Building a stronger union in your contact centre
Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.

MARGARET MEAD

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Dear member,

We are constantly looking for ways to ensure we have as many union members as we can and for those members’ voices to be heard. At a national and local level CWU reps are doing what they can but we need your help.

It’s often said that a union is only as strong as its members – this is true. We know many of you are keen to help us be as strong a union as possible and this booklet is designed to assist you in doing that.

A strong union is one where the company realises not only that negotiators speak for all staff, it’s one where members participate in the decision-making process and where growth and engagement is everyone’s concern – not just a handful of members in the branch office.

Take a few minutes to read through it, get in touch if you have any questions and let us know how you get on.

With your help we can continue to build the union, respond to our members’ priorities, and ensure that the company listens to you.

Andy Kerr
Deputy General Secretary (Telecoms & Financial Services)
Why talk to?

talk to is a simple guide to give CWU members like you tips on talking to colleagues about why being a CWU member is valuable to them. It is important that people who work beside you understand why they should be in the union and the best placed people to do this are you, the union members. In addition, the more members taking part, the more effective the union will be.

Why should I take part in talk to?

As a voluntary, member-centred organisation, the CWU always needs new members and to have as many involved as possible.

With a strong union membership comes a strong influence over company policies and procedures which can only improve everyone’s working life.

Emails and newsletters only get us so far – most people become motivated to do something after a conversation. This is even more the case if it’s a conversation with someone they know and trust.
**How to start a conversation**

It is important to be friendly, open and to check if it is convenient to chat with this person. If the person is in a rush, let them know that they can talk to you another time. Most people will appreciate that you are showing interest in them and will spare a few minutes of their time. Starting the conversation with an ‘open’ question demonstrates this well and shows that you are interested in their opinions.

You could ask questions like:

- What are your thoughts on the CWU?

- What has stopped you from joining the union in the past?

- What issues do you think the CWU should prioritise?

- What would make you consider getting involved in the CWU?
Helpful responses to potential questions

Some colleagues may have preconceived ideas about the union that appear a little negative at first. Below are some helpful responses.

I don’t need to join the union, I get the pay rise anyway...

“There’s more to being a union member than just pay rises. Most of your colleagues are in the union. Yes, union members take part in decisions about pay but they also participate in shaping workplace policies, protection of current employee benefits and improvements to all your terms and conditions.”

I’m not going to be working here very long...

“You might be here longer than you expect, and even if that is not the case, the union will still be making a positive difference to your working life through pay and protection. Whether you are here a month, a year or a decade there is still mutual benefit to you being in the union.”
The union doesn’t make any difference!

“" The CWU wants to make sure that your issues are addressed seriously. Union reps talk to the company about important issues that impact you such as workload, call handling time, Heath & Safety and pay. The union wants to make sure that line managers act consistently thus avoiding unnecessary disciplinary action and unfair performance management programmes. ""

I haven’t got time to get involved...

“" Union activity doesn’t need to take up a vast amount of your time and it is also very rewarding and enjoyable. There are lots of ways you can contribute to your union and only commit a little time each week. E.g. updating notice boards, handing out union literature and gathering feedback from members. ""

FAQs

Q. When is the best time to talk?
A. Try to speak to people when they are on a tea break or just before they start work.
Q. **How long will the chat take?**

**A.** Having a talk chat won’t take that long – you can talk to someone about the union in less than five minutes.

Q. **What will my manager say if he/she sees me doing this?**

**A.** If you are on a break or outside of working time then your manager should not say anything about what you are doing. If they do remind them that there are agreements between the CWU and the company in place.

Q. **Isn’t it somebody else’s job to do union stuff?**

**A.** Often people think that union reps and union staff should do it all but, quite simply, they can’t do everything! Taking part in talk will help out a lot and show non-members that we are all in this together! Branch officers and union reps are actively talking to people but can’t get to everyone.

Q. **What should I do if the talk doesn’t go well?**

**A.** Don’t worry about it and don’t let one bad experience put you off. It has probably gone better than you think!
Contact form for colleague 1

When you have spoken with your colleague, please complete the form below and return to us in the freepost envelope provided.

**About you**

Name  

Workplace  

**About your colleague**

Name  

Job title  

After speaking with your colleague, would you say his/her views on the CWU are  

☐ Positive  ☐ Negative  

Would your colleague like more contact from the CWU?  

☐ Yes  ☐ No
Contact form for colleague 2

If you have spoken with a second colleague, please enter the details here.

About your colleague

Name

Job title

Workplace

After speaking with your colleague, would you say his/her views on the CWU are

☐ Positive  ☐ Negative

Would your colleague like more contact from the CWU?

☐ Yes  ☐ No
What happens next?

If you have any questions please contact your local rep or local Field Organiser who have provided their contact details below.

Local Field Organiser / Union Rep

Email

Mobile

Date

Published by the Communications Workers Union 2017
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