

Door-knocking – it works

Knocking on doors to talk to potential members isn't the latest or most sophisticated recruitment technique but it is the best way to talk one to one with colleagues about issues which concern them.

I have literally knocked on hundreds of doors over the past years and have countless examples of the benefits of this approach. Often I will combine this approach with a recruitment stall in the same building. When it is a bit quiet I knock on a few doors and ask people to join us. Usually, I will have a list of members and so know who to approach.

However, if it is a building where we don't have a representative, I will use the opportunity to ask members to take on the role. Discussing face to face with a member what a rep does makes it more likely that someone will agree to do it rather than just sending out an email asking for volunteers.

When a member of staff isn't in their office, their name can be noted and an email sent explaining that you missed them and then inviting them to join. Leaflets can also be pushed under doors or, if you want to be particularly organised, produce a short message for staff who are out and stick it to their door with the UCU logo on the back so that it is on display to those walking past. An application form could also be left.

There are certain techniques which can be used when approaching door-knocking. Knowing the situation of potential members is very useful. For example, are they on a fixed term contract? If so, a handful of campaigning materials as well as an application form will come in handy. There might be particular issues relating to a department, such as an imminent reorganisation, that could be used to recruit new members.

If you have a list of new starters at the college or university, then you can target these members of staff. Meeting up with the local rep, if there is one, to discuss local concerns, and hopefully involving them in the exercise, is a good way to start.

When speaking to someone, ask questions about their concerns to identify issues which you can then address by explaining what UCU is doing about the matter. For example, if your branch or local association (LA) is still negotiating on the new pay framework, asking if they are aware that UCU is currently negotiating not only their pay but how they will be transferred onto a new pay spine. This may bring out concerns about downgrading.

It is worth stating the simple message that the more non-members who join us, the more chance we have of getting the best possible deal, as well as emphasizing that a non-

member cannot join if they already have a problem and then expect our full support. It is, of course, not necessary to know everything and this gives you an excuse to take a potential member's contact details and then follow up later with both the answer to their query and also ask if they have decided to join us.

Handing out spare copies of UC magazine can be useful in showing how we are involved in a wide range of issues. A potential member might be satisfied with their pay but feels strongly about a particular professional issue.

Knocking on doors also gives a chance to leave material in coffee rooms and on noticeboards. The vast majority of staff are quite happy with this approach and there are always those who say that they have been meaning to join and haven't yet got round to it. Ideally, getting someone to fill in the form immediately saves time in following up calls. You could say it means that they are covered immediately if they fill in a form straightaway, or that you are sending off a batch and you could send them all together or call back in half an hour.

Having a recruitment stall helps but there are plenty of staff who you won't meet by this method alone.

Door-knocking can be more enjoyable if carried out by a small team. This also increases our presence. So why not go ahead and give it a try. You might be surprised at the results.

Ronnie Kershaw, UCU Organiser