

Surmounting the Trade Union Act 2016: A case study of using local branch data and communication systems to ‘get the vote out’ in the UK higher education sector

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STUC Research Network Conference, 13 February 2019

Behind Closed Circuits: Data, Digitalisation and Trade Union Tactics

#ClosedCircuits

Aim

- Tell the story of GTVO campaign in one UK HE institution
 - Context to GTVO campaign
 - What did we know at start of GTVO campaign?
 - What resources/data did we have/need?
 - What did we do/what did our GTVO campaign look like?
 - What did we achieve from the GTVO campaign?
 - What was learnt from our GTVO campaign?

GTVO campaign - context

- Second series of IA ballots since TU Act 2016 came into effect – first pensions dispute early 2018
- Long history of low turnouts before pensions dispute
- Likelihood of sub-50 per cent turnout without significant GTVO campaign
- Very different from pensions dispute – annual pay round
- Consultative ballot suggested willingness to take IA but turnout below 50 per cent
- IA ballot window opened at end of summer 2018
- Branch achieved highest turnout in pensions dispute (77 per cent) – plan to repeat GTVO campaign

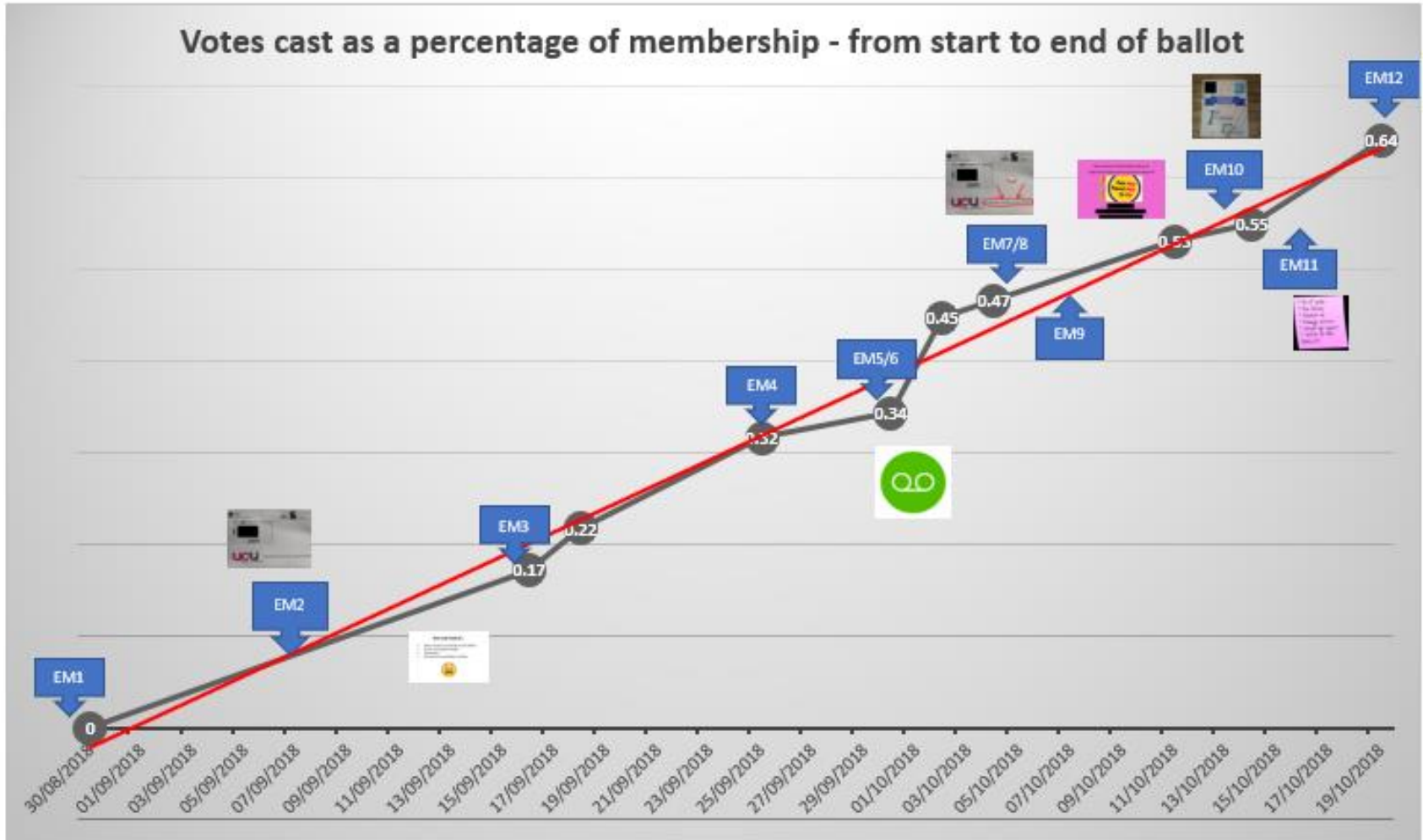
GTVO campaign – what did we know at the start?

- A membership base characterised by:
 - Very busy, especially with start of new academic year
 - Fragmented/based largely in individual offices – no/limited common areas
 - Based on multiple campuses
 - Remote working
 - High levels of domestic and overseas travel
 - Highly engaged/dedicated to job/strong occupational identity
 - More widely disgruntled/relatively engaged in UCU/TU matters
 - Distracted by other UCU ballots/surveys
 - Many new members, many with no previous experience of strike ballots
 - Often works outside of regular Monday-Friday 9-5 regime
 - Most effectively contacted by email, phone or via internal mail
 - Needs to be constantly encouraged to vote

GTVO campaign - what did we have/need?

- Resources
 - Limited number of activists/time to plan GTVO campaign
 - Social media feeds, e.g. branch Twitter, FB and blog
- Data/information
 - Branch email list
 - Individual email addresses
 - Internal mail details
 - Voicemail numbers

GTVO campaign – what did we do?



GTVO campaign – what did we achieve?

- 64 per cent turnout (highest out of 147 individual branches)
- 22 points above average (42 per cent turnout)
- 7 points above next highest (57 per cent Courtnauld IoA)
- Scope to get turnout higher
- Membership very proud of achievements
- Raised bargaining capacity of branch
- Raised branch profile nationally
- Higher probability of having good turnouts in future ballots – employer sensed real threat of IA

GTVO campaign – what was learnt?

- TU Act surmountable in more routine disputes
- Three types of members – low-hanging fruit, needing to be nudged, hard nuts
- Multiple means of direct/universal communications
- Clear, consistent, repeated, but varying messages
- Further valuable info gathered, e.g. voting patterns, follow up with non-voters
- Scalable (?)
- Wider use (?)