

How could the Union Increase the sense of belonging with their members?

The world and workforce has changed over the years. Due to union activism in the workforce, positive changes have been made making a vastly different space from the days where even working hours were a struggle. With workers' rights, safety legislation and improved working conditions the workplace became a comfortable environment. However, with this comfort there is an era of workers that have lost the sense of belonging and knowledge of union importance that came with fighting for rights and the making of the union. This attitude diminishes the union's social standing and further drives a need for the union to strengthen its relationship with members and increase engagement. By focusing on members' connection through education, engagements and better social connection/interaction, the union will be able to foster a higher sense of belonging.

Special union engagements would create opportunities for members to gather and build relationships with other members, representatives and even the spirit of the union. Some engagements could be meet and greets, campaigns, and continuous in-person representative appearances to locals. These events would allow members who lack knowledge of the union's importance and do not care to connect with other members to form connections. This would increase their sense of belonging and to gather information on the importance from Local, Regional and National leadership representatives. There could also be meet and greets between GSU and other components. A togetherness campaign could foster a positive community of members who truly care about each other and the union's causes. This could be done through social media, activities, contests and in person events. The social media aspects could be posts, engaging emails, online chats and seminars, and connecting individuals digitally. Another engagement that could be implemented for members to feel like they are more informed and care is to have a representative show up at the offices semi-annually. This would allow members to reach out personally, find out information and have any questions answered or concerns heard by a real person. E-mails can cause a great disconnect and individuals tend to even delete them as they either do not care or the format doesn't work for them personally. When using emails but also utilizing human connection there will be a greater sense of community and care for members.

The aforementioned insufficient knowledge that union members hold further causes disengagement and uninformed individuals tend to lack the feeling of affiliation with their union. These issues could be resolved through educating members thoroughly on not only current issues but past problems that the union has worked on and resolved. By first allowing members to see how their union leadership works for them including what and where their union dues go, creates a good foundation of knowledge and future learning. Then the union should implement learning devices on their website that members are highly encouraged to read through or take as a course. This would go above and beyond mandated education and show members the small things that have been done. Positive members' stories can be shared in all facets from personal issues, discrimination, pay issues, Truth and Reconciliation and health & safety. This would allow members to see that their issues do matter, they are not alone and can bring their issues up.

As well, the union should implement stronger education programs into their locals. With members more commonly working remotely these could be bi-monthly in-person training events to create community, even connecting with other locals at these meetings through video conference.

To counteract the negative view of PSAC, GSU could focus attention on the component itself, engaging members through catchy slogans such as “GSU for You” and build on this drawing on the successes and gains made at the component level. As well, engaging newsletters could be issued providing tips, union process such as grievances, and a leadership spotlight section. The spotlight section would personalize GSU representatives and staff from the local to National level. These newsletters could also show local/regional/national presidents connecting with members and communities, showing that they truly do care about their cause. To further connect members in these newsletters as well as other formats, contests could be done to uplift spirits in difficult times. You could possibly win tickets personally or even locals could win events such as pizza parties. By incentivizing members to interact more they will realize how much the GSU really does for them and feel like they are more a part of the community.

Union pride in the workplace will foster a wanted sense of belonging and this can be achieved through better interaction with things such as newsletters, better foundational and continuous education and meet and greets which engage members. Ensuring that members feel as if they are part of the union is important in the union's success and without it causes a union to fail. By implementing positive changes, the GSU union will be able to have engaged members who care and feel as if they belong and are important.

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