

▣ SEVEN STAGES OF PLANNING

1. *Create a map of your workplace and keep it updated*
2. *Create a profile of your members, potential members and activists*
3. *Identify strengths and weaknesses of your unions organisation*
4. *Decide on your aims and objectives*
5. *Decide who will do what and allocate resources*
6. *Implement your plan*
7. *Evaluate and review it*

Mapping – identifying and prioritising our organising.

Workplace mapping is a fundamental skill for a trade union organiser. Without knowing where our members are, (and where they are not), we cannot hope to increase membership and activism; and with it our bargaining power.

To map a branch is a simple concept, but it requires preparation, practice, and legwork from officials and active members at the branch and brigade level.

At its most basic, mapping is a list or plan of the area of responsibility (in the FBU this is usually a brigade or area/division), showing the number of members at each workplace, the numbers/names of reps in place, and the total number of staff. From this we can work out:

1. **The number of members in each workplace and, therefore the total number in the Brigade area.**
2. **The duty systems in each workplace and the number of members employed on each duty system (including those with dual contracts).**
3. **The different employment types in each workplace and area (full/part time, Grey Book etc).**

4. **Total density of membership as a percentage (i.e., the ratio of staff who are FBU members to the total number of staff employed in the area of responsibility).**
5. **Information on the numbers and locations of branch reps (including H&S and FAW reps etc).**

Once up to date, this mapping gives the organiser the ability to focus efforts where they can build the most power in the workplace and helps to alter and focus their approach when visiting or speaking with a branch; for instance, there is little point in launching a full-scale recruitment presentation if the branch concerned is already close to 100% membership.

Accurate and up to date membership information, such as the workplaces where members are based, their current home address, the rank/role that they hold etc, is vital if the Union is to beat the highly restrictive anti-union laws and deliver a successful ballot on behalf of members. ***But successful mapping is not just about numbers and data.***

To achieve our aims, we also need mapping to identify other issues, such as:

- **Areas and workplaces in need of support to hold Union meetings and/or elect Branch reps.**
- **Areas and workplaces being targeted by management for unagreed work activities/policies or as part of an anti-union agenda.**
- **Areas and workplaces experiencing an unusual drop in membership.**
- **Areas and workplaces known to achieve high levels of attendance at union events and can share best practice.**
- **Areas and workplaces with specific questions/concerns requiring Brigade Official intervention.**
- **FBU Branches who are not being represented at Brigade Committee.**
- **We also know that issues in the fire and rescue service, especially around culture, do not affect all our members equally. A good workplace and brigade map will also be able to identify where we have members from our equality sections and are often underrepresented in our democratic structure.**

Successful mapping requires officials to engage face-to-face with members and branches in an organised, structured way. A strong and vibrant union can only be achieved by meeting and engaging with reps, members, and potential members.

Effective Mapping in the FBU

Workplace mapping is never complete as no workplace ever stays the same. As an organising activity mapping needs to be constant, especially in an industry such as the

Fire & Rescue Service where members can be promoted or transfer from watches and workplaces on a regular basis.

Although the role of Brigade Organiser engages directly with the FBU membership system, mapping is a key role for every official and is best achieved if officials work together as a team and take ownership of the branches and areas they represent.

Brigade Committees should therefore:

1. Ensure that all officials have a clear understanding of the FBU aims, strategy and principles which drive our organising.
2. Task each Branch Official with providing regular updates to the Brigade Organiser on any changes to membership in their Branch. This information is vital to ensure we are always ballot ready.
3. Agree an initial mapping plan. This must include:
 - Confirming the number of members in each workplace and, therefore the total number in the Brigade area.
 - Confirming the duty systems in each workplace and the number of members employed on each duty system (including those with dual contracts).
 - Confirming the different employment types in each workplace (full/part time, Grey Book etc).
 - Confirming the density of membership in each workplace (i.e., the ratio of staff who are FBU members to the total number of staff employed in the workplace).
 - Identify numbers and locations of branch reps.
 - Identify which branches are meeting regularly and have an engaged membership (and, conversely, which branches do not).
 - Identify areas and workplaces being targeted by management for unagreed work activities/policies or as part of an anti-union agenda.
 - Identify areas and workplaces experiencing an unusual drop in membership.
 - Identify areas and workplaces known to achieve high levels of attendance at union events and can share best practice.
 - Identify areas and workplaces with specific questions/concerns requiring support from the Brigade Committee.
 - Identify branches not being represented at Brigade Committee.
 - Identify areas and workplaces being targeted by management for unagreed work activities/policies or as part of an anti-union agenda.
 - Identify areas and workplaces experiencing an unusual drop in membership.
 - Identify areas and workplaces known to achieve high levels of attendance at union events and can share best practice.

NB: Although this may initially seem a daunting task, experience has shown that most information is either already known by Officials or can be quickly provided by the Branch rep. The mapping activity is most effectively implemented by Branch Officials with direct support from the Brigade Organiser.

The Power of Small Tasks.

In the FBU, and across the union movement, officials often feel under pressure to 'do it all'. However, this often leads to us neglecting to use our most powerful resource as a trade union, our members.

By asking 'ordinary' FBU members on branches to take on small tasks which help build the union not only are you freeing up officials' time for other tasks but more importantly you are building the confidence and capability of that member to be a more active FBU member, and potential future official.

Some of the actions associated with Mapping, especially those all-important one-to-one conversations do not need to be undertaken by an official but can be tasked to a FBU member.

Other examples of small tasks which can inspire a big change in members could include but are not limited to:

- Updating the FBU noticeboard. Even if there is no new information to put up asking someone to move the information around into a new order every few weeks will make people stop and have a look.
- Helping to organise the branch meetings. Taking the minutes can be an activity that rotates around members, as is getting in the all important snacks.

4. Make 'Organising' a stand-alone agenda item at every meeting of the Brigade Committee and provide time to receive an updated membership presentation. This to include a breakdown of:

- Number of new members since the last meeting of the Brigade Committee.
- Number of leavers since the last meeting - broken down into retirements, resignations from the service, resignations from the Union (including stated reason why if available).
- Current overall number of members in the Brigade.
- Current overall membership density in the Brigade.
- Current number of registered Branch Officials in the Brigade.

- Updates on Organising plans, tasks and activities (see section 3.3).

All the above should be overseen, reported to, and supported by Regional Committees in accordance with the structures of the Union.

3.3 Charting - Using Mapping to Build

Although a good workplace map is never complete and is always adapting, once the initial mapping process, as outlined above is complete, Brigade Committees will be able to objectively assess the strengths and weaknesses of their FBU structure and prioritise the areas to build upon. This is most effectively done by undertaking an advanced form of mapping called Charting.

We believe that the workplace branch is the building block of the FBU. To make our branches strong we need to identify, encourage, and support members to become active in the Fire Brigades Union. The FBU is a movement, and movements get their power from motivated members taking on more responsibility and more complex tasks to build the power they need to make the change they want to see.

For officials that are worried that their members are not engaged with the union or willing to 'step up' charting is an especially effective way of building confident members and workplace activists in a systematic way.

As well as the basic information on membership (see above) charting adds other measures to a map which lets officials make judgements on how powerful, capable and willing branches and members are to act and demonstrate their power as workers.

A chart uses 'Structure Tests' as a unit of measurement. Each Structure Test is a different action being asked of a brigade, branch, or member to build power at the workplace. With each structure test successfully completed those members are becoming more confident, capable, and powerful trade unionists and the union becomes more likely to achieve even more impactful actions.

Example of Charting:



Here is an example from a union campaign in a US hospital. As you can see the workers are broken down into departments and shifts, as you would expect from any workplace map. However each of the different coloured stickers denote whether that worker has taken the actions asked by the union, such as signing a strike pledge card and signing petitions etc.

3.4 Building the branch – Make contact & engage.

As part of the Organising plan, Officials should concentrate their efforts on having physical meetings with the members at the branch and telling them that they are there to support them.

With regular engagement and discussion, Officials will be able to identify:

- **What the issues on the branch are.**
- **The dynamics and issues which have led to a lack of FBU engagement.**
- **Individuals or groups who are politically active or may, with encouragement, support FBU activities.**

Officials should consider the following when developing an initial plan for engagement:

- **Having an initial meeting with members at the branch and introducing themselves. This can be pre-arranged or, in situations where there is hostile management at the workplace, Officials may wish to simply turn up unannounced at the workplace during a known break or at close of shift/drill period.**

- If it's a wholetime branch, make sure you take the time to meet each watch (doing this at change of shift can save time) and ask for an initial watch rep or point of contact.
- Break the ice by giving a short, pre-prepared update on the current issues being dealt with by the Union in the Brigade. This will assist in gaining the interest of members and showing that the purpose of the Union is to fight for them.
- Find out what the issues on the branch are and highlight how these can be dealt with by organising through the union.
- Offer your contact details and encourage members with issues to contact you. This will highlight the role of the Union, especially if, for instance, you are able to take up and support a member in a grievance or discipline procedure.
- Encourage members to recognise that it is in their interests to have an active branch and support them to build it.
- Organise for an FBU noticeboard to put in place and encourage members to support it by keeping it up to date and tidy.
- Once you have made an initial connection, call a branch meeting, and emphasise how members can strengthen the union and make it more effective by organising in the workplace.
- Ask for two branch reps, or points of contact, to come forward. This way new reps will feel less vulnerable and can share workloads.
- Highlight that new Branch Officials will have the support of the wider FBU team and that education is available to support them in their new role.
- Assist in organising for branch members to attend any FBU rallies, lobbies or demonstrations that are coming up. If they are inspired by the experience, they will champion the union in the workplace and may even consider becoming reps.

Make sure you report progress to the Brigade Committee during the Organising agenda item.

3.5 Building the branch – Encouraging new reps

Becoming an FBU branch rep can seem a daunting task, and you may find that members are initially reluctant to put themselves forward as a workplace representative. However, to recruit new reps, the most effective thing that can be done is to engage and **ASK!**

Make sure you engage members in face-to-face discussions at branches. Discuss union issues and encourage members to get active by '**DOING SOMETHING FBU**' by following these simple rules:

1. Be realistic in what you ask them to do. Make sure that it not only appears relevant and effective but is also feasible and practical.
2. Make it clear that the union values any and all contributions and emphasise how branch activity strengthens the union and makes it more effective.

3. Make a connection – give them a reason to be active and link what you ask them to do to something they already care about. If they're bothered about something, ask them to discuss that issue with other members in the branch and gauge support for doing something about it through the FBU.
4. Start with small tasks and as confidence grows give members bigger tasks and more responsibility.
5. If members are reluctant to get involved, think about why. While it's important not to pester them, don't give up too easily either.
6. There's always 'something FBU' to be done during a campaign or in the daily running of a branch. For example, ask members to help by:
 - Checking that colleagues have their correct home address registered with the union by asking if they receive 'Firefighter'. Then ask them to call you with the results.
 - Making sure the union mail gets opened and passed around watches.
 - Keeping the union noticeboard up to date and well resourced.
 - Asking them to be a point of contact for a particular issue, for instance a campaign the union is running locally.
 - Collating names for attendance at FBU rallies or other events.

You can then build on their interest by asking them to attend a Brigade Committee meeting, even as an observer, or encouraging them to attend an FBU education course.

Make sure you report progress to the Brigade Committee during the Organising agenda item.

3.5 Building the branch – Encouraging new members.

The aim of the Union is to achieve, as close as possible, 100% FBU membership in all Grey Book roles. The Brigade Committee should ensure that there is an ongoing programme to achieve early access to new trainee firefighters and recruit them to the Union as early as possible.

However, there will be occasions when this has not occurred and there will therefore be groups of workers who are in workplaces but have not yet joined the FBU. The mapping process will identify who these workers are and where they are based. Officials should ensure there is an ongoing programme of contacting these workers and encouraging them to join the FBU.

A tried and tested FBU membership presentation is available for officials to use at. The full presentation takes time to go through and requires IT in order to show the videos it contains. It is therefore most effective if you can arrange a meeting with groups of potential members, for instance at an RDS station which has not previously had RDS members. For individual potential members, it is best to meet them in the workplace, give them information on why it is in their interests to be in the FBU, ensure they have the electronic link necessary to join the FBU and encourage them to do so.

A range of posters encouraging FBU membership are also available and these should be permanently displayed in all FRS workplaces.

Former members who have left the Union.

Although the aim of the Union is to achieve, as close as possible, 100% FBU membership in all Grey Book roles, there are also strict rules regarding how former members can re-join the Union.

Before approaching former members and requesting them to re-join, Officials should acquaint themselves with these rules and ensure they are fully conversant with them.

Officials should make sure they report any progress on recruitment to the Brigade Committee during the Organising agenda item.