

## Tips On How To Have Good One-on-One Conversations at Work

1:1 organising conversations are the beating heart of strong trade unions. Here's how to do it.

### Here are some general tips:

- Feel the embarrassment and do it anyway. It is totally normal feel awkward or silly when initiating conversations with colleagues about the union. No wonder – everything in our society is geared towards deterring us from collective action and self-empowerment. No matter. Accept that you might feel a bit embarrassed, smile, be friendly and do it anyway. (Do not try to be cool or offhand when you're door-knocking, this is more likely to come across as intimidating and make the other person feel nervous.)
- Decide how many people you are going to door-knock advance, and make sure you complete this list. If people are not in when you first go round, make sure you go back later. Don't give yourself an opportunity to chicken out.
- Keep notes of who you have spoken to, and what they say (don't assume that you will remember it all afterwards). You will definitely need to go back to remind people who said they were going to vote to check that they have done it (don't underestimate forgetfulness, members of the union committee have forgotten to vote in the past!). It is also useful to keep these notes for the future – e.g. so you know who might want to help out with other union issues.

### Here are some suggested steps:

**1) Introduce yourself** as a UCU member and co-worker (if you hold a position in the union, such as on the branch committee or as a departmental rep or contact, please include this information as well). **Explain** that you are here today to talk to the co-worker either about joining the union, if they are not yet a member, or about voting in the pay and pensions disputes, if they are already members. **Ask** them if they are already familiar with the union, if a recruitment conversation, and with the pay and pensions disputes for both recruitment and GTVO conversations.

**2) Give the co-worker a chance to respond/ask questions** before you go on.

**3) Provide further details.** If they are not yet a member, explain that we have two dispute ballots on very important issues affecting their employment conditions – if they would like to have the opportunity to vote and are not yet members of UCU, they will need to become members by October 15. If they are members of the union, please explain that the dispute ballots on pay and pensions have opened on September 9. **Two crucial talking points:**

- a) UCU is asking members to vote yes on both ballots gives the negotiating team the strongest mandate possible to push the employers to agree to our demands.
- b) Because of the anti-trade union laws that came in in 2016, we need to get 50% participation in the ballots in order for the results to be valid.

**4) Answer any questions that are raised.** For specific questions regarding the pay and pensions disputes, you may **refer them to the fliers or other UCU materials** for further details. Please also see the FAQ's. Explain the importance of member involvement and **practice active listening** (i.e., don't interrupt, empathize, validate concerns, offer reassurance, make eye contact etc)!!

5) **“The Ask”**. This is, for most of us, the most uncomfortable part of having one on one conversations but one of the most important. Before you leave, be sure to **ask members if they will commit to sending in their ballots. If they are not yet members, be sure to ask if they would like to join and instruct them on how to do so.** If you come across members who want to get more involved in the union, please take down their contact information and let us know.

6) **Answer any additional questions.**

7) **Reaffirm** with the worker that their participation and feedback are very important for UCU and that you were glad to have a chance to talk with them.

**IMPORTANT: If you don’t know the answer to a question tell the co-worker that UCU will get back to them on this. Please then refer any questions to us.**

**How do you handle objections or resistance from co-workers?**

**1) Acknowledge/Affirm**

- Acknowledge the feeling that someone has expressed if they are unsure about joining the union or about the ballots for industrial action.

**2) Answer**

- Answer the underlying concern or question that has led to the objection (for example: fear, disappointment in the union’s record to date, lack of information). Please see the FAQ’s for suggestions on how to address specific concerns.

**3) Return**

- Ask a question that takes people back to discussing the issues at hand; the need and the will to want to improve things should outweigh the doubts that are raised through objections.

**List of dos and don’ts**

<b>Dos</b>	<b>Don’ts</b>
Repeat and reflect	Put words in their mouths
Restate without changing	Play “gotcha” on inaccurate statements
Active listening	
Empathize – body language+	Show distrust
Tell the truth	Only talk about the positive
Respect their common sense	Assume you know better
Discuss options & obstacles	Talk down to them
Be positive	Be only “anti-company”