



Unite Guide to Campaigning on the Web

Unite reps campaigning toolkit

*An introductory guide to online tools for
campaigning and organising.*

Introduction

This brief is designed to give reps and activists a guide to some of the basic tools available for online campaigning.

The web is enormous and constantly evolving so this list will not be definitive but it will hopefully provide a basic entry level window into the resources available.

This brief should be read alongside the *Unite guide to the web for workplace reps*. This provides links and resources for workplace reps to understand the union and research their employer, employment law, pay information and other useful information:

www.uniteunion.org/uploaded/documents/theWEB-1311-10816.pdf

Set up a website for your campaign

The easiest free website programme to use is Wordpress: (<http://wordpress.org/>)

This can be as basic or complicated as you like and there are many forums and websites that help explain how to get started. For example there are many “how-to” videos for wordpress on youtube here: <http://tinyurl.com/mcqdksv>

Wordpress has a user forum that can help you get started and speak to other people using the same software. <http://wordpress.org/support/>

There are also sites that give guidance on good web design. These sites can help you to understand how to make your website easier to find and come up high on web searching software (e.g. www.google.com)

Set up a blog for your campaign

The simplest way to make your Wordpress website effective is to set up a Blog. Many of these are free to use and relatively simple to make look nice. Keep designs simple and clear. Make sure you include contact details for people interested in knowing more/getting involved.

Examples of Blogs

- LabourList, <http://labourlist.org/>
- Left foot forward, www.leftfootforward.org/
- False Economy, <http://falseeconomy.org.uk/>
- Unite for Our society, www.uniteforoursociety.org/

- Diary of a Benefit Scrounger, <http://diaryofabenefitscrounger.blogspot.co.uk/>
- NHS vault, <http://nhsvault.blogspot.co.uk/>
- 38 Degrees, www.38degrees.org.uk/
- Touchstone, <http://touchstoneblog.org.uk/>
- The hardest hit, <http://thehardesthit.wordpress.com/>

There are many services that help you to monitor the blogs you follow and help you to browse all the information that is put out on your favourite blogs. Probably the most popular now is Feedly: www.feedly.com/

Using web resources that already exist

There are already various national resources for campaigners and activists to advertise events out there.

Some of the most high profile of these are the UK uncut website www.ukuncut.org.uk/ and False Economy <http://falseeconomy.org.uk/> These allow people to sign up and be put in touch with local people interested in campaigning against local service cuts or privatisation in their areas. They are free to use and you will be able to post events and meetings up on their maps. This will alert others about your meetings/events and actions.

Other resources for publicising events include:

- Gumtree www.gumtree.com/
- Indymedia <http://indymedia.org.uk/>
- Hyperlocal blogs <http://openlylocal.com/>
- Facebook www.facebook.com

Twitter

Twitter is one of the most popular communication and organising resources for many people, from celebrities, MPs and organisations. This website allows the user to post short messages (140 characters, the length of a standard SMS text message) to inform people of their latest news.

Organisations use it to update followers of latest news and campaigning information and to circulate that far and wide through its vast network of users. Unite uses Twitter in its national and industrial campaigning. <https://twitter.com/#!/unitetheunion/>

Facebook

Facebook is a very popular social networking website. It is predominately used for social purposes by individuals to keep in touch with friends and family. However, increasingly the site is being used by organisations to inform people of their activities, organise activists and canvas support for particular issues.

For instance Unite nationally has a Facebook group and has several specific groups for Unite campaigns. This allows the union to establish an online network of people who want to hear about forthcoming events and get behind the campaigns that the union is supporting.

www.facebook.com/#!/groups/Unitetheunionofficial/

There are several other social networking websites out there including LinkedIn, Myspace, Friendster, Orkut, Bebo and even Unionbook (set up to network trade unionists). Facebook, however has the biggest membership.

There are now online tools that can be used to manage all your social media accounts. One of the most user friendly of these is Hootsuit <https://hootsuite.com/>. This helps you to coordinate what you are saying on all the various social media sites you use.

Infographics

A powerful way to communicate ideas quickly on social media is by using infographics. These are quick a clear graphics that illustrate a point – e.g. graphs, charts and pictures.

There are now various online tools for making colourful and professional looking infographics without much fuss or know how.

Probably the easiest of these to use is Infogr.am: <http://infogr.am/>

This allows users to create more than 30 chart types - from bubble charts and treemaps to simple pie charts, in various designs and formats.

Web forums

Web forums are less popular than they used to be but still often have fairly active participation. They allow people to discuss issues and ideas, organise events and network with people over the web.

One of the most effective of these for many years has been Urban75 <http://www.urban75.com/>, but there are numerous examples of these now on many different issues. Other examples include www.patient.co.uk/ or <http://forums.eslcafe.com/teacher/>

Email groups and lists

Many groups have email announcement lists and or email discussion groups.

Email lists allow you to collect a large number of email contacts for your campaign supports and contact them all quickly and cheaply in order to keep them informed. This sort of list is best managed and moderated so that you are not over-whelming people with information, once a week is normally enough but this will obviously depend on the urgency of your message.

The other option is to create an e-group that allows you to have email discussions with a group of people. In general this is only recommended for small groups of people, e.g. committees or specific working groups. Such groups allow you to have email conversations on issues arising.

Again these groups can overwhelm people if over used. Most e-group providers do allow members to manage the frequency they receive emails including allowing them to receive daily or weekly digests of conversations.

Some providers of these services include:

- Yahoo groups: <http://groups.yahoo.com/>
- Google groups: <http://groups.google.com/>
- Riseup.net: <https://help.riseup.net/en/lists>

Survey Monkey

The internet can help you to quickly and easily survey people by email.

This can save you an enormous amount of time chasing people for views or comments. Survey Monkey is the most well know of these resources. It provides a free surveying service, including collating responses, drawing graphs and an excel spreadsheet of results:

www.surveymonkey.com/

Doodle

Doodle is a piece of software that allows people to organise and schedule meetings efficiency and quickly. It asks all those invited to a meeting to indicate their availability. This then makes it very easy to organise meetings that everyone can attend: <http://doodle.com/>

Online Video sharing

In today's fast moving media age it can often be quicker and more effective to communicate an issue using video. Such videos can be as basic or slick as you like but the basic tools are the same.

Most mobile phones or digital cameras have a video function on them and windows on your computer often comes with basic video editing software for those of you who want to add text or effects to the video.

The main video tool is YouTube: www.youtube.com. This is free and simple to use. Another increasingly popular tool is Vimeo: <http://vimeo.com/> Videos can be embedded onto your blog or website which can improve your content.

There are websites that provide "how to" guides to making basic videos for example: VisiononTV: <http://visionon.tv/>

Lobbying tools

The web has made it possible to access and contact your elected representatives much faster and more effectively. This includes tools such as www.theyworkforyou.com which allows you to fax or email MPs, councillors or other elected representatives. It also shows you what they are saying publicly and also their voting record on various issues.

These other websites also help with this:

www.directgov.org.uk

<http://findyourmp.parliament.uk/>

www.whatdotheyknow.com is a website that helps you to send freedom of information requests to public bodies. This includes organisations such as councils, local authorities, central government or NHS Trusts.

Hyperlocal online resources

In recent years there has been a growth of websites and blogs that are known as Hyperlocal websites. These are websites set up as forums and campaigns for local issues, often either at council, borough or even neighbourhood level. Most of them are interactive including elements of blogs, forums and other networking tools.

Most of these sites can be found on the Openlylocal website <http://openlylocal.com/> which sets them out in a map so you can track down the most relevant site to you.

To find out more there is an interesting workshop on Hyperlocal websites here on the Netroots website: www.netrootsuk.org/about-netroots-uk/workshops/engaging-on-a-hyper-local-level-online/

Ideas and practical help

The TUC and a range of other organisations are supporting the development of the Netroots UK project.

This project aims to build campaigners and activists' capacity, individually and collectively, to develop online campaigning skills through exchanging best practice and engaging in practical training, making new contacts and partnerships with online activists from other progressive traditions and coming together to discuss strategy for online activism in the UK.

www.netrootsuk.org/about-us/

Privacy at work

Using web tools is not without its risks and members should be aware of the potential problems they might face if using these tools at work or talking about their employer in public.

See the *Unite guide to privacy at work* for more information:
www.unitetheunion.org/uploaded/documents/Job%203641-11-RG%20privacy%20at%20work%205-1311-11204.pdf

Conclusions

Remember though, that these are just tools and are no substitute for an effectively planned and organised campaign. For more info see the *Unite Reps Campaigning Toolkit*:
www.unitetheunion.org/uploaded/documents/GuideToCampaigningMay1311-10733.pdf

And remember if you get stuck or don't understand, don't worry you can always ask for help. The internet is full of friendly techies who will be happy to lend a hand. Remember too that when you do need help, google is your best friend! Just type in your query and the chances are someone else will have already asked it and they can help you find a solution.

Good luck and happy campaigning.

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