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*Essay Topic 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?*

If the main complaint against the younger generation is that they are always on their phones, then why aren’t more people taking advantage of that as a way to engage them. Using social media platforms with quick easy access and simple enjoyable content is the key to unions being able to engage their younger workers. Particularly, the platform of twitter because of its informative nature as a social media application and secure, trustable, and verifiable software. With the right person at the helm creating and putting out content for the union, the use of Twitter could be a simple, cheap, and very effective way to engage the young work force, be it to mobilize for strike or to fuel the ‘next’ movement.

To begin, of all social media platforms, Twitter would be the best option for a union. An application that all or almost all young people have and use, Twitter is informative in nature because of the type of media content it puts out. Simply following the account for a union leader would allow members to see push notifications and messages right on their lock screens without even unlocking their phones in the form of informative tweets. This can be taken a step further with quality and simple content. Once members begin looking at and reading push notifications if the content is interesting enough they’ll be more likely to open it and read allowing the union to get out messages effectively, and then eventually members will come to really on information from that source.

Perfect examples of unions doing this here in Nova Scotia are the Nova Scotia teachers Union and the Halifax Professional Firefighters union. To begin with the teacher’s union, they use their Twitter page to send put general information, tweet about fun and interactive events, as well as news and jokes related to their field of work. During their last strike, however, Nova Scotia teachers quickly and effectively managed to mobilize their members through Twitter notifications. They effectively communicated with public, students, and their parents to gather their support. As a result of their effective mobilization through Twitter notifications, Nova Scotia Teachers organized one of the biggest street protests around the provincial legislature in the history of Halifax. Similarly, the Halifax Professional firefighter’s union uses their Twitter page as a way for members to access their website directly. They provide content about things happening involving firefighting in Halifax as well as in other firefighter unions. They also send out information on events like charities, funerals, partnerships and more. Both those union have effectively used their Twitter content to engaged young workers and students like me. I have participated in numerous public, volunteer, and fund raising activities, which I learned about from their Twitter pages.

These examples show how a well-run Twitter page with good simple and engaging content is a very easy way to engage not only younger members but members of all ages. Statically, this checks out as well. Halifax has about 500 career firefighters, yet their Twitter page has over 4000 followers it reaches. Similarly, the teacher’s union has almost 10000 followers it engages. The even bigger step to take place after getting members to read the simple and enjoyable content is to get them actively engaged in it. This is yet another advantage to using Twitter! It offers anonymous surveys that can be done on line, and the content can be retweeted by members and numerous other readers from public at large. Lastly, it gives members a platform where they can comment and engage in the messages the union is putting out in a safe, respectful, and efficient manner. Once this is achieved, the messages of the union leaders will not only be effectively received by members, but they will influence and engage them. Those messages can also be linked to other platforms such as YouTube, internet websites, or blogs to further support the union content.

To conclude, while many young people use different forms of social media, Instagram, Facebook, and many others platforms, Twitter stands out as a free, effective and efficient tool for engagement of members and public. To start out, a union local can set up a free Twitter account, which is easy and quick. Frequent publication of interesting and reliable content will quickly truth that Twitter page into a reliable a trusted source of information for young members to get info. Then the page will naturally transition into a way for the members and followers to engage in enjoyable, quality, and relevant content. This form of simple and effectively engagement can very simply and affordably attract the new and younger members in all unions to fuel any and all union movements.