

communicating **CUPE**

CANADIAN UNION OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES




How
to
reach
members
and
the
public

CUPE
On the front line



communicating **CUPE**



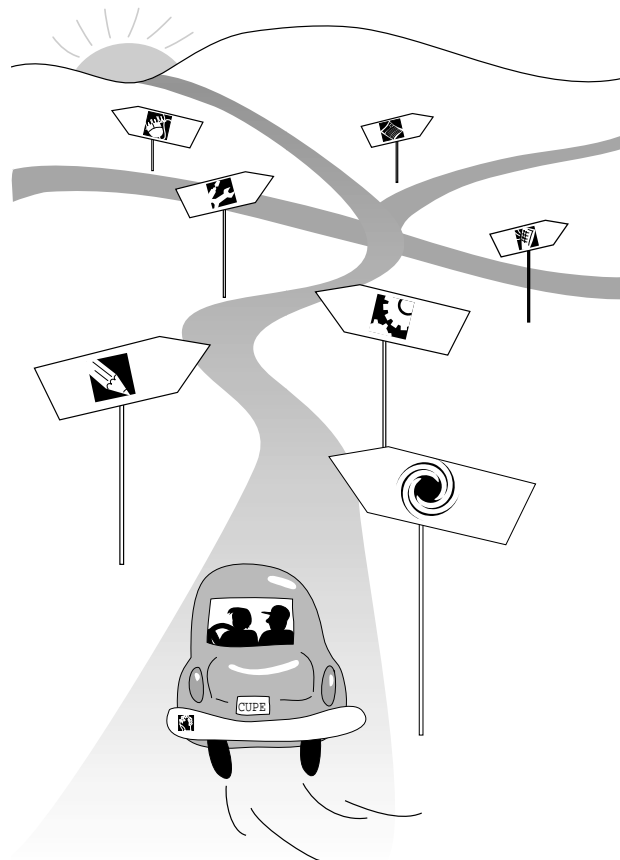
How to reach members and
the public

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What this booklet can do for you

Communicating CUPE is a roadmap to getting and staying in touch with members and the public. It outlines the how-tos of communicating from planning and confirming a strategy to using tools like a local newsletter, a fax tree or a letter to the editor. It has simple guides on everything from writing and using photographs to coalition building and talking with the media. And remember, help is just an e-mail away at comm@cupe.ca.



Communicating CUPE

How to reach members and the public

Why we must communicate

Each day CUPE members face new challenges on the job. The right-wing agenda to downsize, contract out and privatize is restructuring workplaces and eroding vital public services. Yet studies show the public supports better services, not the latest political whim.

CUPE members know from experience how important our work is to the people who use our services. We know better than any politician or reporter the human consequences of downsizing, cutbacks and other backsliding policies. That's why it's important to voice our concerns and speak up for quality public services and jobs. We know public services best – and should always remember that our front-line experience makes us experts.

Communicating what we know can and does make a difference. Communicating with CUPE members and the public is an essential part of our work as advocates for fair treatment and change that benefits everyone.

Members feel connected

In the local, good communication is the glue that connects members to one another. With it, members feel the union belongs to them. The newsletter gets read, the 1-800 number gets used, and the e-mail message brings an answer to a question. When members feel part of a local, they become activists and that makes the local stronger.

Our work becomes visible

In our communities, good communication makes our work visible. When we join forces with our friends and neighbours in coalitions and local committees, we show the media that we are real people. The public consistently shows support for the public employees it sees. By being visible in our community and letting people know what's really going on in our workplace, we're building support for ourselves and our public services. Whether working as a local or in coalition, we are seen as legitimate voices making an important contribution to public debate.

Communicating with CUPE members and the public is an essential part of building and maintaining support for our public services and jobs.



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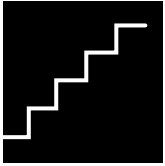
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Getting started



Don't be put off or put down. Start from your own experience. Never forget that you and your co-workers know more about your public services than anyone else and your front-line experience is critically important.

Like any important task – bargaining, health and safety, anti-racism – you'll probably need a committee. Speak to your local president or rep about people they think might want to participate and make sure you have a committee that's representative of your membership.

Posters are a good idea for getting people involved, but nothing beats just asking people. Most people feel good when

they're asked because it shows you think highly of them.

There doesn't have to be an immediate issue to start a communications committee. In fact, it's better to communicate with members before there's an issue because good communications builds a strong local.

When starting your committee, ask each person what they want to see happen. Exchanging opinions allows members to focus on shared ideas about what needs to be done. Your goals can be as simple as increasing attendance at your meetings or encouraging discussion about a major bargaining issue.

The best time to start a communications plan is well before a crisis hits. Being proactive rather than reactive puts time on your side. For example, communications planning should be a part of any negotiations strategy, not hurriedly put in place when a strike, lockout or layoff happens.

Keep your plans simple and doable. Start small and be consistent. You can always add to your success.



How to get what you want - Strategic planning

Good campaigns have a strategy and action plan focused on achievable goals. Make sure someone is assigned to take notes so you'll have an action plan when you've finished strategizing. That's a fancy term for figuring out where you want to go and how you're going to get there. The following sections outline the steps to take.

Strategic planning isn't complicated. Our kids do it when they're figuring out how to stay up beyond their bedtime. We do it when we ask someone out on a date. We prepare for the worst if we're pulled over for a speeding ticket and want to get out of it. Strategic planning is anticipating problems, figuring out how to overcome them and getting what we want. Everyone has the skill to plan strategically. But the steps below will help you do it with success.

Identify the issue

The first step at your strategic planning meeting is to clearly state the situation. It could be a privatization threat or a health and safety problem that is endangering both members and the public. It could be a cutback in members' hours that will mean a cut in public services.

Look for real workplace issues that you can build a campaign around. Since

good communication is always useful, try out your strategies and thoughts on smaller things – maybe getting people to run for a spot on the executive or become a shop steward – before you need communications to save jobs.

How do members see it?

A good communications plan includes speaking to members with differing experiences and opinions: women and men; newcomers and veterans; part-time and full-time. Knowing how your members feel about the issue helps determine a strategy that pulls the local together, not apart. Many locals are made up of diverse memberships with differing racial and cultural backgrounds and language needs, so make sure you reflect the diversity of your membership in the opinions you seek. Members need to see themselves in any campaign for it to work.



Strategy



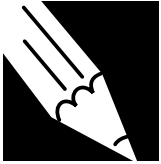
Action



Getting the facts

If you're dealing with a major issue, you need to do some research. Depending on the issue, background information may be available from CUPE's web site or from the Research, Equality, Health and Safety or Legal branches. Ask your rep for assistance in how to access these resources.

You will also want to dig around yourselves for hard facts to support your cause. These do not have to be long research documents. They can be as simple as knowing how your local councillor or trustee voted on a certain issue or the amount of funding your public service receives. They can, of course, be more in-depth and include things such as research briefs, polls or surveys. If your issue has already received media coverage, go back through the newspapers and see if there are any people who may have information you can use.



Again, depending on your sector, regularly attending meetings of your board or municipal council can be immensely valuable.

There are two important things to remember about facts, though. The first is that facts must back up your case but if you're going to the public, you need a human face for any campaign. People care about people – and the stories they remember are ones that involve people. Your campaign must be about people first, with the facts used to support your case.

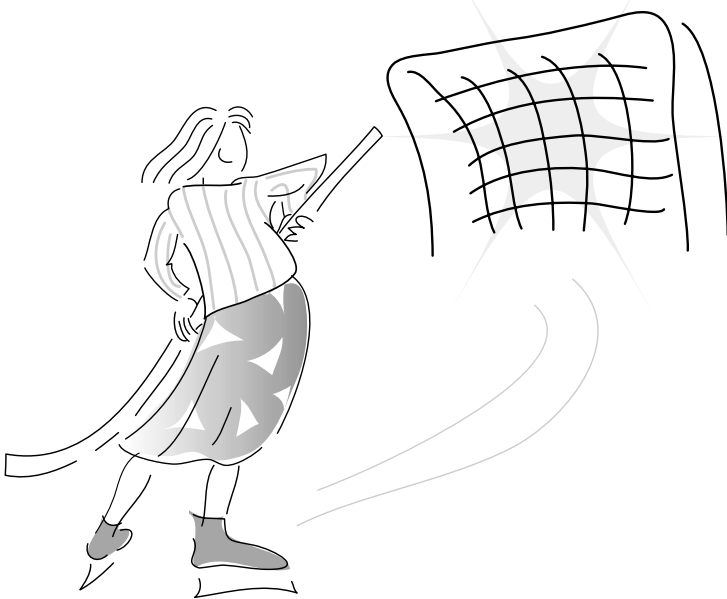
The second is that you should resist the urge to preach with facts. You are right. But let the facts speak for themselves without beating your audience over the head with them.

Solutions and campaign goals

In your strategy session, you need to identify the goal or solution to the issue. What is it you want to achieve? What will resolve the situation?

Be realistic when setting goals. Simply raising public awareness of members' work can be your goal. Getting more people to run for your local executive can be, too. Set a short-term as well as a longer-term goal. Success is easier to achieve in small workable steps.

For example, in the short term you want to stop or minimize the impact of cut-backs or layoffs. In the long run, you want to strengthen your collective agreement language. In each case, you need both membership and public support.



Get your strategy rolling

Here's a checklist of the steps you've taken so far.

You have:

- ✓ *Identified the issue/situation clearly.*
- ✓ *Determined how members view the issue.*
- ✓ *Collected background information, done some research and have your facts straight.*
- ✓ *Set short-term and long-term goals.*

Next you need to identify the people or different audiences you want to talk with.

Identify your audiences

Take a look at the sample 'communications wheel' on page 8 and the explanation of how it works. You don't have to use it, but many locals will find it to be a valuable tool that helps them to think about who they need to talk to. There's a blank wheel included (Appendix A) to help your committee create your own communications plan.

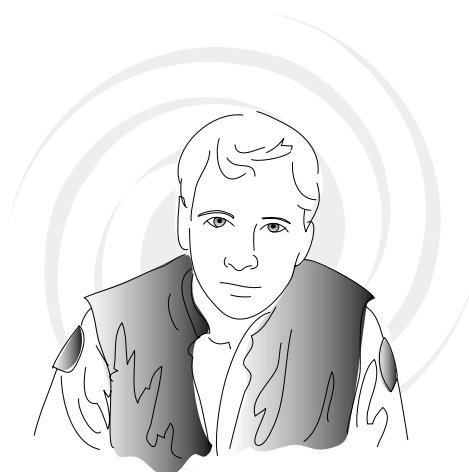
Here's how the wheel works. In the centre spot of the wheel put yourself, your committee or your local union executive. Then work outwards from what you presently know about your union activities.

Think of the groups with which you now communicate – the membership, your employer, other unions. Think about existing or potential coalition groups.

Draw each of them in a larger circle around your small centre circle.

Work your way out by adding rings for each group with which you communicate as well as groups you want to contact. Identify potential allies, such as other like-minded community groups and users of your members' services. In the outer rings, you could draw circles to include politicians whose decisions affect your work. There should be a ring for the media and lastly one for the public.

Think of the circle as making waves. Setting up a communication link with each group in the ring should flow naturally. First, you contact your members. Then you develop allies who will support your campaign. Next you talk to the politicians. Then you use the news media to broadcast the situation. Perhaps you want to have a ring for some paid advertising, depending on campaign funds. Lastly you reach out to the public.



Communications Wheel



For a blank template, see Appendix A, p. 45

Campaign theme and your message/slogan

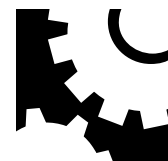
The ‘communications wheel’ makes it easier to brainstorm about what your message will be and then to choose an appropriate catch-phrase or slogan. You want to make sure your slogan will be quickly understood by each audience in your wheel – including something simple enough to be picked up by the media.

Put a few ideas down, e.g., *Keep our kids safe! Our work makes our town work! Neighbours at work for you.* Test them out by asking people their opinions. Elaborate campaigns sometimes use focus groups to do the same thing. Help to refine a slogan is available through CUPE’s Communications Branch.

Think about your service, how our members feel about it and what it means to the public. Sewage treatment workers provide a critical early warning system for environmental hazards and public safety. Other CUPE members, such as social workers, nursing home and child care workers provide important services that make communities a better place to live.

Remember in choosing a slogan or theme for your campaign that it needs to connect with your audience. Your message should appeal to feelings rather than repeat facts. If there are layoffs at your school board, the link to the public is likely to be the negative impact on the quality of their children’s education. If the city is privatizing its water, the link to the public is likely to be concerns over water safety or big water bills. Think of your audience and tailor your message to them.

In some places, you’ll want to communicate your message in more than one language. If you’re in Ottawa or Moncton, for example, an English-only message won’t connect with francophone members. If you’re organizing a campaign to encourage your members to get involved and many of them speak Spanish, it’s probably a good idea to have information available in Spanish.



Seven Cs to good communication

When you’re thinking of a message or slogan for a campaign, keep these seven Cs in mind. If you test your ideas against these goals, you’re more likely to choose a winner.

Clear
Consistent
Concise
Compelling
Creative
Comprehensive
Credible

Timing

Set an overall timeframe for your campaign and look for appropriate peaks in activity. Whether your goal is to sway opinion for an upcoming council vote or stop a pending hospital closure, plan your actions leading up to decision day. Look for openings to communicate your message, such as a visit by the provincial health care minister. If you’re dealing with a board or municipal council, you might want to use their meeting as a focal point since the media are likely to be there.

Campaign event

To launch your campaign, you will probably want to focus on a central action. This could be some kind of public event, such as a demonstration or information picket. It may be a longer-term effort, such as a petition or card collection. Ask yourselves what would draw attention to your issue and win support from your target groups.

members, using the Internet or developing a CUPE Communicator/1 in 10 contact system. (See Tools section)

If you aren't publishing a regular union newsletter, this is your chance to start one. Consider issuing a special campaign bulletin separately or as an insert in your newsletter. (Remember a newsletter doesn't have to be huge. Many locals have only one-page newsletters and they work very well.)

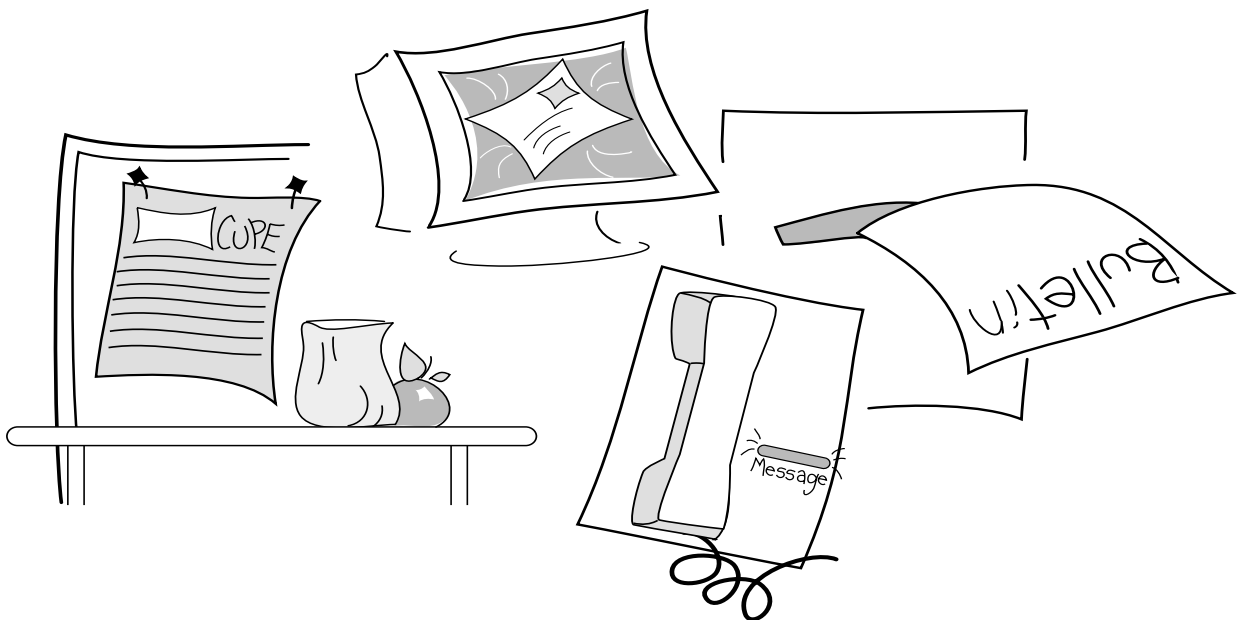
Membership communications

To ensure your members' support, you will need to keep them informed throughout the campaign. How you do this may best be determined by your local union's structure.

It could be as simple as a notice prominently displayed on the local's bulletin board or in the lunchroom. Sometimes using e-mail or group voice mail is best, depending on how your workplace is structured. Other locals may communicate best by bulletin updates faxed to

If many of your membership have access to the Internet, either at work or at home, you might want to consider a web site. For some locals, it may actually be a more cost-effective solution than paying for photocopying and printing. (It doesn't have to be complex or have a dazzling design. Make it simple and easy to update so you can keep it up with a minimum of fuss.)

Check other sections in this Power Tool for more detail about different tools to use when building your communications network.



Public relations

To reach your public audiences, you will want to engage in one or more activities. These could include leafleting, lobbying, petitions, mall displays, coalition building, information pickets, cultural events, political action, etc. Some members have created web sites or used the Internet to fax letters directly to political targets. Never forget – any bit of publicity helps. A letter to the editor of your local paper doesn't take long to write, but helps get out information.

Financing the campaign

It's important to state that a campaign does not have to be expensive to be effective. In fact, many successful campaigns are virtually free. No amount of money replaces hard work and commitment from members and the best way to guarantee success is to get as many members involved in a campaign as possible.

That said, some campaigns do cost money. If you are spending, it's important to list your campaign materials, quantities, costs and deadlines. Call your local unionized printer for estimates. Contact your local Internet provider and find out about getting a web site hosted. Get estimates on advertising in places that best reach your target audience, if you think you need advertising to get your message out. Don't forget – advertising isn't always the answer and almost never works unless there are members doing something to back it up.

Don't forget to identify all possible expenditures (travel, office equipment, supplies, lost wages for bookoffs, mailing, printing, distribution, web design and hosting charges, etc.).

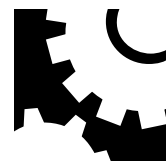
Your campaign may qualify for financial help from CUPE National. Working with your CUPE rep and a Communications representative you can make a request to cost-share expenses for certain types of campaigns.

Local unions may also want to work with provincial divisions and sector committees to gain access to cost-sharing. This can sometimes be done by incorporating local campaigns into broader provincial ones, but it can't be stressed enough that a campaign does not have to be big to be successful.

Measuring success, shifting gears

Build a concrete measure of success into your campaign so you know how well you're doing. Include a mail-back coupon if you're leafleting. Give people a chance to respond by using a feed-back phone line. If you have a web site, make sure your site allows people to send comments to you and tracks how many people visit your site and where they're visiting from.

Hold regular evaluation meetings of your team. It's important to be aware of the impact your campaign is having so you can shift gears and make appropriate changes. Be flexible and remember to evaluate what you're doing as you go.



Rocking the boat

Don't be put off if your campaign generates a negative reaction. Rocking the boat is bound to make waves. In fact, if you get some people angry it's probably a sign you're doing something right. Get help before you plan something that you or your members have doubts about. For example, there are resource materials available that explain libel and other issues. Always inform yourself. Remember, help is available through your rep and CUPE's Communications Branch.



To do checklist:

- ✓ *Identify the issue.*
- ✓ *Find out how members see it.*
- ✓ *Gather background facts.*
- ✓ *Set goals.*
- ✓ *Develop campaign message and slogan.*
- ✓ *Target your audiences.*
- ✓ *Refine your timing.*
- ✓ *Plan your campaign event.*
- ✓ *Communicate with your members.*
- ✓ *Decide how to go public.*
- ✓ *Plan your finances.*
- ✓ *Set up ongoing evaluation.*

Communications tools

Connecting with members

Your strategy and action plan are drafted. Now you need some tools to do the job.

The first set of tools involves ways to reach out and connect with members. Members are the campaign. Without membership support, leaders are frustrated and the union can't act as a unified group.

A good communications network raises the union's profile. It says members are organized and ready to fight smart no matter what the issue. It sends a signal to management as well.

Think about using more than one tool to ensure you reach different members. Use the tools best suited to your workplace.



Here are some pointers:

Meetings

- Have something new to say.
- Advertise the issue.
- Keep on track.
- Make meetings shorter.
- Try lunch hours or alternative times.
- Choose convenient location, e.g. at worksite, by department.
- Arrange for interesting guest speakers.
- Encourage listeners to speak and talkers to listen.
- Consider childcare.
- Always post meeting minutes on the union bulletin board.

One-on-one

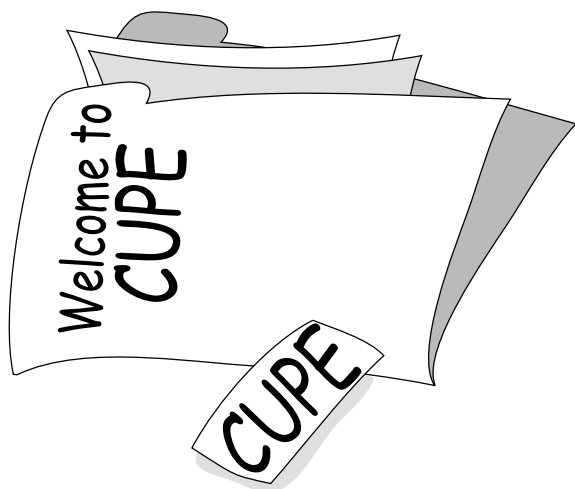
- Get out and talk with members.
- Identify natural leaders and keep them informed.
- Have a way for individual members to reach the union.
- Offer union 'office' hours.
- Practise good listening skills.
- Show you care with personal attention.
- Act quickly to deal with members' concerns.
- Make sure the atmosphere is inviting.
- Prepare a kit of union material to welcome new members.

Raise your union's profile

- Lead by example.
- 'Toot your own horn' and self-promote your local's members and their successes.
- Be ready with positive alternatives to management's agenda.
- Build confidence. Get the answers and results out to members.
- Develop a positive image with community involvement.
- Use the bulletin board and make it more appealing.
- Distribute union promotional materials (e.g., pins, posters, etc.).
- Set up union suggestion boxes in visible locations.
- Have a steward in the mailroom or switchboard to reach people.

Support activism

- Reach out to new members, young members and members from different backgrounds.
- Invite observers to grievance and other meetings to learn.
- Delegate small duties to make people feel more involved.
- Offer education opportunities.
- Offer per diems and cover child care costs.
- Involve people in committees such as EAP (Employee Assistance Program).
- Recognize members' work in the community.



Organize

- Set up phone trees (each member phones two or three others, who then phone others until the whole membership is covered). A phone tree template is provided in Appendix B, page 47, along with instructions.
- Set up a fax tree (same as the phone tree).
- Use group voice mail (check with your phone service provider for details).
- Set up a local union hotline for messages – larger locals may need a toll-free number.
- Prepare scripts for phone messages; have multilingual members voice them.
- Create an e-mail list of union members. Put up a web site for your local.
- Identify natural leaders from different backgrounds and work sites.
- Create a Communicator/1 in 10 net work (see page 16).



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- *Sponsor a free lunch.*
- *Offer union videos for members to watch at home.*
- *Start 50/50 draws.*
- *Organize a free social event.*
- *Use banquets, dinners or dances to get together.*
- *Organize 'free speech' sessions on controversial topics.*
- *Offer small prizes for trivia questions based on collective agreement.*
- *Print a T-shirt with your local's logo.*
- *Use 'freebies' to grab attention.*
- *Start a community radio or cable show.*

Communicator/1 in 10 network

In many local unions it's often the busy executive or shop stewards who distribute union materials to the general membership. While this may work for some, even a good distribution system is not a communications network.

are not expected to have answers to members' questions or handle grievance issues. They simply are a channel for questions or answers and verbal or written union information. It takes only a few minutes to give something to 10 people in a Communicator's immediate work area, but once this system is up and running, you'll wonder how you managed without it.

The CUPE Communicator/1-in-10 network is set up to get people talking to people, not just shuffling paper. It should be a goal for all locals because, quite simply, it works.

Member communicators take on the job of communicating with 10 other members in their direct contact area. Communicators are expected to introduce themselves to their member groups.

They are then responsible for talking about and circulating (or collecting) any materials channelled through them by the local's executive. Communicators

There are two advantages to this system. The first is that it is the fastest way to distribute information and guarantee it is read by everyone – crucial if an important decision needs to be made. The second is that it ensures the union is always visible to all the members and, when it works well, provides a two-way flow of information: the executive to the membership through communicators; with communicators telling the executive what the membership thinks.

Here are steps to set up your CUPE Communicator/1-in-10 network:

1. *Draft a map of where members are located within your union local.*
2. *Within each area, divide members into groups of 10 persons.*
3. *Look for a person within each group to act as a CUPE Communicator*
4. *Ensure Communicators are drawn from all departments/areas and are representative of the workplace.*
5. *The member Communicator should be able to make conversation easily and be interested in union affairs*
6. *Once Communicators are assigned for each area, talk with them and ensure they know what to do.*
7. *Clearly define the Communicator's role as simply a two-way channel for information.*
8. *Make sure Communicators understand their role is not to answer complicated questions or grievance issues but to refer them to a steward or executive for action.*
9. *Let all members know the network exists and how it will operate.*
10. *Distribute buttons to help Communicators make themselves visible and easily identified.*
11. *Meet with Communicators regularly to resolve difficulties and act on suggestions.*

Start a union newsletter

News is information people don't know about. A letter is a relaxed style of writing. And a newsletter is a very useful tool for keeping union members in the loop and involving them in the local's activities.

A successful newsletter is always a group effort, tapping into the talent and energy of as many people in the local as possible. Here are some other tips for success:

1. Keep your newsletter full of what's new and write in a simple, easy-to-read manner.
2. Use lots of familiar names and local references. Make people, not things, the centre of your stories.
3. Publish the facts. Keep your members informed about what's happening in the workplace, the local union and your community labour scene.
4. Issue your newsletter often. A short, regularly published newsletter gets members used to seeing it.
5. Make sure you have your facts straight and pay attention to details. Members care about how their names are spelled. Your credibility is on the line.
6. Use design tricks, cartoons and photographs to give your newsletter reader appeal. For sample newsletter see Appendix C, page 48.
7. Invite members to contribute their skills, e.g., writing stories, computer layout or sketching cartoons.
8. Draft an editorial policy and publish it. The newsletter is an open forum for all members but the local union is responsible for respecting individual rights, legalities and editing items for good taste.
9. Consider the diversity of your membership. Can your newsletter be read by all members? Are there ways to reach out to reflect cultural and language differences?
10. Ask your rep about Communications workshops offered during education schools. On occasion, special sessions can be arranged for groups or newsletter design templates can be created for locals.



CALM

Have your local union join CALM, the Canadian Association of Labour Media. CALM supports local newsletter editors with up-to-date union news, good graphics and cartoons. The organization also holds a yearly conference with workshops including ones for new editors. (For more info, see CALM in the Resources section).

Distribution ideas

A newsletter has to get to people to get read. Here are some tips about how to get it into members' hands:

- Circulation boosters – puzzles, quizzes, contests, raffles (a free dinner for two, or a movie?).
- Workplace handout – provides direct contact with members.
- Start a CUPE Communicator/1 in 10 network system.
- Employer office mail system where practical.
- Faxing to departments or members' homes where available.
- E-mailing to members with home computers or posting on the local union web site.
- Direct mail to member's homes where it can be read by spouses and children, too.
- Remember to put it on the union bulletin board.
- Consider wider distribution; other unions, local politicians, local reporters or labour publications.



Writing

Writing is hard for most people. Here are a few ideas to keep it simple and easy. Remember, good writing rules apply to all written communication within the union local.

Style

1. Write short. Short words. Short sentences. Short paragraphs. Short stories.
2. Get to the point. Your readers will appreciate it.
3. Adopt a conversational, informal tone.
4. Get it right. Factual errors, spelling errors and half-truths work against you.
5. Use lots of names in your stories. People love to see their names in print or names of people they recognize.
6. Spell all names correctly.
7. Action words, especially verbs, pack more power than longer ones.
8. Show, don't tell. Use examples.
9. Don't overuse adjectives and adverbs.
10. Avoid union rhetoric and jargon of all kinds.
11. Stress the positive. A negative tone can turn people off.
12. Don't use racist, sexist and homophobic terms.

Structure:

1. Gather all your facts; organize them in priority by putting the most important one first.
2. Decide what you want to stress. What is your 'lead' or first paragraph?

3. Make your lead an attention-grabber. Keep it topical.
4. Include the five Ws (Who, What, When, Where, Why) and the How, and keep an eye on what it means to members.
5. Add other details in descending order of importance.
6. Double-check the story for accuracy.
7. Edit yourself for grammar, spelling, punctuation – or, even better, get someone else to edit.
8. Rewrite, if necessary.

Fact gathering

1. Do your homework before the interview.
2. Make a list of questions. Use the five Ws to guide you.
3. Get quotes to add human interest and let people speak for themselves.
4. Find out what it means to members.
5. Don't be afraid to ask dumb questions.
6. Save touchy questions until last when the person is more at ease.
7. Ask the person to slow down or repeat as necessary.
8. Get more information than you need.
9. Call the person back to ensure accuracy.

Story ideas and sources

1. Profile members and leaders at work and at home.
2. Promote the benefits of being in the union.
3. Highlight important decisions at meetings.
4. Announce special meetings, speakers.





5. Contract negotiations.
6. Grievance settlements and arbitrations.
7. Nominations and elections.
8. Announce union activities such as education classes, social events, summer schools, campaigns, picnics, sports, etc.
9. Features on pensions, benefits, employment insurance, workers' compensation, or anything else members are talking about.
10. Reprint stories from CUPE's web site or publications.

Headlines

Readers decide what to read based on headlines that catch their attention.

1. Give real information; show why the story matters.
2. Use specific words that hit home.
3. Use action verbs in the present tense.
4. Keep it short and simple (one to five words).
5. Avoid weak and over-used words.
6. Skip words with double meanings.

Copyright and libel

According to the federal Copyright Act, all original articles, cartoons and photographs are copyrighted. This means that the right to copy them is held by their creator, and you must get permission before doing so. You have permission to use anything from CUPE's web site or CUPE publications and from CALM, if you're a member.

Libel is the printed form of defamation. You defame someone when you publish or say things that hurt their reputation, or cause other people to ridicule or hate them. Calling someone a liar, a thief, or incompetent at their job is defamatory if it is untrue. If you have a bone to pick with someone, stick to the facts of the matter in dispute. Let your readers draw their own conclusions.

Handbooks produced by CALM are available on both topics. Contact CUPE Communications for a copy or see CALM in the Resources section.

Editing

Editing means to revise for the better. Everyone needs editing. Here's a brief guide:

1. Ask yourself the following questions, then edit:
 - Did you understand the story?
 - Did you get the main point?
 - Did you have to read some sentences twice?
 - Are there words you don't understand?
 - Does the writing sound natural?
 - Does the article leave questions unanswered?

2. Editing takes diplomacy. Be sensitive to the writer and her/his work but be tough for your readers' sakes:
 - Don't edit by whim or to your personal taste.
 - Criticize in a constructive spirit. Don't rewrite stories yourself; help the writer do it.
 - Don't change things without telling the writer.
 - Be nit-picky; better to get it right.

3. Editors clarify, correct inaccuracies, proof-read:
 - Check for accuracy; make sure the story tells the truth, doesn't distort or mislead.
 - Eliminate libellous statements. Review for fairness and good taste.
 - Correct grammar, spelling and punctuation. It adds to your newsletter's credibility and wins membership respect.
 - Simplify. Cut the fat (e.g., 'in order to' can often be cut to read 'to' as in 'to do the job...').
 - Avoid repetition; clarify confusing statements; define technical terms, spell out acronyms at least once in the story (e.g., P3s are public private partnerships).



Eediting
means to
revise for
the
better.

Design



1. Good design makes an impression and engages readers
2. The flag is the publication's name. It should be instantly readable and set the mood for the publication.
3. The masthead identifies who writes, edits and puts together your newsletter.
4. Include your address, phone or e-mail in the masthead so readers can reach you.
5. Front pages usually carry two to four stories plus a visual.
6. Colour, then shape, catches the eye.
7. Boxes break up text and draw attention.
8. Put at least one picture or graphic on each page.
9. Make body type and size easy to read.
10. Leave white space, breathing room for easy reading.
11. Use narrow columns for short stories, wider ones for longer features.
12. Underlining makes text hard to read. Use bold or clear italics type instead.
13. Keep it simple. Too many typefaces, shapes and decorative elements compete.

For a full sample newsletter, see Appendix C, page 49.

Steward News...

PUBLICATION FOR CUPE ACTIVISTS IN ALBERTA

NUMBER 1

Welcome to the first edition of our newsletter for Shop Stewards. As CUPE's Education Representative here in Alberta, I meet many stewards throughout the province at Effective Stewarding workshops. Often, the same questions are asked again and again - how do I help employees who get disciplined, what do I do if co-workers can't seem to get along together, how do I read certain parts of the contract.

Discipline Issues

Stewards often attend meetings with Management where an employee is being disciplined. Here are some things that a steward should know in order to help an employee who is being disciplined:

Insubordination

Sometimes, employees can run into trouble because they refuse to carry out an instruction given to them by their supervisor or manager. This is called insubordination. Here are the main elements that must be present in order for an accusation to be upheld:



"Working a shift at Rail City Industries is a labour of love. We care about our residents and clients. We're like a family."

We're Worth More!



CUPE
Canadian Union of Public Employees

SOS
CUPE NOVA SCOTIA

Campaign update

Code red for healthcare

The Nova Scotia Government recently released information regarding cuts to Health Care in Nova Scotia. Here's a breakdown of the cuts:

Western Region - According to Local 4150 President, Brother Carl Crouse, cutbacks in the Western Region amount to \$4.6 million.

- × closure of 37 hospital beds across the region;
- × closure of Obstetrics and Day Surgery at Digby General;
- × elimination of administrative and clerical positions in Mental Health; and

Chaos in the classroom

The Tories' recent provincial budget also dealt a blow to Scotia's education system. Boards were sent scrambling for trim budgets that were seriously inadequate to our needs of children in our schools.

- × The province imposed a 10% salary increase on the Victoria Regional School Board budget. The cuts result in layoffs to cleaning, maintenance, library staff and secretaries. Teacher aids had their hours reduced from six to 5.5 hours per day.

Campaign to target Tories

Premier John Hamm's scheme to slash vital government services hit a major stumbling block this spring as CUPE Nova Scotia officially kicked off the Save Our Services 2000 and Beyond.

The province-wide, three-year fight-back campaign is aimed at forcing the Conservatives to

Photos

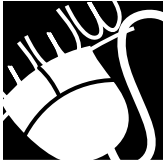
1. Have an idea of what you want to convey before you point the camera and shoot.
2. Think about how the photo will be used.
3. Knowing what you want makes it easier to be confident when posing subjects.
4. Get closer. A good photograph of a person makes eye contact with the reader.
5. Show faces, smiling when appropriate. Line-ups of committees or groups don't work.
6. Watch out for background objects, e.g., the pole or tree appearing to stick out from someone's head.
7. Be prepared to capture natural action, e.g., shaking hands, planting a tree, walking the picket line.
8. Be inventive. Take control and ask people to pose so you can get the photo you want.
9. Photos in your union newsletter should reflect the diversity of your local's membership.
10. Remember a good picture is worth a thousand words.



Photo samples from our archives



Start a local web site



As locals grow larger and cover greater distances – and as CUPE members are increasingly surfing the net – more locals are creating their own web sites. They needn't be expensive to build or update and distribution costs are minimal.

Like newsletters, web sites are most successful when they're the product of a collective effort. There are lots of on-line tutorials available on how to make web pages. And you can purchase or download programs that make layout and design easy.

In building a web site, the first step is to plan before you move on to collecting the material or actually setting up the site.

This stage is at once the most obvious and the most neglected. You need to figure out what your site is going to

look like, but also how the information will be organized and how people will get around your site.

Be realistic about what you can produce and how often you can update it. Figure out how much time your web committee has to work on the site every day, week or month. Then figure out how much you can get done in that time and plan your site accordingly.

It takes no more time to build an attractive web site that's easy to use than a poor site that's unlikely to get repeat visitors. Think through how your site can help your members get information, give feedback, order materials, download forms or communicate among themselves. The Internet is interactive so it presents all sorts of new possibilities for involving and mobilizing members.

Some hints:

- *Look at other locals' web sites and see what you think would work best for your local.*
- *Consider who your audience is. Are they activists, rank and file members of the local, the public, the media? What kind of information would be most appropriate for each?*
- *Draw a flow chart or arrange index cards on the floor or on a bulletin board, listing contents and links.*
- *Plan how you're going to get your content: who will write it, who will format it and who will post it?*
- *Content is key. People won't return to the site if there's no reason to.*
- *Include an e-mail link to the local so visitors can ask questions, make comments and provide feedback on topical issues – and on the site.*
- *Include a link to CUPE's web site to access bargaining tips, health and safety information or campaign materials.*
- *It's a good idea to include images but they shouldn't overwhelm the site. Graphics take time to download and most users don't want to wait more than 45 seconds for a page to appear. If nothing shows up, they'll move on.*

When you've done your planning, gather together all the text and all the images for your site in a single place.

Computers have been part of union life for long enough now that a lot of the information is already in electronic form. For example, your collective agreement may be on disk.

It's not complicated to format files so train several members of your local to do it. That way, it will be easier to quickly post new items to your site.

Remember, people are more likely to scan a web page than read it. So instead of posting long documents to the web, you might want to post a summary and provide a link to the full text.

Visitors to your site don't want to have

to scroll down to find what they're looking for so don't bury the highlights.

- Keep items short.
- Put the most important facts up front.
- Use bullets and meaningful sub-heads to make it easier to focus in on key points.
- Provide links to background information.
- Avoid scrolling sideways.



Keep your site up to date. Visitors are looking for practical, timely information. Update calendars and remove out-of-date notices regularly. If you can only manage a monthly update, don't highlight dates and avoid words like "the latest" or "updated." Avoid distracting gimmicks that quickly become annoying.

Sample web page from our cupe.ca site



Web design



- Good design offers a clean, fresh look.
- Pages download quickly.
- First page and home page fit into a standard screen (640 x 460).
- Important material on other pages fits into the same 640 x 460 screen.
- Graphic elements (photos, subheads, pull quotes) help to break up large areas of text.
- Every web page in the site looks like it belongs to the same site.

Navigation

- Navigation buttons and bars are easy to understand and use.
- A large site has an index or a site map.
- Frames, if used at all, don't get in the way.
- Navigation appears consistently and with a consistent look.
- Links to contact e-mail or e-mail forms are part of site navigation.
- All pages have links to get you back to where you started.

Links

- Link colours coordinate with page colours.
- Links are underlined so they are instantly clear.
- Links tell the visitor where they are and what page they're going to.

Text

- Background does not interrupt or dominate the text.
- Text body type is easy to read.
- The most important information is up front.
- Columns of text are narrower than in a book to make reading easier on the screen.

Graphics

- Buttons are clear but don't dominate.
- Graphics enhance but don't distract.
- Graphic links have a matching text link.
- Animated graphics turn off by themselves.
- Graphic elements repeat from page to page for a unified appearance and faster downloading.
- Graphic tags use height and width attributes to speed downloading.
- Tables are used to position page elements and defend the proportions of your page.

Using the News Media

The most effective way to get your message to the public is usually through the news media: print, radio and television. While advertising may be the first thing your local union thinks about, it is often costly and needs careful consideration.

Getting your issue picked up by the news media takes planning and some basic skills. A reporter's job is to talk with real people just like you to get to the heart of the story.

CUPE members know first-hand what's happening in the workplace and how decisions affect the people who use our services. As front-line workers, you know more than the reporter does. It's a good idea to identify several members who feel comfortable speaking with reporters. Then choose one who will serve as the main spokesperson and steer reporters to them. Use this guide to prepare. Remember, help is available through your CUPE rep and the Communications Branch.

When thinking about the media, don't forget about the alternative and community media. They're often far more sympathetic to unions than the Globe and Mail, National Post or other large dailies. Most large cities have an "urban weekly," which is usually free; and sometimes peace, environment,

women's and gay and lesbian newspapers. Media are also sometimes centred on a specific community, such as First Nations people or African-Canadians. If these operate in your area, they should be included in any plans you have. There are also province-wide alternative media in places such as Saskatchewan (*Briarpatch*) as well as community radio stations and cable TV channels throughout the country.

Personal contacts are more effective than a news release. Keep track of who's reporting on what issues and follow up by phone or e-mail with additional information. On-going contact will help develop a relationship of trust. Then reporters will seek you out for comment.

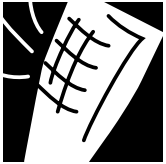
Not making any headway with the reporter who covers your issues? Try columnists or commentators and build contacts with them. Maybe a background briefing with the editorial board or producers will help.

Remember that reporters have a lot of issues on their plate, limited resources and deadlines to meet. Keep releases short and to the point. Keep interviews and news conferences brief. Return calls promptly and give ample notice of events, when possible.



What is news?

News is information people need to make rational decisions about their lives in a democracy. It's a break from the normal flow of events, something new.



News is information people need to make rational decisions about their lives in a democracy.

Reporters personalize and dramatize their stories to catch readers' interest and to capture the feeling of being there. What is newsworthy is often determined by factors called news value. Here are some examples:

Impact – events that affect many people, e.g., an airline strike or a major storm.

Timeliness – events that are immediate or recent, e.g., election results, how workers vote in tight negotiations.

Prominence – events with well-known persons or institutions, e.g., CUPE's National President draws media as the representative of hundreds of thousands of CUPE members across Canada.

Conflict – events reflecting clashes between people or institutions, e.g., fist-waving protestors on the steps of Parliament.

Bizarre – events that deviate sharply from everyday life, e.g., an unemployed worker who wins a lottery.

Currency – events and situations being talked about, e.g., the ongoing cut-backs and changes to health care.

Media Relations

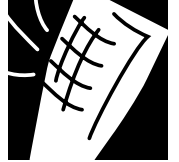
1. Have a strategy/action plan to follow. If you're planning a media campaign, speak to your Communications rep for help in

developing a strategy and your main message.

2. Inform your members, make sure they grasp the issue and support it.
3. Know what your message is and make sure it is news. If you try to get coverage for non-news, it will harm you when you have real news to communicate.
4. Be able to say it in a few sentences. Reporters are looking for a good quote from you that sums up your side of the story.
5. Let the media know how to reach you and be available at the phone number you give them.
6. Contact your potential allies, e.g., labour council, politicians, community leaders. Try to visit them personally. Explain the issue.
7. Consider a joint effort. When all the unions in a workplace act together, the media takes notice.
8. If approached by the media, don't say 'no comment.' If you can't respond right away, tell the reporter you'll get back to them with an answer. If you can't comment, find someone who can.
9. Try to prepare a simple one-pager of facts and/or basic background information for the media about your union local and whom you represent. Don't assume reporters know that CUPE stands for the Canadian Union of Public Employees or what kind of work members do.
10. Prepare a list of the news media contacts for your area.
11. Help is available through your CUPE rep or CUPE's Communications Branch.

Being interviewed

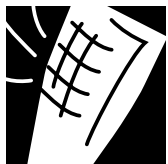
1. **Who talks?** Whoever says it best and can make a point in a 10- or 20-second sound-bite or quote. Front-line workers have a great deal of credibility with the public.
2. **Be prepared.** Think what questions you might be asked and how you might answer them. 'No comment' wastes an opportunity to get your message out.
3. **If you don't know, don't make it up.** Tell the reporter you will get back to them.
4. **Listen carefully.** If you don't understand the question, ask the reporter to repeat it.
5. **Need a little time?** Ask the reporter to repeat the question while you are thinking of how you will phrase your comment.
6. **Avoid yes/no answers.** The reporter wants you to tell your story.
7. **Expect repetitive questions.** It's a technique to get short, jargon-free answers from you.
8. **Appearances.** Don't wear gaudy clothing. Don't chew gum. Skip sunglasses and hats that shadow eyes. Wear your union button where the camera can pick it up.
9. **Remain calm.** Turn negative questions into positive answers.
10. **Stress your main point.** "I'll have to speak with my members before commenting on that point but what I can say is (and stress your main message again in another way)."



Interview tips

- Know what you want to communicate.
- Gear your message to your target audience.
- Listen carefully.
- Speak as naturally as possible, using clear language.
- Quick, direct answers are more effective.
- Use concrete examples. Experience is more persuasive than rhetoric.
- Avoid scripted answers. One good quip is better than an excellent speech.
- When you have answered the question, stop.
- Talk about "we" and "our members" rather than "they."
- Emphasize broader community's interest.
- Be comfortable.
- Watch your 'ums' and 'ahs'.
- Beware the "What you're saying is..." from a reporter.
- Look at the interviewer, not the camera.
- Speak the truth. Never lie.
- Don't get bogged down in details.
- Don't hesitate to repeat your main message.

Letters to the editor



1. Keep it short (300 words is good, 150 is better, 50 best).
2. Focus on your strongest argument. Get across one strong point.
3. Expect to be edited for length, grammar and to fit the paper's 'style.'
4. Keep it timely and topical, e.g., refer to a previously published article.
5. Write while people are still talking about the issue.
6. Keep it simple and clear.
7. Localize the issue.
8. Be specific. Give details and straight facts.
9. Be positive and stress alternatives.
10. Be courteous. Attack issues and policies, not people.
11. Be accurate. One mistake damages your credibility.
12. Sign your letter, e.g., Sangeeta Jones, President, Local 999, Health care workers, Canadian Union of Public Employees. Include a phone number.
13. In some cases, your local paper might run a longer article as a commentary opposite its editorial page.

Sample letter to the editor

Editor:

In the months since the small Ontario town called Walkerton leapt onto our front pages, concern about public infrastructure has taken on a new urgency.

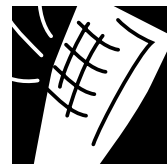
Across the country drinking water and waste water systems are in critical need of upgrading and repair. Walkerton is the starkest example of a network of services and systems that desperately needs to be not just patched, but rebuilt. Poorly funded public systems are in danger of failing other communities.

CUPE has been warning about the dangers of water downloading, deregulation and privatization since 1997. We represent the front-line workers who deliver water across Canada. We have also been calling for renewed public funding to pay for these vital systems – not so-called public private partnerships, which bring new risks.

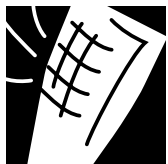
There are those who claim the only way we can meet the urgent need for investment in water services is to turn to the private sector. But the experience in Canada and around the world has shown that water privatization is bad for public health, taxpayers and the environment.

As the community of Walkerton rebuilds and recovers, we can only hope that what flows from this tragedy will be a renewed commitment from all levels of government to strengthen and support public water systems.

Spokesperson
Local XXXX
Canadian Union of Public Employees
(include contact information)



News releases



1. Make a list of the facts.
2. Be accurate. Check your facts.
3. Be honest.
4. Speak from your own experience. Remember you know more about it than the reporter does.
5. Make sure you have 'news' to report (Check previous item 'What is news?').
6. Keep your writing simple: short, everyday words and sentences.
7. Avoid jargon.
8. Use direct quotations from a person involved in the story.
9. On first mention, use full names. Then use initials or last names when it's a person's name.
10. Spell names correctly.
11. Consult a news writing stylebook (e.g. The Canadian Press) or contact the Communications Branch for help.
12. Make sure you provide a contact name, phone number and if you have one, web site address so the media can reach you.
13. Fax, e-mail or hand deliver your news release to your list of media contacts.
14. Make sure your news releases are posted to your web site in an easy-to-find location.
15. Follow up your news release with a phone call to each media outlet to ensure receipt.

Sample news release

Use your CUPE letterhead or create a campaign logo

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Today's date

ONE IN THREE WORKERS STRUCK, BITTEN OR KICKED

SMITH'S TOWN, Alberta – A survey of employees at the local nursing home shows that 35 per cent of aides have been struck, bitten or kicked on the job during the last two years.

"We knew there was a problem, but we didn't realize how widespread the abuse of staff by the home's residents had become," said Juan Shymanski, president of CUPE XXX, which represents the 75 nursing home aides.

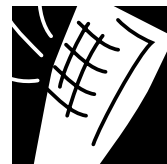
Shymanski adds that the root of the problem isn't unruly senior residents but staffing and program cuts which leave them confused and frustrated.

"There isn't even time for us to offer some personal assistance or chat with residents," said Olivera Hernandez, one of the CUPE aides. "Ten positions have been cut during the last two years and the resulting speed-ups make the place seem more like a factory than a real home."

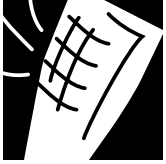
-30-

Contact:

(Insert your name – and those of each person quoted – along with your title and phone numbers where you can be reached. Indicate hours at each phone number if necessary.)



News conferences



1. Contact CUPE Communications.
2. Use news conferences for important news only (e.g., launch of a major campaign).
3. Schedule it to best attract your local news media (e.g., Monday mornings are often busy, Friday afternoons or weekends get poor reporter attendance. Usually 10-10:30 is the best starting time).
4. Avoid other major news events that compete for reporters' attention.
5. Notify media in advance (beginning of week, sending a reminder the day before).
6. Include contact name and phone numbers where you can be reached.
7. Pick a convenient location, one that relates to the story.
8. Make sure the room is big enough. Cameras need space.
9. Ensure there are electrical outlets for media.
10. Use visual material as props and backdrops for speakers.
11. Provide reporters with a copy of the release, fact sheet, short biographies of speakers, etc.
12. Have someone chair, introduce speakers.
13. Refreshments (coffee, tea, juices) are nice but not essential.
14. Keep it short, no more than 30 minutes. Leave lots of room for questions.
15. Be prepared. Practise and coach your speakers beforehand. Identify potential questions and answers.
16. Use members or service users who have been directly affected.

Media Contacts

News conferences aren't the only way to reach the media directly.

You can try:

- *Background briefings*
- *Media 'scrums'*
- *Photo opportunity*
- *One-on-one interviews*
- *Guest – or caller – on talk shows*
- *Meetings with editorial board*
- *Letters to the editor*
- *Commentaries*
- *Phone in to listener talk-back lines*
- *E-mail or web-based news chat lines*



Advertising

Advertising can be an important communications tool when used wisely. In all cases, you must ensure that what you are saying, how you say it and where you place your ads are carefully considered.

You need to make sure your message is targeted to the right audience and the cost is worth the results. The right message can help to build pressure on employers and politicians.

Look at your options: community papers or metropolitan dailies; radio or in rare cases, television; billboards or transit ads; web sites or magazines.

Remember, if your message is being covered in the media, you don't need to buy ads to get your position out. And with rare exceptions, there are cheaper and more effective ways to reach members.

1. Consider these options before using paid ads:
 - Get it free by making it a public service announcement.
 - Get on community cable TV with your message, again for free.
 - For more impact reach your audience directly, and at a lower cost, in their homes with a mail drop or direct mailing.

2. You may opt to use paid advertising when:
 - Your target group is too large to reach any other way.
 - Your target group is concentrated in a small media market area, e.g., a community newspaper delivered to a specific neighbourhood or within a targeted cultural community.
 - To counter management's advertising. Caution: avoid getting into a costly war of words.
 - To boost sagging member morale during a key struggle.
 - To improve your union's image with the general public.
3. Use as few words as possible.
4. Use a large, bold headline that attracts the reader's attention.
5. Use a dramatic photo or eye-catching cartoon or graphic.
6. Consider using members as spokespeople in the ad (as well as cable TV message or public service announcement). Make sure they reflect the diversity of the membership.
7. Buy as big an ad as you can afford. Most small ads are missed. An insert in the weekend paper may be cheaper than an ad and more effective.
8. Consider paying extra for prime positioning so your ad gets more easily noticed.
9. Be prepared to back up your facts in your ad copy. Some media won't let you make claims.
10. Consult with CUPE Communications if you need help.



Working for change



Making waves

Getting noticed. Making a positive impact. That's what communicating is all about. When you publish a leaflet, talk to members, phone reporters, coax administrators, pressure politicians, get involved in elections, you are making waves. You are taking action. In the union movement this is generally called political action.

Many CUPE members have used political action to stop contracting out, budge a stubborn employer, reverse a budget cut, deter the use of volunteers and fight employer demands to cut hours creating more part-time work at the expense of full-time jobs.

CUPE members deliver services to the public. Key policies affecting our work lives are often set by politicians at different levels of government.

The real decision-makers are elected officials – not the personnel manager or the labour relations officer. In fact, electing labour-friendly people to office makes dealing with our immediate managers that much easier.

Going public gives CUPE members an important voice in the democratic process. By working hard with the public, we can pressure elected officials to make sound decisions that benefit both workers and services.

Guidelines for political action

1. Set up a political action committee to focus on educating politicians about your public service.
2. Examine your local's goals and how those goals can be achieved through political action. For example, if you work for a community child care centre and want a fair wage, clearly increased funding for your day care is a political goal.
3. Ask yourself what your members are prepared to do to achieve your goal.
4. Plan your campaign step by step.
5. Remember your message. Does your plan of action reinforce it?
6. Study management and what makes them react positively.
7. Consider a joint action with other unions or forming a public coalition. In some instances, your employer may even be a coalition partner because some services are so under-funded even management realizes the need to lobby for increases.
8. Help shape public views on your issue (leafleting, letters, news conferences, phone calls, UseNet news groups and on-line chats, events, calls to listener feedback lines).

9. Lobby politicians. Remember, politicians are there to be spoken to. They have a responsibility to meet with you or speak with you. They are not doing you a favour. You elected them, you pay their salary and they have an obligation to listen. Lobbying is simply a fancy term for speaking with your elected representatives and leaving behind some written information for them to consider. Don't forget that you will know more about your workplace than they will so don't let them intimidate you.

10. Find out who is on your board or municipal council and ask the following:

- What do they stand for and what was their election platform?
- What do they think about cut-backs, privatization and contracting out? If it's during an election, get them to answer a questionnaire on these issues so you will have something to hold them to if they start to enact anti-worker policies.
- What are their formal political affiliations (are they a Liberal, Alliance, New Democrat, Tory or Bloc)?
- What motivates them to respond, e.g., public pressure or their powerful friends?

11. What can we do between elections?

- Be a watchdog. Get to know politicians. Get them to know us. Go to their meetings so you know what's going on. Monitor their web sites.
- Find friends. Make sure they give us information.
- Develop regular news bulletins or releases which track the issues so you can give them to members.
- Work on campaigns to elect progressive candidates.



Wired for action

The Internet presents all sorts of new opportunities for cyber-activism – taking full advantage of the web and e-mail.

- *Lobby politicians.*
- *Get the goods on employers and governments.*
- *Circulate petitions.*
- *Set up cyber-picket lines.*
- *E-mail protest letters.*
- *Download leaflets.*

Coalition building

More and more CUPE locals are finding themselves in situations where a coalition of groups makes more sense than trying to go it alone. The time invested in bringing groups together pays off in increased clout and credibility.

For example, reporters tend to believe a senior citizens' group, a medical professional or a church committee before they believe a union. Coalitions allow you to present a complete view of your issue – from the perspective of workers, service users and concerned citizens.

This way, more people in the public will see themselves in your campaign.

The first place to start building a coalition is to identify your allies – other groups that share your views on the issue. A word of caution: It isn't always easy to get agreement on the direction of a coalition-led campaign. Coalitions take steady care. Good group-to-group communication is essential and finding compromises that don't water down your position takes care. Be patient!



Here are a few pointers:

1. *Establish contacts early. It is harder to build coalitions in the middle of a crisis.*
2. *Contact labour councils and other unions first. They are our natural allies.*
3. *Contact community associations, women's organizations, environmental groups and social activists. Identify ethnic and cultural groups and organizations with a natural allegiance to your service. For example, friends of medicare for a health care campaign. If you're an arena worker, hockey leagues would be a natural fit.*
4. *Stay in close touch with service user groups (taxpayer's associations, parent-teacher groups, health care consumers).*
5. *Remember: You may have to compromise.*
6. *Also remember: Coalition partners may have a different understanding of group dynamics or little knowledge of unions.*
7. *Consider getting someone on the elected boards of agencies that CUPE members work for. This puts you on the inside.*

Lobbying

We all lobby every day – in our workplace, within our families, within our union local. We may not use that word, but we use the same skills. With persuasion and persistence, we try to help others see our perspective.

Still there can be fears within the union local about actively lobbying politicians. Some members may feel they can't express themselves well enough, especially with someone they think knows more than they do. Yet in many

cases, front-line workers know more about a service than a politician ever will.

With a little experience, you'll find that politicians are just ordinary people from a variety of backgrounds. And they're always responsive to voters. No politician wants to be seen on the wrong side of an issue. Lobbying can help keep them informed.

Acting as a union, members are a powerful lobby group. If we don't speak up, our opponents are the only group to get the ear of the decision-makers.

Most campaigns can benefit from a quiet, behind-the-scenes lobby.

Lobbying can be short-term or ongoing. Petitions are often short-term ways of lobbying politicians to change their minds on a particular decision. Long-term lobbying involves more commitment. It's a year-round effort which can include regular attendance at public meetings, visits with city councillors, coffee with a board member, breakfast with a sympathetic provincial candidate or any ongoing communication with decision-makers.



Here are some ideas on how to lobby:

1. *Be organized. Arrange a meeting with the person you intend to lobby. Phone or write for an appointment. Confirm the time and date. Include background information.*
2. *Look organized. Plan the agenda. Decide on your key points. Choose a spokesperson. Practise what you have to say.*
3. *Ensure your delegation reflects the diversity of your membership and the community you serve.*
4. *Know your audience. Keep your target's special interests in mind. Your goal is to persuade others to support your position.*
5. *Know your subject and stick to it. Be positive.*
6. *Be sure your information is accurate. Don't be afraid to say you don't know the answer to some points. Offer to get back with more information and be sure to follow up.*
7. *Be clear and concise. Don't try to cover too much ground.*
8. *Explain your position. Don't assume your view is understood.*
9. *Speak confidently but be a good listener. Try to identify areas of agreement. Avoid arguments. Don't lecture.*
10. *If your target favours your position, ask for help in identifying and persuading the opposition.*
11. *If the target doesn't, try to leave the door open. Prevent outright rejection of your position. Emphasize areas of common ground, not differences.*
12. *Encourage members to approach different targets, then share your strategies and successes.*
13. *Keep track of the public decisions of those being lobbied.*
14. *Don't give up.*

Staging public events

Not every campaign or issue needs a central event, but these often help to highlight your issue in a public way. Remember, the main purpose of the event is to advance your message.



CUPE members have organized everything from national television shows to street theatre to parades and information pickets. Pick something where you are fairly sure of succeeding. A modest news conference, with proper media

relations work, can be an effective public event. A public announcement of a good deed, if properly promoted, is another possibility.

It's important not to bite off more than you can chew. A public event that bombs can demoralize your supporters and deflate your campaign. Poor attendance will also lose you points with the media.

Here are a few more thoughts:

1. *Be audio/visual. TV and radio need sights and sounds to make their reporting interesting.*
2. *Be creative. Choose an event that will win over the public (e.g., live music, street theatre).*
3. *Be organized. Give everyone a job and make sure it's done.*
4. *Consider giving something away, e.g., healthy eating charts.*
5. *Don't overload the public with information. Stick to your message.*
6. *Make sure you have enough handouts, signs, buttons, etc. (For help in ordering and designing these products, speak to CUPE Communications. Make sure everything is union-made!)*
7. *If you're asking the public to do something, keep it easy and make it quick. They might not write a letter, but they might sign a petition or call a talk-back line.*
8. *Don't have too many speakers at an event. It causes crowds to diminish and the media to lose interest. Make sure your speakers will be available for interviews and that they further your main message.*
9. *Pick a member to be responsible for the media, helping set up interviews and providing background.*
10. *If it's a public protest, make sure the public knows. Posters, a banner on your web site and faxing your allies will help. Ask your allies to promote the event in other ways too: by e-mail and on their web sites.*
11. *If it's a strike or lockout rally, keep it positive. You want to promote your message, not conflict.*
12. *Arrange for a good photograph capturing the essence of your event.*
13. *Use the photo afterward to celebrate your success: in your newsletter, on your web site, in Organize magazine, etc.*
14. *Be courteous and clean up afterwards, recycling as much waste as possible.*

Election politics

Don't assume you have to be an expert on politics to get involved. Most MPs aren't experts on politics either. Your experience as a public employee qualifies you to get involved, as does the very fact you live in this society.

One person can make a difference. Remember the senior citizen who stood up to Brian Mulroney outside the House of Commons? Mulroney wanted to de-index pensions. The senior's words captured the media spotlight when she told him that if he cut her pension, it was: "Good-bye Charlie Brown." That oft-repeated news clip rallied others and was instrumental at getting the federal government to back down.

Elections do matter. Voting does matter. And electing labour-friendly candidates is an important step in building the society we want and the respect we deserve. Working in an election campaign is a great way to meet new people and you don't have to work every day. Any time you can spare would be appreciated by the candidate you choose to support.

The work of many of our CUPE members is affected by local decision-makers: school board trustees, city councillors, provincial officials. It's often easier to get involved at these levels.



Here are some things you can do:

1. *Talk to your friends, neighbours and co-workers about the issues.*
2. *Contact your local labour-friendly candidates and ask how you can help. (If you're not sure who is labour-friendly, call your local CUPE district council, labour council or division.)*
3. *Put up a sign of support on your lawn or in your window.*
4. *Canvass (knock on doors) with your friends promoting the candidate. Or, get on the phone and follow the script that will be provided by the campaign.*
5. *Find out if any CUPE members are running and give them your support.*
6. *Draft an action plan with your CUPE political action committee and then do it.*
7. *Get out and vote!*
8. *Make sure your co-workers vote!*
9. *Stay informed between elections.*
10. *Track your local candidates and their record on the issues. Actively lobby them.*
11. *Think of politics as more than just something that happens at election time.*

Doing what works



Communications work just keeps on going. So you need to evaluate your efforts regularly so you can shift gears, fixing your strategy and action plan as you go. Once a campaign is over, take the time to see what lessons you've learned and what you could have done differently.

Be realistic in your assessment. Look at both your short-term and the longer-term objectives. If you failed to move the employer but succeeded in strengthening the membership, a campaign could still have been a great success. Despite your best efforts, you may get poor media coverage. But if you informed one more person or created a new activist, there's been some benefit.

You want to look at your strategy and action plan, reviewing what worked and what didn't. The goal isn't to criticize or assess blame. It's to identify mistakes that were made and ways to avoid them in future. It's important to value everyone's contribution. Building a union takes a lot of work.

A campaign post mortem – a meeting after the fact to make positive recommendations that get acted on – is a good step. The post mortem will tell you whether you chose achievable goals and what you accomplished.

Here are some ideas on how to measure what works:

1. Ask campaign co-ordinators to file a written report on the campaign.
2. Review media clippings and analyze whether the message got out clearly.
3. Survey members to see if they benefited from the campaign.
4. Listen to what members say in the lunchroom or at break. If they're talking about the things you mentioned or start showing up at more meetings, you've done well.
5. Catalog feedback you got from your web site. How many positive? How many negative? Review your web site statistics. How many visitors? From where? How many returned?
6. For larger campaigns, do an informal survey of the public and see if they're aware of the campaign and your main message.
7. Keep a file with samples of all the materials you produced.
8. Make sure the results of what you learn get used in the next strategy/action plan session.

The best follow-up to a campaign is to launch another one. That takes us back to the strategic planning stage. But this time we've got a lot more experience – and a tested network – to build on.

Keep communicating CUPE!

Where to get help - Resources

Your CUPE representative is the best person to put you in touch with other CUPE resources, e.g., Communications, Research help, etc. Speak to them first.

Cost-shared campaigns are often set up to help local unions fight back and win. Your **CUPE representative** or a **Communications rep** can work with you to prepare a request for support to the National Executive Board. The request sets out the issue, the campaign strategy and a budget, and confirms the local's commitment to pay its share of the costs.

Communications specialists are here to help and in most of the country, work out of your regional office. Talk to your CUPE rep about what you want to do and have them connect you with the Communications Branch's resources.

CUPE's web site is a tremendous support to union communicators, offering the latest news, facts and arguments, story ideas and campaign materials you can download.

CUPE Communications workshops are offered at regular intervals through the education schools co-ordinated by your Education (Union Development) representative. If you need specialized help, speak to your rep about arranging for a course in your region.

CALM, the Canadian Association of Labour Media, is a national co-operative of union newsletters, magazines and TV programs. It provides its member editors with a monthly news and graphics service, computer graphics and a quarterly how-to-newsletter. It also holds an annual editor's conference in the spring of each year, and sponsors an annual awards program for union communication. CALM materials and technical support is offered in English. The organization is supported by dues from member publications, including CUPE National and local unions of CUPE.

Check the CALM web site at www.calm.ca or contact the CALM editor, Rosemarie Bahr, at 1-888-290-2256, roseb@calm.ca or 76 Westmount Avenue, Toronto, ON, M6H 3K1.

The Canadian Labour Congress also has some excellent materials including *Making it clear, a guide to clear writing and design for labour communicators*.

CUPE's Communications Branch can be contacted at 21 Florence Street, Ottawa K2P 0W6. Our e-mail address is comm@cupe.ca, our phone number is (613) 237-1590 and our fax number is (613) 237-5508.



Communications Wheel

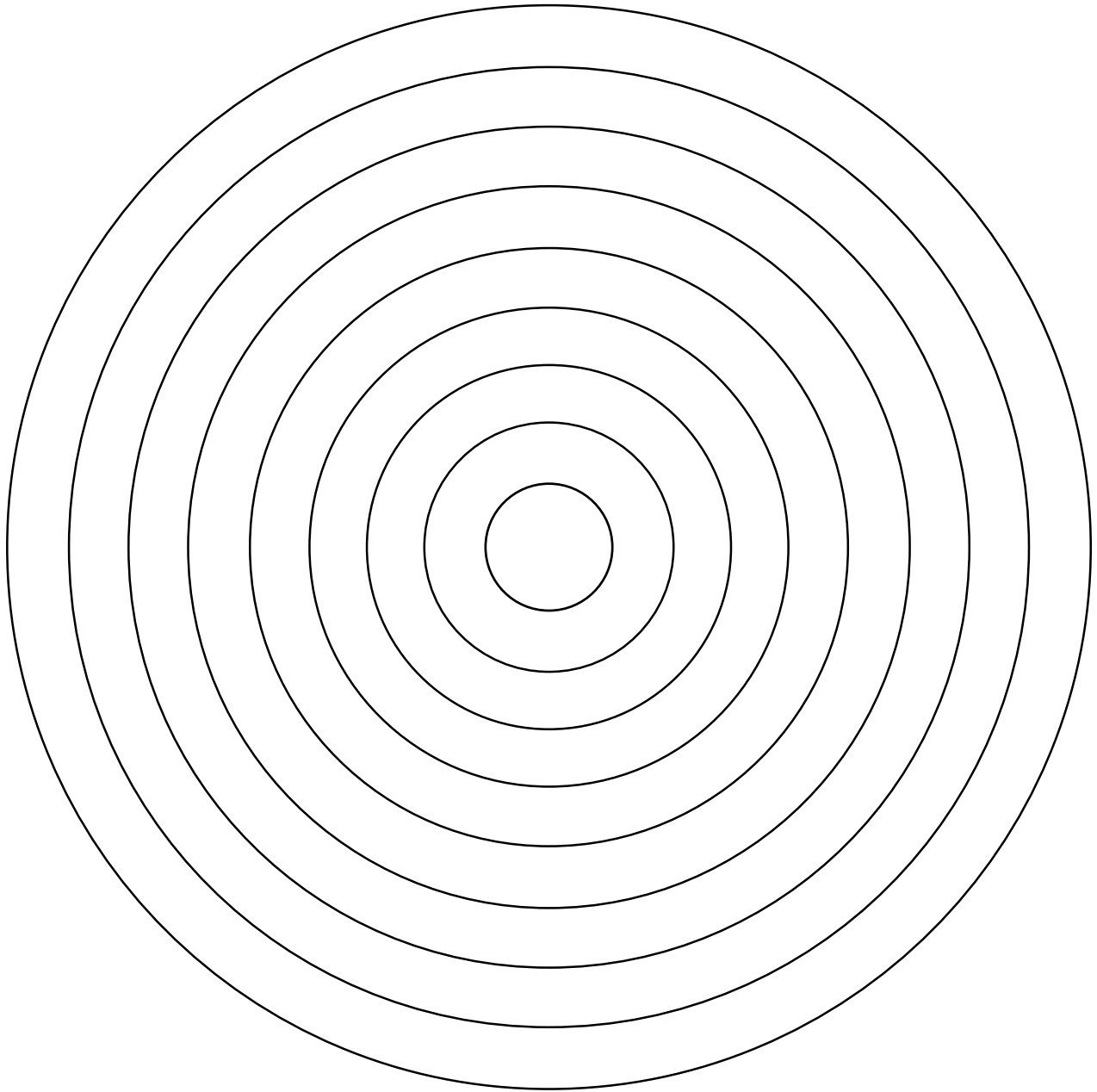
Here's how the wheel works. In the centre circle of the wheel put yourself, your committee or your local union executive. Then work outwards from what you presently know about your union activities.

Think of the groups with which you now communicate – the membership, your employer, other unions. Think about existing or potential coalition groups. Draw each of them in a larger circle around your small centre circle.

Work your way out by adding rings for each group with which you communicate as well as groups you want to contact. Identify potential allies, such as other like-minded community groups and users of your members' services. In the outer rings, you could draw circles to include politicians whose decisions affect your work. There should be a ring for the media and lastly one for the public.

Think of the circles as making waves. Setting up a communication link with each group in the ring should flow naturally. First, you contact your members. Then you develop allies who will support your campaign. Next you talk to the politicians. Then you use the news media to broadcast the situation. Perhaps you want to have a ring for some paid advertising, depending on campaign funds. Lastly you reach out to the public.

Communications Wheel



Use this blank Communications Wheel to brainstorm your own local union strategy.

Organizing a Phone Tree

First, you need a membership list with telephone numbers – work and at home if possible. Then you need an organizational chart of the membership. A thorough knowledge of the various locations and workplaces is essential to organize an effective contact system.

From this point you begin to recruit your initial list of callers. Your best bet is to contact executive members, stewards, committee members and other known activists. You then divide the membership among the number of reliable callers you have recruited.

You should bring the initial callers together to assist in setting up the network. Their job is to recruit contacts in the various work areas and to maintain on-going contact.

It is often useful to have people call people they work with. If some of your members are not comfortable speaking English, group them by language and find a member who can speak with them.

Try to avoid giving too many calls to any person and avoid more than two or three levels of contact. This will prevent breakdowns and decrease the possibility of messages getting confused.

A script should be provided if the message involves something more than basic information such as a meeting or rally date.

Where possible, build in a back-up system. Ideas include designating "back-ups" who can take over the calling if needed, ensuring that at least two different people are called within each work area, and having initial callers at the end of the list as well, so they can make sure the message got out.

Follow-up is critical to the maintenance of an effective telephone tree.

The tree should be tested before it's actually put into operation.

Telephone Tree

Organizing Committee	Key Contacts	Local Contacts
A. _____	<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. _____b. _____c. _____d. _____	<ul style="list-style-type: none">1. _____2. _____3. _____4. _____5. _____6. _____7. _____8. _____9. _____10. _____11. _____12. _____13. _____14. _____15. _____16. _____
B. _____	<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. _____b. _____c. _____d. _____	<ul style="list-style-type: none">1. _____2. _____3. _____4. _____5. _____6. _____7. _____8. _____9. _____10. _____11. _____12. _____13. _____14. _____15. _____16. _____

Sample Newsletter

On the following pages, you'll find a simple, easy-to-use guide to writing and designing a newsletter. Take a look at both its design and content. The sample is set up like an actual newsletter.

Whether you're putting together a one-pager or a longer newsletter, the sample is full of information and helpful tips to get you started.

LET'S COMMUNICATE

NEWSLETTER THE BASICS



Teamwork: Design and Content

One glance at our newsletter should tell readers what our priorities and concerns are. Good design enhances content. It invites people to read what we have to say. No one welcomes a boring invitation.

This newsletter is designed as a sample to guide you. It's full of points to follow when creating your own local union newsletter.

Many word processing/design programs or desktop publishing packages can help you design a good newsletter. Just remember that too many fonts (different type styles), shapes and decorative elements compete for attention. A busy page can be a reader turnoff.

Front pages of newsletters usually carry two to four stories plus a major visual. Colour, then shape are the first to catch the eye. Boxes around short stories grab attention. Put at least one picture, graphic or box on each page to break up text.

The **flag** is the newsletter's name. Visually, it should give an instantly recognizable and readable meaning. Its type style sets the tone for a publication.

Body type should be easy to read. Type with serifs (letters with little 'hooks') are generally easier to read than sans serif. If your audience doesn't like to read, larger than average type can be an attraction.

Use the different pages of your newsletter to group stories that are alike, for example: 2nd: national events, 3rd: local news, meeting notices in back.

White space, the open space around text or visuals, allows the eye to separate items. This breathing room makes your stories and graphics more inviting and readable.

Vary column width – take a look at a newspaper. News (short) items are generally in narrow columns while longer features (indepth stories) are easier to read if columns are wider.

Headlines should be brief and effective:

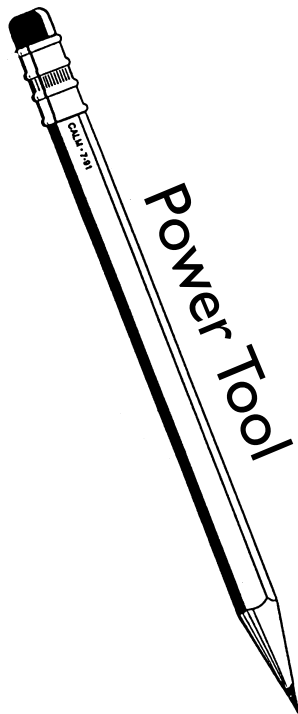
- Active words attract reader attention to the story, for example: "Picket Protest Packs Punch."
- A headline contains the essential 'news' of the story – "84% Vote Yes to New Deal."
- Avoid placing headlines beside each other.
- Use subheadings to break up and lead readers through longer stories.



graphic: UAW / CALM

GOOD WRITING

is essential if you want people to read your newsletter.



- Clear thinking means clear writing.
- Keep it simple, be brief, get to the point.
- Avoid jargon or slang.
- A conversational tone is easiest.
- Short, action words pack more power than long, cumbersome ones.
- Two short sentences are usually better than a longer one.

The **lead** is the first paragraph that starts a story. It tells readers in a nutshell what the item is about. For example, if your report is about a meeting, the lead should focus on a major decision or action taken. It should accurately reflect what is

most important about the story. The lead is the hook that gets people to read on.

Longer leads sometime start with an anecdote – a short, but telling example. It captures the heart of the story and can peak reader interest. Longer leads often introduce items like features. A **feature** can be a longer, indepth look at a person, event or issue.

Journalists write news stories in an **inverted pyramid style**. This means the important info comes first in the story. Extra detail follows. It adds to the story but is not essential.

When editing or laying out design, this writing style makes it easier to cut a story from the bottom without having to rewrite the whole item.

The **masthead** identifies who edits, writes and puts together your newsletter. Do give your readers a way to reach you: a mail or e-mail address and a phone number.



Let's Communicate is produced by the Canadian Union of Public Employees – Communications Branch, 21 Florence Street, Ottawa K2P 0W6.

For more information on newsletters and media relations, write, e-mail us at comm@cupe.ca, or phone (613) 237-1590. Check our web site: cupe.ca

Ten Rules for Writing the News

1. Don't write until you know what you want to say.
2. Show, don't tell. Instead of reprinting contract clause 4.2, tell your members what it means; for example, Mary whose mother is very ill is entitled to special leave.
3. Good quotes – using people's actual words – adds interest.
4. Put real life examples in your story. People like to read about people, not things.
5. Use concrete nouns and colourful action verbs.
6. Don't judge or resort to name-calling. Let your facts talk.
7. Write simply, accurately and honestly.
8. Cut/edit as though you've never read your story before (your readers won't have).
9. Fill in the gaps. Unanswered questions and incomplete info leave readers confused not informed.
10. Get your facts straight. Whether it's a person's name or an issue, make sure what you put in print is accurate.

CONTENT

Check the sections of your local newspaper – news, current events, sports, feature stories, background analysis, editorial comments, entertainment events, ads. These are all areas for story ideas from your own local union activities.

Be inclusive. Try to cover issues from all areas of your membership, from different departments and worksites. Reflect your local union's diversity. Members feel the newsletter is theirs when their interests are covered. Ask for story ideas or get members to report on their worksite happenings.

Involve members. Encourage people with different skills to contribute. Some locals have discovered budding cartoonists. Others have members who know how to use computer programs to better lay out and design the newsletter.

The **interview** is one of the best sources for story material. Interview your local executive, committee reps or interesting members. Good quotes bring your story to life. But be accurate. No one likes to be misquoted.

Written documents – committee reports, health and safety meeting minutes, management memos, CUPE publications – are also sources for information to use in stories. Quote from them but do attribute (identify) where your information comes from.

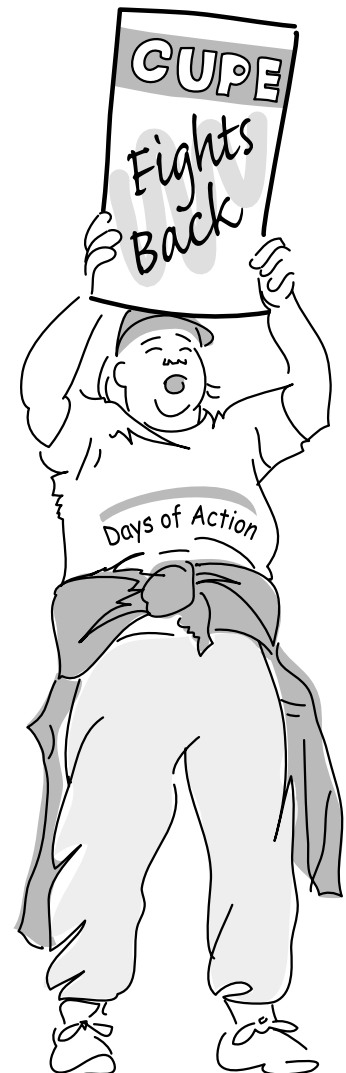


Photographs and illustrations are as important as the words around them. They convey information, too.

Anyone can take a picture but ending up with a good one takes planning.

- Show people up close so we get eye contact and emotion. Make us care about them and their stories.
- Composition is important. Skip the usual line-ups and behind the table positions. Get people to do something together. Try to capture action.
- To reproduce well, a photograph must be in focus, sharp and have good contrast.
- When using a photo, remember to crop aggressively and enlarge if good.

You can use CUPE materials. Go ahead and use that item from Fastfacts or *Organize* or the Union Development workshop. If you're on the Internet, you can download any material from our web site at cupe.ca



Publish regularly! At least four times a year. Let your readers (and your contributors) know when to expect your newsletter to build readership. More is not better if you can't meet your own and others' expectations about deadlines. Date your newsletter, for example: Spring (year) or Sept/Oct (year), according to your publishing schedule.

Help! Wanted!

DO talk to your CUPE staff rep, Education (Union Development) or Communications rep about the next newsletter/media relations school and plan to attend. Special shorter workshop sessions may be arranged with groups of local unions or newsletter/public relations committees.



HELPFUL HINTS

Borrow ideas from other well-designed publications. You can use any CUPE materials. You can even download stuff – text and/or graphics – from the web site. You can learn a lot and it's free!

Plan to be visual. Every story has a visual angle. Plan on getting a picture or graphic. Start a library of good stock photos or other graphics.

DO join CALM – the Canadian Association of Labour Media. CALM provides ready-made labour news stories and graphics for local union communicators. CALM's materials make doing a newsletter easier and more fun for union editors.

For info, contact Rosemarie Bahr, Editor, CALM at 1-888-290-2256 or write: CALM Editor, 76 Westmount Avenue, Toronto, ON, M6H 3K1. Or, check the CALM web site at calm.ca

WE'RE ON THE INTERNET: cupe.ca



Newsletter editors are welcome to join us at our very own listserv called cupe-communicators. It's our very own space to e-chat with other CUPE local union communicators and Communications reps. To join the list, visit: www.cupe.ca/services/maillinglists



Canadian Union of Public Employees cupe.ca

What this booklet can do for you

Communicating CUPE is a roadmap to getting and staying in touch with members and the public. It outlines the how-tos of communicating from planning and confirming a strategy to using tools like a local newsletter, a fax tree or a letter to the editor. It has simple guides on everything from writing and using photographs to coalition building and talking with the media.