

UNISON

Job Brief: Director of Communications

Introduction

UNISON, the UK's largest union, needs a new Director of Communications to lead our full-service in-house communications team and provide strategic direction for the union's communications with members, activists, potential members and the general public.

With more than 1.3 million members working across a range of vital public services including health and social care, local government, education, police and energy services, UNISON has a wealth of stories to tell, campaigns to win and members to engage.

The Director of Communications sets the tone and direction of the union's communications, working as part of the senior management group and liaising directly with the general secretary and senior staff to ensure that the union's objectives and priorities are supported with strong communications and campaigns.

The Role

You'll lead and manage the work of the three teams who make up the communications unit (editorial, media and campaigns and design) along with overseeing the union's offsite print unit.

In addition, you'll work closely with colleagues in the digital product team and policy and public affairs teams.

You'll provide advice and guidance on communications issues to our regions, national departments and the senior lay and officer leadership of the union ensuring a cohesive and consistent approach to communications that supports UNISON strategic objectives.

You'll contribute to the strategic and operational management of the union as part of the senior management group.

UNISON's size and diversity is a huge strength, but also presents challenges in terms of managing priorities, audiences, channels and timing of our communications. We're looking for an energetic clear thinker with strong management and engagement skills as well as an understanding of delivering integrated on and offline communications and campaigns within a political environment.

The union has started on a significant digital transformation to enable better member engagement through better access to data and insights and integrated digital communications and campaign tools.

The Director of Communications will be a key part of ensuring this programme supports an integrated communications approach.

UNISON

Director of Communications

Communications Unit

Ref: CCP/1

Job Description

Grade: 1
Location: UNISON Centre, Euston Road London NW1
Reports to: Assistant General Secretary (Communications, Campaigns and Policy)
Responsible for: A management team of three team leaders, overseeing the work of staff in three teams in the communications unit, as well as oversight of the union's print unit.

Summary

The Director of Communications is responsible for the strategic direction and development of the union's communications and the staff teams of the communications and print units.

The communications unit includes staff working in three teams (editorial, media, campaigns and design) with three team leaders. The post also includes oversight of the union's offsite print operation, UNISON National Print, and the staff based there.

In addition to this, the Director of Communications works closely with a range of external contractors and agencies to support specialist areas of communications.

The postholder is responsible for the following areas and will require substantial professional experience in **at least one** of the four specialist fields below along with demonstrable ability to lead a team of communications professionals to deliver in all of these areas:

Key responsibilities

Recruitment marketing/member acquisition

The Director of Communications is responsible for commissioning, planning and overseeing a multi-channel external membership recruitment marketing campaign delivered with specialist external agencies. This annual campaign is a key part of the union's successful growth strategy and can involve television advertising, online display ads and paid search.

Membership communication and engagement

The postholder oversees the direction and tone for a range of national communications to over 1.3 million members including balancing the union's priorities and objectives with an audience-focused

understanding. Our national member communications are a key engagement channel with members and for many members may represent their only regular contact from the union. Ensuring they speak to members, foster a sense of belonging, underscore the value of union membership and encourage participation are a key part of this role.

Developing powerful public campaigns

The Director of Communications provides leadership around key high-profile public-facing social and political campaigning as well as overseeing the work of the campaigns team. You'll ensure our campaigns are innovative, engaging and well-targeted to achieve change on behalf of UNISON members and that they support the union's key objective of raising UNISON's profile with opinion-formers, members and activists, and potential members.

Media strategy and PR management

Creating and executing plans to effectively communicate messages, advocate for member interests, and enhance UNISON's public image across various media platforms. The postholder will also support senior stakeholders with brand management and crisis communications to safeguard and strengthen UNISON's reputation by consistently conveying its values and mission, and by promptly managing public challenges or controversies to maintain trust and credibility with members and the public.

Other responsibilities

Messaging

Responsibility for working at all levels to influence, develop and disseminate clear messaging in a complex political environment with multiple stakeholders.

Organisation identity, brand, house style and tone of voice

Overseeing the implementation and development of the union's organisational identity, design standards, house style and tone of voice. Providing leadership to the work of the design and editorial teams to ensure national communications reflect the union's identity and voice, as well as advising and supporting other parts of the union on adhering to corporate identity.

Developing our digital communications

UNISON is developing its digital communications capacity through a union-wide programme which will oversee the implementation of a modern membership data system and associated integrated digital communications tools, as well as developing an online hub for members to access digital services and update their membership data. Working with the transformation programme team, the Director of Communications will be pivotal to defining and establishing new ways of working and adoption of new technology ensuring a member-centric approach to communications is established and sustained.

Integrated communications

Candidates must have extensive knowledge and experience of working across a range of on and offline channels to create integrated communications plans to support organisational objectives and inspire teams to deliver excellent and creative communications.

Reporting to and liaising with lay committees

Responsible for managing partnership working with lay committees of the union including the national executive council and a range of strategic committees.

Management and leadership

Demonstrable leadership skills and an enthusiastic and creative management style to encourage and motivate a wide range of staff across different disciplines. The Director of Communications provides direct leadership for the teams within the communications unit and will influence the work of others.

Financial and resource management

Responsible for preparing, managing and reporting on budget and resources for the communications and print functions, as well as specific external campaigns including an annual recruitment marketing campaign and a number of high-profile external political campaigns.

Internal communications

The Director of Communications has overall responsibility for the union's internal communications to over 1,200 staff across the UK, working with HR and senior leaders on ensuring clear, timely and transparent staff communication that improves efficiency and effective working across the union.

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Director of Communications

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Person specification and selection criteria

UNISON is an equal opportunities employer, committed to providing equal opportunities regardless of race or ethnic origin, gender identity, family situation, sexual orientation, disability, religion or age. This person specification is designed to help members of interviewing panels judge the qualities of interviewees in a systematic and consistent way and in accordance with UNISON's equal opportunity policy. It is given to all job applicants for information

Assessment code:

A = application form

PI = panel interview

ST = selection test

Heading	Selection criteria	Assessment		
1 Knowledge and thinking	1.1 Ability to provide strategic leadership around communications issues and act as link between the General Secretariat/national executive council(NEC)/senior staff and your team of communications professionals.	A	PI	ST
	1.2 Specialist experience, knowledge and skills in at least one of the fields highlighted in the Key Responsibilities and evidence of wider communications understanding and management experience.	A	PI	
	1.3 Commitment to, understanding of and ability to promote UNISON's aims and values and understanding of the wider trade union and political environment.	A	PI	
	1.4 Experience of understanding and promoting the value of integrated on and offline audience-focused communications.	A	PI	ST
	1.5 Ability to lead teams to develop, monitor and review integrated cross-channel communications plans across print and digital environments.	A	PI	
	1.6 Ability to work in partnership with senior lay activists and committees to achieve shared objectives.	A	PI	
	1.7 Ability to contribute to strategic planning, organisational development and management of change.	A	PI	
	1.8 Ability to develop teams, project manage and delegate work to others	A	PI	

	1.9 Ability to promote equality at a managerial, communications and strategic level.	A	PI	
2. Interpersonal and communication	2.1 Ability to develop, articulate and win support for communications strategies.	A	PI	ST
	2.2 Highly developed personal skills to build and manage relationships, negotiate around a changing union agenda and influence thinking.	A	PI	
	2.3 Ability to communicate effectively with management, senior staff and lay members including around complex or nuanced messages.	A	PI	ST
	2.4 Excellent presentation and engagement skills at all levels.		PI	ST
	2.5 Ability to represent the union.		PI	ST
	2.6 Ability to demonstrate emotional resilience, self awareness and self-management		PI	ST
3. Initiative and independence	3.1 Ability to act as lead advisor to the General Secretary/Secretariat and NEC committees.		PI	
	3.2 Ability to plan, manage, monitor and evaluate communications strategies.	A		ST
	3.3 High level of prioritisation skills		PI	
4. Staff management	4.1 Ability to lead teams to deliver organisational objectives through creative and engaging communications and campaigns.	A	PI	ST
	4.2 Ability to lead and motivate a tightly-knit management team to work together across functions to deliver integrated and creative communications.	A	PI	
	4.3 Experience of managing multifunctional creative teams, including managing strategic projects and co-ordinating the work of others.	A	PI	
	4.4 Experience of selecting, motivating, developing and managing staff and their performance.	A	PI	
	4.5 Ability to interpret and nuance organisational objectives to ensure the union's high profile external campaigns and member communications support the union's priorities.	A	PI	ST
5. Resource management	5.1 Experience of securing, monitoring and reporting on large and/or complex budgets	A	PI	
	5.2 Ability to ensure value for money and effective use of resources.	A	PI	
	5.3 Ability to ensure appropriate use and understanding of issues around use of sensitive organisational information and member data in the context of planning and running engaging campaigns, developing content and communications planning.	A	PI	

	5.4 Experience of sourcing, selecting and working closely with external contractors and agencies to deliver communications campaigns, outputs and resources.	A		
6. Physical skills (with reasonable adjustments where required)	6.1 Keyboard skills	A		
7. General knowledge	7.1 Ability to work flexibly under the direction of the NEC, General Secretary and senior staff.		PI	
	7.2 Experience of managing and prioritising work under pressure (both self and others).	A	PI	
	7.3 Knowledge and understanding of the political and social environment in which the union operates.		PI	ST
	7.4 Experience of using and/or managing teams using specialist software and systems, ideally in a Mac-based environment including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • design and publishing software • website management systems • email systems • resource libraries • digital campaign tools. 	A		