

Asking People to Join – possible conversations for organising staff

Opening the conversation

First of all it's important to remember why we are there – it is to recruit new members on the basis of the important new advertising campaign we have launched.

This gives us a useful opening for starting a conversation.

“Hi, I'm with UNISON, have you seen our adverts?”

If - Yes

“What did you think of the advert?” – listen to what their views are and acknowledge those views

If - No – let them know where they can see the advert

Then move the conversation on “OK, well we're telling people about the great services and offers available to members. Are you a member?”

If they are a member

Ask them if they have used any of our services (based on what you know about the worker/workplace).

It is important to acknowledge any criticism. But try and move the conversation on to a positive.

Then ask them about any friends or colleagues nearby who are not members – can they introduce you to them?

Once you get to workers who are not members

Talk about the services and benefits that are promoted in the advertising – start with the most prominent ones, or start with the ones you think are most relevant to the workgroup.

Advice, support and help when at work – legal help for work, for accidents, the fact that our members can access debt advice and practical financial support from our own exclusive charity.

You may have workers there who are members and already fairly positive about UNISON – try and involve them in the conversation – the aim is to create positive reinforcement – you are backing up what the materials and advertising campaign say, the members are backing up what you say, and their colleagues may trust them more than you.

Remember our helpline UNISON Direct means that they will be able to speak to a friendly voice even at 11:30pm

If you don't have any members present then it might be useful if you have familiarised yourself with any stories about good payouts from UNISON Welfare or compensation claims through the solicitors – you only need one of each.

Point out that membership of UNISON can be surprisingly less than people expect, and that we are the only union that provides all services and benefits irrespective of how little you pay.

Dealing with doubts

- People won't always respond positively – they may be wary of unions, they may have had a bad experience with a different union, or with UNISON, or they might say it's too expensive or that they don't need one.
- It's important to stress that membership fees are based on income, that members can access a range of discounts (saving up to £250 per year), the financial support that is available to members, the fact that nurses and some other medical professions get tax rebates on part of their fees, the free legal services etc.
- 'Play it by ear' target your conversation based on the setting and the arguments being made by the potential member(s).

- The current campaign should help you deal with political objections to unions – this is about personal support, representation, and services, not politics.
- There will be some people who will not join under any cost, as soon as you identify one make your excuses and move on to someone else, and try not to encourage them to join in a conversation with anyone else.

Sealing the Deal

- ✓ It is really important to get those completed application forms back.

The best way to get the form filled in is to offer to help complete it there and then - Make sure you are confident in filling the form in yourself – be ready to answer questions about issues like the APF/GPF.

If the person you are talking to says they want to fill the form in later – offer to come back and pick it up at a time that suits them.

Some people will want to join on-line make sure that they have the right web address and ask them if there are any areas like the APF/GPF that they would like clarified?

X Equally it is important not to put too much pressure on people, as that can build up resentment and put them off joining.

If you have a group of workers who all seem like friends identify the ringleader if you can get them to sign the form their friends might – try and establish a bit of a rapport with them, if you can encourage one or two to feel like they're on your side they might join in with you in trying to convince their colleagues to sign up as well.

Creating a team spirit creates a buzz around the idea of joining – after the negative elements you have talked about (insecurity, low pay etc) – we should make joining feel like a positive, even fun act.

Remember – the whole conversation should feel like a five minute story – start with a welcoming open (hi have you seen our advert?) create dramatic tension

(all the possible threats our services can deal with), and end with a feel good ending (joining the team that can help).