

Workplace mapping

Workplace mapping is one of the most effective ways of examining the strength and weaknesses of your branch. How long is it since you took a really close look at the level of UCU organisation in your institution? Can you be confident that everyone who might join UCU has been asked and everyone who might be prepared to take on some responsibility, however small, has been given the opportunity?

How can we hope to involve people or even have effective two-way communication when we don't know where they work, who they work with or who is the best person to speak to them? And without this information how can we effectively plan and make decisions about branch/LA strategy or priorities? Yet too often we make very little effort to get any of this information.

Mapping is the process of obtaining accurate and relevant information about the workforce in a systematic way. If done properly it can form the basis of most successful union activity, including recruiting, communications, developing activists and campaigning around issues.

Mapping a workplace – the benefits

Mapping is the most effective way to:

- know where your members are
- identify weak areas of membership
- begin recruiting members
- know where reps and activists are
- identify weak areas of reps and activists
- begin identifying and developing potential reps and activists
- find out people's concerns
- begin identifying potential issues.

More importantly mapping highlights areas of strength and weakness in branch/LA organisation and makes priorities clear to us.

Getting started

Mapping is an ongoing process – maps change with the workplace. If done properly your map will become an important and invaluable tool for identifying areas of work. It will show you weak areas of membership or departments where you need to develop reps and activists. And it will help you identify activists and new recruits. Once you have recruited or developed reps, these changes will be added to the map, which will then highlight new priorities for you.

Because mapping is an ongoing job you will not be able to do it all yourself and you should not try. Further, the information that you need will require local knowledge that no one person will have. The success of your mapping will depend on involving as many people as possible along the way.

If you have a branch/LA committee, raise it there and get them to help. Mapping should be broken down into small manageable chunks for people. An individual, or the committee, should be responsible for co-ordinating the mapping.

Prioritise what you are going to do according to the information that you can get. In many branches simply getting hold of personnel lists or constructing a staff list from other sources will be a great step forward. Alternatively you could start with just one department.

Most importantly mapping is not difficult, many activists say it is fun and rewarding. Most branches report that the results are clear and quick. The following steps will help you get started.

List all the departments in your institution

Corporate structures, annual reports or management structures often provide this information. Cross check a number of documents to make sure you have not missed any departments.

List all the staff in each department

Staff lists, phone directories, fire warden floor lists, payroll information, student/ staff annual handbooks or prospectuses are all good sources of information. Each institution will be different – use what ever is available. Some institutions have computerised phone or staff lists – if you can get the information already on computer even better as it will save time sorting later. Make sure you have all the staff. Don't leave out part-timers, managers, people who work in smaller sites etc.

Get an up to date copy of the branch/LA membership lists

If you do not have a current list, your regional office can provide you with an up to date membership printout. You will be giving these lists to other members so they should not contain any personal information. A name and if provided a department, branch/LA or site is all that should be used.

Identify activists and reps in each department

From your list of staff and members identify people in each department who may be able to help. Branch/LA officers and department reps can take responsibility for their department. Where you have no branch/LA officer look for activists, you can ask members or even non-members to help. Allocate somebody to approach him or her to ask for their help.

Where nobody can be found in a department, allocate the department to somebody who has a natural affinity with it because they work near it for example, or know people in it, or have worked in it before. Where departments are too big break them down into units no larger than 20 –30 staff per activist. Where departments are not useful units (they may be split across sites or buildings) pick different units to allocate activists to groups of staff.

Get activists to match the membership list against staff in each department

Give the allocated activist (or activists) for each department (or unit) the list of staff you have made and a copy of the full membership list. Explain why mapping is important and ask them to check that your staffing records are correct. They rarely are. Even management-compiled lists are usually out of date with omissions of new starters, people who have left or moved departments and part timers.

Ask each activist to use the membership lists to mark all the staff in their department that are members.

Beginnings of a map

Business Studies Department Map		
(4 members out of 7 staff – 57%)		
Name	Part-time or full-time	Notes
Dasahn Pyra (member)	Full-time	Department Contact
Sally Jones (member)	Full-time	not on membership list – but says she is a member
Jo Wright	Full-time	
John Smith (member)	Part-time	
Mario Dontelli	Full-time	New employee – not on original list
Mary Prior (member)	Part-time	
Bob Phelps	Part-time (4 hours a week)	

Get activists to provide further details of each department

Once you are confident that you have an accurate list of staff and members you can begin to think about what other information you might want to collect. Basic information will probably include who is part-time and fractional, where people are based (if not on the one site), those who are union/departmental reps/activists, those who are potential members or activists and what issues concern people. Each branch/LA will want different information depending on their needs. Ask each departmental activist to list this information as best as they can for you. Keep central records.

Analyse the map

The reality is that by now you will probably have already been analysing the map! It should be fairly easy to ascertain what proportion of eligible staff you actually have in membership and where your activists are. However at this stage you should be systematic about it.

You may want to order department figures by percentage density, from best to worst, to get a feel for relative priorities or you may want to calculate density by gender, part/full time or any other distinction you think is relevant.

To make best use of the information ask questions like:

- How does the membership in different work areas compare with staffing in these areas?
- Is our membership concentrated in only a few departments or evenly spread?

- Where do we lack activists or reps?
- What is the profile of our activists or reps?
- Are we recruiting men and women in proportion to their presence in the establishment?
- Are we appealing to every grade of eligible staff?
- Are we reaching out to part-time staff?

Equally importantly the trends may identify important issues. Are certain departments surprisingly heavily part-time? Is a lack of membership in smaller sites because we don't involve them enough? Are certain issues prevalent in certain areas - for example more bullying in the faster growing areas? The answers to these questions will tell you on what and where you need to focus your attention.

Analysis of a workplace map

XXXX Institute Map Summary					
Department	Teaching Staff	Members	Non Members	% Members	Contact/ Rep
Art	9	7	2	78%	John Biggs
Science	14	9	5	64%	No Contact
Business Studies	7	4	3	57%	Dasahn Pyra
Construction	11	4	7	36%	Bob Rogers
Hair and Beauty	16	3	13	19%	No Contact
Total	57	27	30	46%	

Analyse and develop department maps

It is at this stage that mapping becomes a very powerful tool for recruiting and developing activists. Work with the person responsible for each department to begin analysing who in their department area is supportive of the union, who the natural leaders are, which staff could be persuaded if approached, who is anti-union and what the issues are in the department.

This gives you a framework for identifying who is most likely to get active or help in each department and who the committee thinks would be useful to have involved. It also helps you work out who is the best person to approach potential activists. The organising committee should pick the person who has the best chance of success to speak to them.

In turn when you have found activists in each department, work with them to gather and analyse information that will help them in their work as department rep or activist.

This additional information should be detailed and staff member specific. Mapping at this level can be used to understanding different factors in the workplace or department such as social groupings, lines of supervision and the ways departments interact with each other.

Useful additional information

Business Studies Department Map		
(4 members out of 7 staff – 57%) (members in 'bold')		
Name	Part/full time	Notes
Dasahn Pyra	Full-time	Department contact – happy to continue (wants information on union training)
Sally Jones	Full-time	Interested in paid maternity leave clause in agreement
Mary Prior	Part-time	
John Smith	Part-time	Ex union rep in old job
Jo Wright	Full-time	Anti union – worried about strikes – friends with Kim (activist in Department of Art)
Mario Dontelli	Full-time	New employee – not on original list – worried about fixed term contract – ask branch/LA secretary about this
Bob Phelps	Part-time (4 hrs a week)	Interested in part time rights – took membership form – follow up in a week
Totals	43% Staff P/T 50% Membs P/T	Most in the department are worried about the rumours of relocating to another site

Integrate mapping into branch/LA committee work

At this stage mapping should be an ongoing part of a branch/LA committee's work. Information is continually added to the map and each activist takes responsibility for approaching various potential members. The organising committee at this point will have a strong sense of where the areas of strength and weakness lie and will be able to make informed decisions about which areas need to be focused on.

Specific uses for mapping

Once you have the basis of a map for your institution it can be used for many different purposes.

Recruitment

Recruitment is best done on an individual basis and by a person who knows the potential member and understands their work and issues. Each department rep or activists should be responsible for keeping the map up to date. You, or ideally the committee, can then work with each department rep to discuss who is most likely to join (approach them first), what their issues are and who is the best person to approach them.

You can identify workplace leaders to focus on first and develop strategies to involve them. Useful information from each contact with potential members can be recorded for follow up. If the person was interested in a certain issue you can return with information about that issue. If somebody took a membership form you can return to collect it in person. You can even inform each rep of those potential members (or potential activists) you have spoken to at new starter's induction's, and will be working in their department, for the rep to follow up.

Communication networks

Communication networks distribute information and find out members' views. They are best organised via reps or contacts in each department. You should keep notes of who the contact, or rep, is in each department and work on getting one in departments where you have none. Communication networks ensure that when an important issue comes up you know that everybody will receive the information in person and can speak to somebody about it. If you need to make quick decisions you can speak to each rep or contact to get a feel for the mood of the members in the entire branch/LA – often within hours.

Negotiations and campaigns

The map allows you to involve and distribute information to members about campaigns or negotiations. You will be able to report back quickly on negotiations and receive feedback from members. You can also work out which areas need extra work in a campaign or who to target certain messages at. For example if management wants to make changes to part timers contracts you will be able to identify, distribute and collect surveys quickly from all the part timers without having to rely on management to provide lists.

Your capacity to respond with speed and accuracy sends a powerful message to management who will often rely on your inability to mobilise members when trying to push through changes. When campaigning on issues like this it is useful to identify those who feel strongly about each issue. You might find that some people who never participate in

union activity, will on certain issues that affect them. Use your map to ensure they are involved and followed up.