



Changing the world
of work for good

Membership retention

with Becky Sixsmith-Hughes

Recruitment alone isn't enough

- While recruiting new members is crucial, relying solely on recruitment poses challenges for sustained growth.

Challenges to growth

- Ageing population
- Job market dynamics
- Factors leading to member departures

The benefits of member retention

- Increased financial contributions
- greater member involvement over time

The impact

- Even a small annual decline in retention will have a significant long-term impact.

Leaky bucket analogy

- Membership organisations are like leaky buckets. A 10% annual loss in a union with 100k members results in 50,000 members in 7 years and 30,000 in 10!
- Unions must identify and address the most significant retention challenges.

Strategic focus on retention

- Unions urgently need to prioritise retention strategies for sustained and healthy growth.

Retaining members is not just about plugging holes; it's about securing the foundation for long-term growth.

Some questions for you

<https://ahaslides.com/44ICS>



What are good goals for union retention?

Unions need to have clear and achievable goals for retention. These include:

- Finding out why every member leaves
- Finding out what members feel about the union
- Having a plan for all eventualities

Unions that successfully retain members will have accurate data, the right infrastructure to act, and buy-in from the rest of the union on this strategic challenge.

What would your union's goal be?

Activity: Why do people leave unions?

People leave unions for all sorts of reasons, sometimes it's because they retire or leave work, sometimes it's because an incident at work affects their relationship or opinion of the union. Before we can begin to understand how to retain members, we need to understand why they leave?

In your group:

1. Consider the reasons why your members leave or consider leaving the union. (10 mins)
2. Then identify which reasons are most frequently given and which reasons are given less frequent. Put your reasons in two groups, frequent and less frequent. (5 mins)

Activity: Early warning signs

The first you might become aware that a member has left the union is when an expected subs payment doesn't arrive. By then the member is long gone. But before this happens can we do anything to spot the early warning signs?

In your group:

1. Keeping in mind the reasons members give for leaving the union, identify the potential warning signs that we sometimes might miss. (10 mins)
2. What can we do to spot the early warning signs? (10 mins)

Keeping members 'happy' and engaged

To retain members, we need to make sure members are (a bit more!) happy, and we need to know, as early as possible, when they are not.

Better retention depends on the quality of the members' overall experience.

- How well are they onboarded into the union?
- What do they think of the work of the union?
- How often do they access and enjoy member benefits?
- Do they hear good things from and about their union?

How can we retain members?

We've considered the importance to unions of retaining members, why members leave or consider leaving the union and how to spot the early warning signs. But what can we do to retain members?

To help, consider a union member's journey as a series of **seven distinct steps**. At each stage of the **member journey**, there's an opportunity to intervene and to make a positive impact on members' happiness, thereby influencing their likelihood of remaining committed to the union.

Seven steps

Step	Theme	Examples
Joining	Setting realistic/honest expectations	Be clear and transparent about the union's offer, pricing and benefits.
Onboarding	Delivering value early	Provide a welcome pack. Offer a welcome webinar with Q&A. Contact new members early by phone or email.
Participating	Increasing member engagement	Offer access to training. Ask members to sign-up to campaigns. Get members to engage with member networks.
Staying in touch	Ensuring contact details are up to date and listen	Listen to members. Regularly talk to members and keep them updated.
Renewal	Sending timely renewal communications	Follow up with non-renewals in a timely way.
Retaining	Understanding and responding to issues in proven ways.	Ensure people don't leave accidentally. Emphasise the importance of continuous membership. Provide options for changing circumstances (e.g. maternity leave).
Rejoining	Proactively re-recruiting those whose circumstances have changed	Make it really easy to rejoin.

The logo consists of the letters 'TUC' in a bold, sans-serif font. Each letter is white with a light blue gradient and features a white arrow pointing in a specific direction: the 'T' points up, the 'U' points down, and the 'C' points right.

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