**Bonnie Robichaud Bursary**

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**2.** Can technology and social media fuel the ‘next’ movement? How can unions use technology and social media as a tool for the labour movement and increase engagement among its members?

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The Next Movement: Change that Goes Beyond the Digital

When an employee becomes truly passionate about their work, the result is nothing short of inspiring. Although, if employers wish to bring this quality of out of their employees, it is crucial for them to provide the tools necessary for them to thrive. Beyond the nature of the work itself, lay the circumstances that come to affect an employee on a deeper level. Often times, an employer can begin to view staff as employees as opposed to human beings. Without the ability to understand the common needs of employees’, the potential of making the work feel less like work disappears. For this reason, unions, such as the Government Services Union, act as the crucial foundation upon which employees can stand to be a part of something greater than their day-to-day work. This way, the role of unions becomes an organic part of a person’s life outside of the workplace as well.

When the collective good of a union goes beyond the desk, it is only natural to want to integrate its efforts into other daily activities such as social media. When considering the values that encompass a group such as the Government Services Union, social media seems to reflect them all. There is no doubt that social networks provide a medium to empower the voiceless to be heard, create a transparent platform that breaks down social barriers, and encourage innovation for betterment. It ensues a certain user-generated initiative as it puts the power into the hands of the people to drive a grass-root change. At its core, these attributes can all be seen in the Government Services Union. Thus, it can be said that social media can be the ultimate tool to enhance the union’s past, current, and future efforts while engaging a new generation of workers.

From the point of view of the next generation entering the government workforce, there are certain traits that run familiar among young employees when it comes to social media that could directly affect the Government Services Union’s use of online platforms. First, young employees look for empowerment in the form of their online presence. Getting in the driver’s seat to control one’s own career path is a clear priority in a world run by an abundance of information pulling people in conflicting directions. Therefore, a straight-to-the-point approach will form the learning culture that young employees are craving to be a part of online. Young employees strive to gain a meaningful voice among the online world and they search for an organization that can mirror that for them. Second, the new generation rejects the idea of a one-size fits all viewpoint. A welcoming community that embraces new and unique skills, life experiences and needs as opposed to fearing them will attract the new workforce. These two things should become the focus point of the union’s mission when looking to recruit the new generation. Ergo, these goals should be apparent on the union’s social media presence.

While success can come from utilizing these unique traits in the next generation’s online culture, there lays a trap underneath social media’s surface. Knowing that the next generation has the power to make information go viral online in a short amount of time prompts many to believe that feeding constant information on social media will efficiently engage users. This, of course, is the illusion that presents itself when the only call to action is a “like” or a “share”. Although, it becomes crucial to grasp that without a clear understanding of what concrete change looks like in 2019, social media’s impact on unions will remain a mere illusion. The issue remains that a “like” or a “share” only go as far as the platform’s virtual boundaries. Eventually, new information will enter its echo system and will quickly surpass it in novelty taking its place on an employee’s newsfeed. It is therefore crucial that unions use social media as a mere springboard towards the bigger picture. For example, initiating a conversation through interactive voting polls and feedback platforms or engaging participation through interactive invitations and calls to action go a long way. These allow the new generation to quench their thirst for being truly represented among the online masses in a way that will drive tangible results for the union in the process.

This way, social media does not remain the sole channel through which voices can be heard. By making the online world the first step towards an empowering workplace, it becomes clear to employees that real-world differences can only be brought-on by face-to-face engagement. Thus, by being a leader that points online noise towards real-life opportunity, the Government Services Union can serve its true purpose of making authentic differences in the lives of its members. At the end of the day, the biggest difference made in the life of a young employee is one that they can truly see.