



***“Improve your
organising skills”***

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Unions – who does the work?

Unions as organisations rely heavily on volunteers to do the majority of their work for them – without volunteers they are dead. There is simply not enough money in the union business to support a network of completely paid staff. So whether or not such a model is desirable, it is just not an option – you have to interest people to volunteer for your organisation or it will collapse.

So it is useful to consider what leads people to volunteer. When it comes to the people unions represent – their members – unions look very closely at what they get out of it: pay, terms and conditions, perquisites, and so on. However, when it comes to those who actually do most of the union's routine work, somehow what they get out of it is seldom mentioned.

Take a random sample of people and you are likely they include volunteers for a range of activities and causes: charities, schools, political organisations, societies, sports clubs, etc. There is a good chance you yourself are a volunteer in some capacity. What you get out of it is unlikely to be that much different from what anyone gets out of what they do.

Things like:

- Making a contribution
- Believing in the cause
- A sense of achievement
- Being respected
- Being acknowledged
- Making a difference
- Helping people

The above items tend to feature in responses to the questions of why people volunteer. If we look at theories of motivation this makes entire sense.

Theories of motivation – explaining why people do things

Abraham Maslow produced his hierarchy of needs which proposed that people acted in response to perceived needs and the extent to which those needs were satisfied. He suggested that basic needs had to be met before you could think about any higher level activity. For example, if you were at work but at risk of losing your home you would be unlikely to concentrate very hard, or if your life was being threatened you might not think about whether you have paid the rent this month. The hierarchy looks like this:



Your basic needs are those at the bottom. Until you have settled these you cannot move up. However once you have settled them, they are no longer motivators. When a person is hungry you may get them to work for food, but once they have eaten you may need to offer something else to get them to do more work. People tend to volunteer for the higher level reasons, generally social and esteem values. It is important to consider the extent to which these are met by what they are often asked to do.

Herzberg's theory of hygiene and motivator factors

Herzberg overlaps with Maslow but he makes an interesting distinction between two types of factors. Herzberg says that for most workers, as they are getting their basic needs met, basic factors do not work. As they are likely to have enough income to meet their basic physiological and safety needs, income alone is unlikely to motivate them much.

Herzberg separates hygiene factors and motivators roughly as follows:

Hygiene factors	Motivators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>policy</i> ● <i>relationship with supervisor</i> ● <i>work conditions</i> ● <i>salary</i> ● <i>company car</i> ● <i>status</i> ● <i>security</i> ● <i>relationship with subordinates</i> ● <i>personal life</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>achievement</i> ● <i>recognition</i> ● <i>work itself</i> ● <i>responsibility</i> ● <i>advancement</i> ● <i>personal growth</i>

Hygiene Factors do not contribute to raising output if they are increased. However their decrease leads to a drop in motivation.

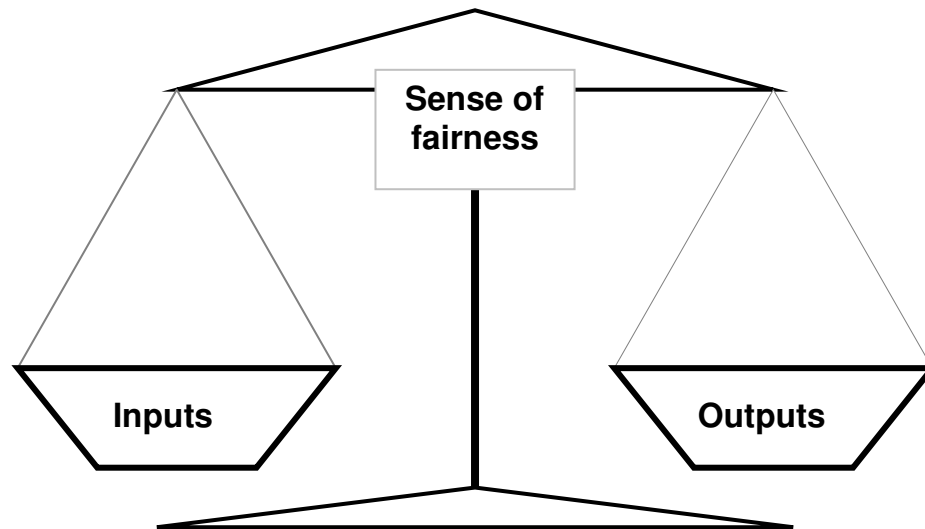
If I raise your pay by 1%, I am unlikely to see a 1% rise in output over any noticeable period.

Motivator factors are the ones which are likely to lead to you working harder. If I praise you more; if I give you more interesting work; if you have a chance to develop – you are more likely to try harder. The work becomes more rewarding in itself and you enjoy it more.

This is sometimes something which seems to go against the grain for unions as they often seem concerned with improving the offer concerning hygiene factors rather than motivator factors.

Adams' Equity Theory

Adams adds to the previous theories his idea of the individual's perception of the fairness of their position. For example although I may have enough income to pay my bills, the fact that I am paid less than someone else for the same work makes me feel I am treated unfairly. This has negative consequences for my motivation.



Adams sees the effort you put into work and the rewards you receive for it as respectively 'inputs' and 'outputs': what we put in and what we get out. This seeks to recognise that people put more into their work than just working hours, and they get more than just money out of it. The points with which we compare our own situation, Adams calls 'referent' others.

At work, we want a fair balance between what we put into our job and what we get out of it. But what is a fair balance? Adams says we get our measure of fairness - Equity - by comparing our set of inputs and outputs to what other people in comparable positions are getting ('referent' others).

The important difference with the previous theorists is that our perception of our situation is not just dependent upon what we give and get, rather it is socially construed and depends upon the situations of others.

We are de-motivated if we think we are being treated unfairly.

What does this mean for volunteering?

Well it means much the same for all of us. If we want to get the best from people we should look at what they are getting from it. As plainly we are not in a position to provide financial rewards – and anyway these might not fit the bill – we should look at other opportunities to enhance their motivation.

Do we praise them, thank them, give them public recognition, give them a chance to do interesting things? Do we treat them like they are valued? Do we treat them with respect?

Additionally we should look at ways in which we might create situations which volunteers find de-motivating.

Do we ever give them tasks for which they might be lacking in confidence, without adequate support? Do we ever overburden them? Do we take the time to explain what has to be done or do we assume they know –and if they do not, they should..?

Do we ever talk in ways they might not understand? Perhaps we could try harder to talk in ways that are accessible to them.

Being conscious of the factors is the first step in being able to do something about them. It is not unusual for people to become involved in the union only to give up after a short period because they are overwhelmed by it and find it a completely thankless task. Perhaps one of the reasons why political activists are often also union activists is that they can find their sense of achievement from elsewhere – they are carrying on their political cause through the union. It is unfortunate if this means they are effectively favoured rather than rank and file members since you will end up with a less representative organisation.

Organising is also a means to addressing some of the motivational issues of volunteering.

Organising in unions

The *organising* model has come into being in opposition to the *servicing* model of unions. In an organising model the drivers of action come from the grass roots and as a consequence, the organisation will be seen as acting in their interest and not as some remote top down bureaucracy.

A brief history of the organising model

Unions started off as small organisations with direct links to the workplaces they represented. In most of the cases, the union representatives worked together with the people they represented. As companies grew and unions became bigger, the linkages between workers and their representatives became more strained. Senior union figures had to find a balance between a greater variety of interests and act according to the common good, which sometimes led to the marginalisation of certain groups of workers. In some countries, union membership remained high because there was a union tradition, sometimes even closed shops, and there was an acceptance of union presence. However, the anti-union backlash of the 1980's, especially in the USA and UK, resulted in a much more hostile environment and legislation, which made it much harder for unions to operate in an accustomed way. Together with large scale unemployment, this resulted in a decreasing membership and the economy became less dependent upon large, unionised, industrial enterprises. Unions tried to present themselves differently in order to respond to the new circumstances and attract new members. Some unions started to offer a broader range of services than what was expected, for example credit cards and travel insurances.

It did not stop the decline in membership and many questioned what the union was really about. A new approach began to emerge, particularly from the USA, which seemed to offer another way of doing things. It focussed on building a closer relationship with the workers and dealing with more local issues. A union becomes more valuable and relevant when it has impact on the day to day working life. This approach is now more widely spread and promoted as the Organising model.

Facts and figures

- UK union membership figures: 1995: ~33% of employees; 2006:~29% of employees; [national statistics inline data]
- Australia 2007/08: drop of 5% [ABC news data]
- Drop in membership most sharply seen in Eastern Europe e.g. Poland union density in 1982: 80%; in 2002 14% [eipro data]

Ask yourself the following questions:

- What is the backbone of my union? Who does most of the work?
- Is it easy to get people to take positions in my union?
- What is our presence in the areas we represent?
- What are attendance figures of our meetings?
- What is the age profile or division of our membership?
- What are the participation rates in voting procedures?
- Are we respected and valued by our members?
- Do we represent our members with a strong voice?

Organising means waking-up the union.

The organising model is not very popular amongst certain union officials since it requires new ways of working. It might disturb people who are comfortable with their current mode of operation and might disrupt their power bases: perhaps some individuals will not be able to keep the same control as before. This approach puts more power in the workers' and activists' hands. They might start deciding what has to be done and how, they might not listen to those who formerly held sway. You might expect resistance from certain people.

The Organising model

Members participate in an organisation which helps them realise their goals:

- Members are the union

The union is not some remote organisation that comes and does things for you. The union is what happens within the workplace and amongst the workers. It is their organisation.

- Widespread involvement

Participation is high and union activism is common. It is not regarded as something which is run by other people, but by you.

- Member led agenda

The local agenda is not something brought to you or dictated by someone else. It comes from you and you decide how it develops.

- Collective objectives and collective action

The objectives are yours, collectively arrived at and to be the subject of collective action. You decide together what you want and then together how you are going to get it.

- Proactive stance

You are not waiting to be told what to do or waiting for anyone else to take the initiative. You are choosing what agenda to set and how to pursue it in respect of your priorities, not as a reaction to someone else's.

- Union very present in workplace

The union is a visible force within the workplace. I know who is involved and how to talk to them and they are available.

So, what is the secret of organising?

Essentially the main aspects are keeping it local and carefully planning what you are doing. The approach can be broken into these five components:

- Strategically build the campaign
- Communicate with the workers
- Develop and sustain member activity
- Utilise relevant workplace issues
- Evaluate your campaign

Strategically build the campaign

- Prioritise
 - There are probably several organisations that seem like appropriate candidates for an organising campaign but you have to choose one which best fits your union's priorities and possibly is the most winnable. Make sure your research is thorough and that you are not just relying on what you think to be the case.
- Choose target workplaces
 - Once you have identified the organisation, look for the most suitable target workplace to start your campaign: you do not want to waste your time on something you cannot win. Ask yourself the following questions:
 - Is the picture we have of the workplace based on good and solid information?
 - Can we adequately support the campaign? Do we have the necessary funds and are the officials not already overloaded?
 - Is this a good use of our resources? Does it fit into our union priorities and commitments?
 - Are there spin-off benefits? For example, would it offer good publicity?
 - What are the potential risks of targeting this workplace?
- Informal contacts
 - Start making whatever contacts you can in that workplace; the bars, the local cafes, as well as the plant gates may be good places to make contacts. Use any contacts you already have to build a network.
- Be flexible
 - Do not be too rigid in your approach but adapt your tactics to the emerging situation.
- Talk to workers
 - Find out all you can about the workplace and especially what they are unhappy about. The workers are a prime source of information.
- Follow up interest
 - Make sure you get back to those people who say they might be interested in doing something: do not let them go cold.
- Build relationships
 - Be approachable and keep the lines open. Be interested in them.
- Plan your project
 - Set yourself goals and a timescale for what you aim to achieve and monitor it.

You might consider using project management techniques to assist with your planning:

Be clear about your objectives and make sure they are SMART:

- S Specific: not general but precise objectives
- M Measurable: quantified so you can say when you have reached your goal
- A Agreed: everyone concerned is signed up

- R Realistic: it is achievable
- T Time bound: you have deadlines.

Break-up the project into all its components [called 'deliverables']: all the things that have to be done to achieve the objectives.

You need to identify the responsible people for all the activities and what resources are needed. In this context, time is also a resource – how many hours/days will a certain task occupy person X? You may need to get an overview of the local people you can involve before you can divide the responsibilities. However, you should create a database of everyone involved with contact details, and a resource matrix identifying everything you will need to implement the campaign.

The next step is to create a sequence and a time schedule: which events are happening at what time. A GANTT chart is helpful for this [see appendix, page 24].

Once you have a schedule, you can put in some monitoring points, or milestones, for example by [date] you should have completed task 5. This enables you to keep track of how the plan is progressing and let anyone else know what needs to be changed if things are not going as planned. Sometimes this even includes the possibility of cancelling the project: if you have not made enough progress by a certain point, you have to assess if it is worth the effort that it is taking.

- Develop the campaign
 - Consider how you will gain visibility. Use whatever media contacts you have and all web communication tools, e.g. blogs, twitter, any networks you have access to. T-shirt campaigns attract the eye if a significant number of members participate – both employers as non-members will notice your campaign – but only try such tactics if you have enough support to make it effective. The same goes for public events. You do not want to appear weak! However, publicity does not always need large numbers of people – look at the success of some Greenpeace campaigns: a creative approach can be very valuable.

Communicate with the workers

- Talk to them
 - Do not just speak with your members but to as many workers you can. Find out all you can about the workplace and especially what they are unhappy about. The workers are a prime source of information.
- Listen to them
 - People like to be listened to and it is an important message to send out that the union listens. The more you listen and take them serious, the more it is likely they are interested in what you can offer.
- Deal with objections
 - Do not try to avoid objections but deal with them directly but amiably. You are building a relationship with these people.
- Try to understand them
 - Try to see where they are coming from. Additionally they may be unused to dealing with unions and be a bit reticent about expressing themselves – be patient.
- Build a relationship
 - Do not treat this as a business relationship where you do your business and then leave. Try to be interested in them and their situation and try to empathise.
- Give time and commitment
 - Treat it as an investment. Possibly the union has never spoken to these people before or maybe they have had negative experiences or advice. Show them you have time for them and commit to supporting them. You have to identify local people who will be active and will lead the local campaigns.

Develop and sustain member activity

- Aim for sustainable structures
 - You want this to persist when you leave it all to them, so set them up in a way that does not rely on you and has the means to refresh itself.
- Involve more members
 - More is better in so many ways: spreading the load, increasing the presence and strength, opening up new contacts and routes. You really want it to snowball.
- Support [and coordinate if required]
 - Provide a diminishing role: start by coordinating, continue with close support and gradually increase the distance, but always stay within reach.
- Give realistic tasks
 - Do not overburden; do not stretch people too far. You want them to feel some achievement, not face them with failure. Start small and they will come back; give them too much at once and they will not come back.
- Help them develop
 - It is important to acknowledge that some, possibly many of the people you will involve, may never have done anything like this before. They may not be very confident and may be operating outside their comfort zones. You need to nurture them: help them in the ways in which they would like to be helped. Be guided by them in how to help them. Encourage them and provide positive, constructive feedback. Do not forget you want them to think positive about the union. It is very likely that the image they get from you will be the image they will pass on to others.
- Set up organising committees
 - Your organising committee is probably the key structure since its main role is to take the work forward. It provides a framework to maintain the direction. The more people involved, the more important the committee structures – it is the best way to keep everyone in the loop. The committee will need a good overall picture of the workplace and therefore it is useful to have a composition that reflects the shape of the workplace.

Utilise relevant workplace issues

- Identify issues
 - Find the things that matter to them. Get them to explain it in their terms and use these descriptions as they are likely to be understood in the workplace – do not put them into ‘union speak’. Find how much support these issues have throughout the organisation.
- Encourage activity
 - Encourage them to do something about their issues. Promote the idea of positive action to cause change.
- Look for collective resolutions
 - Try to encourage a unified response to the issues.
- Give support
 - Provide a diminishing role: start by coordinating, continue with close support and gradually increase the distance, but always stay within reach.
- Promote the union
 - Link the action to the union. Explain how the union has assisted and won in other locations and how it can continue to provide support in this one.

Evaluate your campaign

- Honestly review and evaluate
 - You have to know how it went and you have to have an honest appraisal of the outcome. Involve as many people as possible in your review to ensure your thoughts have a wide reflection.
- Learn from mistakes
 - The reason for being honest is to identify mistakes so that you do not make them again. We learn fastest from mistakes so making them is not something to be ashamed of – none of us is perfect so let us accept we get things wrong and just make sure we do not repeat them.
- Share and celebrate success
 - A sense of achievement and recognition are both important motivators [see above]. Acknowledge the hard work and effort and be fulsome in your praise and celebration: you have worked hard, you deserve it!

Organising for Unions

How to map the work place?

The idea of mapping a workplace is to create a representation of the worker profile, linked to the workplace. There are two ways to map the workplace. The first way focuses on facts and figures, how many people work in each department. The second way is to create a map of the interrelations, taking into account the human factor of the workplace. Depending upon your access you may only be able to complete the first as your initial map. Do not worry, completing the second map will be a part of your plan.

Depending upon the nature of the workplace, you might start by actually drawing a map or a plan of the physical space showing where the various departments are located. For example:

FINANCE		ADMINISTRATION
STORES	HUMAN RESOURCES	
	MAINTENANCE	

It gives you an initial picture of the place you are dealing with.

The next step is to fill in these empty boxes with some details. For each department you need to know the number of employees. In order to do this, you need to have a contact person from the department. As always with Organising, the key is to talk to people. You can use the attached form – workplace mapping form 1, page 22– to record your findings.

What would be ideal from that point on is to have a profile of the members in that department. Talk to all of them, find out who is a member and who is not, what is their attitude towards joining the union,... You can rank this as A, B or C meaning probable, possible and unlikely respectively. Remember many people do not join unions simply because no one ever asked. Anyone who is likely to join has to be noted for a follow up visit – schedule this so that you will not forget it. It looks bad if you say you will get back to someone and you never do. Workplace mapping form 2, page 23, can be used to record this information.

What is the point of Mapping?

- The information you have gained gives you a basis for a campaign.
- You know where your members are located.
- You have an idea of the potential members.
- You can define how long it will take to talk to all the non-members.
- You have identified some initial issues and may have an idea of how widespread they are.
- You have brought the union to everyone's attention.
- You might have begun to identify some potential activists.

Completing the process:

Think about how long this process will take. How big is the place and do you have already any contacts? Will you be able to talk to people during working hours or is it an after work exercise? It is a good idea to have something to hand out to non-members – a recruitment pack together with some brief information (e.g. a couple of leaflets) and an affiliation form. If anyone says they want to join, try to convince them to complete the form immediately – why wait? Make sure you talk to everyone, your members included. Explain what you are doing and find out what issues they have – you are sending a bad signal if you talk to non-members and ignore your actual members. If they raise any issues, make sure you come back and inform them how you will deal with them.

The foregoing assumes you do not have access to management records and have to work from little or no information. If the company is more open, the better. However, experience often tells that the reason why the union is not already present is because the management has not yet realised that union presence is positive.

What is good about Organising for the Workers?

- Allows the members to feel more involved
The union is not something that is 'done to them'.
- Means they pick up more of the work
Which is good for getting them even more involved; being more in touch with their colleagues.
- They resolve local issues
These are the issues that affect them.
- They spread the word and act as role models
Enhances their organisation and their status.

Members feel more involved because:

- The union addresses their issues
Their issues are addressed because of the union.
- They do some of the work and so are not alienated
They can see and participate in the positive outcomes.
- The union speaks their language
...because they are doing the talking.
- The union is more able to address equal opportunities issues.
Because frequently they are local and they are felt most keenly in the workplace and so will arise as issues.
- They gain a sense of empowerment
Look what we have done and can yet do....

Organising and your leadership skills

Sometimes your role may mean you are seen as a leader. It is useful to reflect on exactly what is involved in leadership.

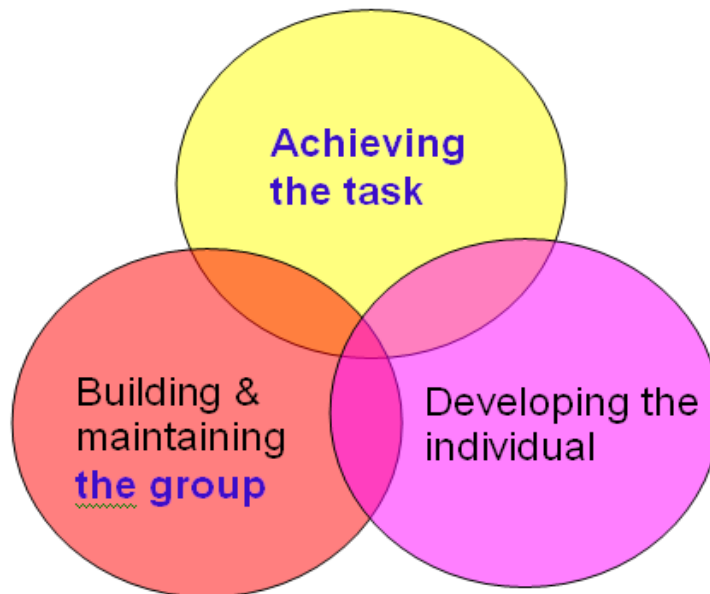
A leader is a dealer in hope.
Napoleon

'A leader is best - when people barely know he exists;
Not so good - when people obey and acclaim him;
Worst - when they despise him.
Fail to honour people and they will fail to honour you.
But of a good leader -
When his work is done, his aim fulfilled,
People will say "We did this ourselves"'.
Lao Tzu

Leadership can range on a scale from those who command everything (autocrats) to those who command nothing (abdicates – as in *abdicate*) and leave everyone to themselves. In the middle are the democrats: happy to consult but take the decision in the final analysis. Consider who you have worked with in the past and where they might be on the scale, and think of the ones you worked best with.

Think about where your style puts you on the scale.

Leading Teams:



John Adair holds that leading a team – which is what you will be doing at first – has 3 components:

- Achieving the Task – make sure the job is done;
- Building the team – make sure people work together well;
- Developing the individual – help and support particular people.

Some leaders tend to focus on the first one to the exclusion of the others – not a good strategy. Think of a football manager: they have to build the team **and** make sure certain individuals are doing well, **and** win games! It might be that sometimes a game is lost but that is not a problem because the team is beginning to play well together. Likewise for your team – the purpose is not short term gain, but long term viability. Even if you undertook some action and did not win, if the team worked well and individuals felt part of it and were not neglected then they will come back for more and they can learn how to do it better next time... and maybe not needing so much of your help.

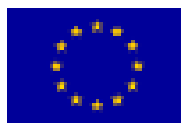
Neither Rome nor strong union movements can be built in a day.



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