited as good and important whereas other sometimes more distant from the member activities, like influencing government were rated lower.

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**The research looks for  
'moments of truth'  
– realisation of  
significant views by a  
member based on their  
experience.**

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This research has given the RCM powerful data upon which to base decision making. In particular the rich and detailed information on four main segmented membership types – based on demographics. In our case the needs and expectations of 'belonger' (younger, more likely single, more likely in London and South East) are very different from 'protectors' (35-55 more likely in a relationship with children, in South West, North West, Scotland and Wales) are very different. That understanding has underpinned a great deal of change about our membership offer, our communications and even decisions on industrial action and affiliation to the TUC. Commercially confidential, of course but the kind of thing our staff conference and teams will discuss in detail.

Every two years we conduct this kind of research using a trusted independent research company.

In the coming year we will repeat it to look at trends and see if changes have worked and what else need to be done. Every intervening year we





which are not just the conventional domains of terms and conditions. In fact it grows the agenda, as issues such as performance and how it is managed, work tempo and balance with domestic commitments are as important to our members.

It may seem an odd claim but we are of the greatest value to employers where our membership is highest; where representatives are trained and have the time to give evidence based voice to their constituents. I have often argued to employers the worst basis for sound employee relations is low density Union membership, an atmosphere where Unions are tolerated but tightly controlled, with a general sense of recognition being on 'sufferance'. For any relation to flourish there needs to be trust and time invested; it is a truism that employers get the Unions they 'deserve'.

That is not to say there are not tensions but representatives have deep expertise, know the company and know what works. Employers know they need to hear the independent voice and act on it for a better outcome. These are also sectors where their future in terms of government policy, investment profiles and skills are all areas ripe for Union/employer collaboration and joint lobbying.

I often ask conference audiences of HR practitioners and managers what do they want from public policy when it comes to Unions? Would they regard zero Union presence in the economy as success? Few would want or support such an objective for public policy but posing the question focuses the mind to what then is the role of government in fostering conditions where Unions can thrive and relate well to employers.

Because it is simply sophistry to say government and public policy does not have such a role. This is why the Trade Union Reform Bill is so damaging. It is about regulation not reform. It is far more

difficult to follow the evidence of good workplace relationships where Unions and employers work well, in partnership but not in collusion and build on that.

Unions free to be independent of action, but with real understanding of the challenges facing the employer. Both parties recognising their obligations to staff/members. I am convinced more than ever that the answers to our productivity puzzles lie in reconsidering three decades of declining voice in the workplace. Atomised employment relationships, 'Uber' models and growing dependent work styles do not form the basis for enduring and stable consumer demand. They do not answer skills crises and they can at worst emphasise the 'factors in production' charge of certain polemics.

Our best working relationships reflect clear understanding of the long term, are reciprocal and evidence based. It is time for employers and unions to solve some of the workplace challenges together and try to change a policy direction from government that reflects nothing about best practise. Fail to do this and conflict will not be eradicated by muzzled and diminishing Unions; it will just take on new unpredictable forms; it will be technology enabled and will show itself if anyone looks, in people being ostensibly on message but privately reluctant to give of their absolute best as they know they are expendable. We will not be near the productivity frontier in these conditions.





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