

Using effective communications

Internal and external communication

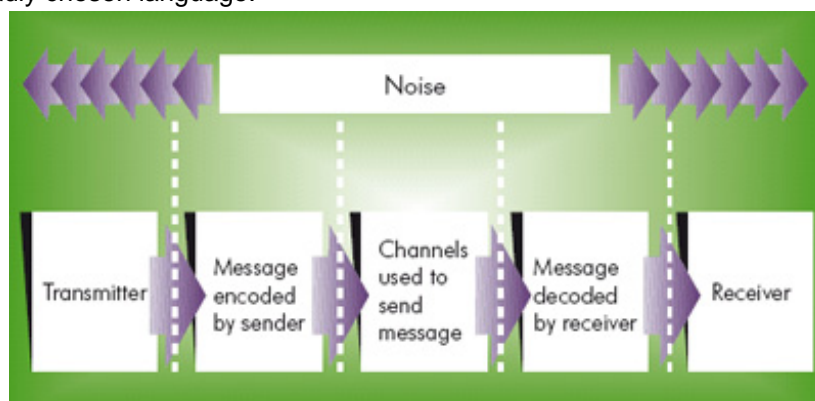


In order to know how UNISON makes sure that it communicates well within the company and to the outside world, the process is best revealed through the Shannon-Weaver model (1947).

People working within UNISON try to reduce all the barriers or 'noise' to make sure they communicate clearly.

This involves a transmitter sending messages to receivers. A transmitter should put data into a form the receiver can understand, such as a written or visual point. This is known as encoding. The medium is then chosen – this might be a letter, e-mail or website. The receivers then translate the message through a process of decoding.

Though a message flows from the sender to receivers, there is no guarantee the receivers will either get or even understand it. This is because the process may involve communication difficulties. These problems are known as 'noise' and they may weaken or destroy the message that is being sent. For example, noise would occur if a message was hard to understand or used badly chosen language.



Within a trade union, a policy – or plan – comes from the members. The role of employees at UNISON is to take it forward and put it into action. It is through helpful contact, both internally and externally, that this is able to happen.

Internal communication

Whereas internal communication takes place between employees within an organisation, external communication occurs between those within the company and those in the outside world.

There are many forms of internal communication. For example:

- * workshops help people to become involved
 - * project groups at UNISON look at issues and help to put policy into action
 - * a key way in which UNISON communicates internally is through its in-house magazine called InsideOut. This is sent to all UNISON staff members. It highlights a range of challenges and issues for staff. These include details about their new headquarters, facts about equal pay issues for UNISON members and other news within the organisation.
- Such communications may be carried out by the use of e-mail, posters, staff briefings, documents or meetings. More information is on the intranet, which can only be accessed by staff and members.

External communications

External communications are also important for UNISON. With more than 1,300 local branches, it may need to convey issues to receivers and stakeholders in many different areas. These issues could include legal matters, pensions and discussions, as well as disputes.

UNISON's website is a vital link with the outside world. To support issues such as collective bargaining, health and safety and to provide legal advice, there are leaflets, booklets and other information. These can be ordered from a communication catalogue or by downloading a pdf from the website.

For example, *Welcome to UNISON* is a full guide for members, covering topics from health and safety to building skills. DVDs have also become a popular way of making contact with members. Another example, *10 Good Reasons to Join UNISON*, is designed to help local branches recruit new members.