



planning your publication

There are several questions to work through before you start putting together your publication. Take time to think about these and discuss them with other union activists; or with fellow Workers' Liberty members; or with like-minded people who will work on the publication with you. Time spent planning it well will make for a more effective publication; and will save time in the production of each issue.

REGULAR OR ONE-OFF?

- 90% of the time, a regular newsletter is more effective than a one-off. It builds familiarity, interest and trust from workers – with a one-off publication, you have to earn that from scratch.
- Socialists should produce regular newsletters for workers to win an audience. The union should also produce regular publications. As a rep or branch officer, you can improve union communication in the workplace.
- Sometimes, a one-off publication is needed – perhaps advertising an event; or election campaign material; or a 'welcome to the union' pamphlet for new members.

WHAT IS ITS PURPOSE?

- For a union publication ... Encouraging members to get more active? Making yourself accountable? Encouraging non-members to join? Explaining union policies? Others?
- For a socialist newsletter ... Offering ideas for workers' struggles? Drawing out lessons from both victories and defeats? Criticising union leaders and their failings? Offering a Marxist explanation of workplace issues? Others?
- Both union newsletters and socialist newsletters can organise as well as inform.
- Form follows function. Thinking through the purpose(s) of your publication in some detail will help you decide what format will work best.

WHO IS IT FOR?

- Workers in a particular industry, company or workplace? Strikers? Delegates to a union conference? Women, black, LGBT, migrant workers? Activists? Politically-active workers?
- How much can you assume they know about the union, or about politics, or about their rights? Is English their first language? What jargon do they use? What issues are important to them?

HOW TO DISTRIBUTE?

- How will you distribute your publication? In the staff room? At the gates? In pigeonholes? On workplace noticeboards? By email?
- Do you expect workers to read it during their meal break, or take it home? Keep it for future reference or throw it away?
- If you give people a leaflet at, it needs to grab interest so they keep it to read later. Promoting a meeting or film show, an A5 leaflet or a postcard may be more readily taken.

HOW OFTEN?

- Plan a regular publication schedule. Be prepared to produce the bulletin more frequently during times of heightened activity eg. strikes.
- Improve frequency by limiting size.
- Appreciate the time it takes to produce a decent newsletter. It's not an add-on to your duties as a union rep or your political activity as a Marxist; it is a central part. Whatever contribution each individual is expected to make, ensure that they have the time to make it.

HOW WILL YOU DO IT?

- Who will write for it? Where will you get stories and information? Do you need to provide training or guidelines for contributors?
- What is the deadline for each issue? Who will lay it out? How will you get it printed?
- Do you need funding? Can you get it from your union branch? Or is it an independent newsletter that you will need to fund through donations, collections and subscriptions?

WHAT TO CALL IT?

- Choose an effective name that grabs attention. Don't call it 'Newsletter', or 'Update'.
- Electricians on the Jubilee Line Extension produced a rank-and-file newsletter called *Flying Sparks*. That's a much better title than *Rank-and-File Electricians' Newsletter*. You could try a title that mocks your employer's newsletter.
- Use a subtitle to explain what the publication is and who it is for. *Off The Rails* is subtitled *a platform for rank-and-file railworkers*.

TO INCLUDE EVERY TIME?

- Decide what features to include in every issue. This should/could include: contact details: phone, post, e-mail/website; subscription details, if relevant; a humorous column.

HOW TO GET FEEDBACK?

- Ask a few people what they think, how they responded to the content! Has anyone told you that they agree or disagree with what you wrote. Check how workers act on your publication – put it on their noticeboard? Taken out a subscription? Canvassed for the candidate you recommended? Refused to work on the safety grounds after your newsletter explained how and why?