

I am he as you are he and you are me and we
are all together:

Communicating with professional know-it-alls

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<http://ulfa.ca/bargaining/>

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Why communicate at all?

- Cynical version: You need members to be on your side for ratification or if things go wrong (i.e. Lockout/Strike)
 - Positive version: Informed members
 - make better decisions at ratification,
 - work better under the collective agreement between ratifications, and
 - bring better-formulated problems for you to work on next time
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- Bottom Line:

An informed union membership is an effective union membership

Issues in communicating with faculty members

- If we've learned anything over the last three years, it is that Academics are not as special as they think they are when it comes to labour relations
 - With the exception of self-governance and management-membership, most issues are common or garden variety labour problems
- However, Academics have several characteristics:
 - Loyalty to discipline, department, and faculty rather than university
 - Barely consider themselves employees; certainly not a collective
 - Actually *are* above average
 - Tend to be relatively sure of their own intelligence (less so of yours)
 - Are good at navigating reward systems
 - Are professional contrarians.

Things that don't work

- Overt propaganda
 - Faculty are not less gullible than others but they assess the reliability of arguments for a living.
 - Are contrarians and poke holes in arguments on a daily basis.
- Appeals to solidarity for its own sake
 - Their day jobs (ideally) involve undermining group think.
 - More likely to think colleagues (especially in different disciplines) are idiots than brothers and sisters.
- Exploiting class division
 - Everybody is either a dean *manqué* or too good to be a dean.
 - It's like Americans and millionaires

Our research

- Looked across country at University and Union and Management communications, focussing particularly on places that had strikes or lockouts.
- Looked at **tone, format, content**.
- On the whole not impressed:
 - Found them to be quite predictable: “Irresponsible faculty” “corporatist administration.”
 - Mostly opinion and clearly slanted facts.
 - Often difficult to access: PDFs, emails, etc.
 - Reading as an academic and union officer, I found that I rarely believed either side was reporting things honestly.
 - I found the hostility/positionality offputting.

Found one really great model

- UNBC Management Strike Updates:

<http://bit.ly/UNBC-BLOG>

March 15, 2015

Classes for Monday March 16 are cancelled. Further updates will be added when information becomes available.

March 14, 2015

The University and Faculty Association bargaining teams met today. The FA bargaining team provided its response to the compensation proposal presented by the University on Thursday. The University's perspective is that it does not represent a substantial shift from the FA bargaining team's original compensation position tabled on June 11 2014. However, the University has committed to reviewing the proposal and will be in contact with the Faculty Association to establish the next meeting.

March 12, 2015

After a day of negotiations, during which the UNBC bargaining team presented a new proposal regarding compensation, the UNBC and UNBC FA bargaining teams agreed to reconvene on Saturday. The University is looking forward to continued negotiations.

Picket lines remain in place, however, so classes are cancelled for Friday March 13.

Found one really great model

- Love the tone (positional but soft on confrontation; credits good will; teaches and explains rather than argues)
- Love the ease of access and breadth of coverage (includes emails, positions, news, letters)
- Love focus on facts over/alongside opinion: I have a sense of what's going on.

March 18, 2015

The University continues to actively pursue options for reaching a mutually acceptable first collective agreement with the Faculty Association (FA):

- UNBC has contacted the mediator and asked him to contact the FA bargaining team to see if there is a way to break the stalemate at the bargaining table.
- Earlier this week, The University President also initiated contact with the Faculty Association and requested a meeting involving the President of the University, the President of the Faculty Association, and the chief negotiators for the FA and University bargaining teams. The purpose of the meeting was to have an informal exchange on the issues separating the parties. This meeting took place on Monday, but no new initiatives have occurred as a result.

When the bargaining teams last met on Saturday, the FA bargaining team tabled a compensation proposal that was fundamentally the same proposal they tabled in June 2014.

In addition, the Faculty Association was very clear that any counter-proposal prepared by the administration would be rejected unless it met a number of conditions:

1. Acceptance of the salary grid proposed by the FA bargaining team.
2. A two-year agreement
3. The addition of "a lot more money" to the University's last compensation proposal.

The University's bargaining team has been told by the FA bargaining team that unless these demands are met, there is no point in tabling new proposals.

The University has repeatedly advised the FA bargaining team that there is flexibility to negotiate within the University's most recent compensation proposal, but that there is no additional funding. The FA bargaining team's demands exceed the University's fiscal constraints and the provincial government's Economic Stability Mandate.

The University continues to pursue options available to resolve this dispute.

We decided on this as our model

- Focus on presenting the facts and constraints facing us, rather than our arguments or opinions.
 - Idea is to put the members in our shoes and education them on the issues; come to conclusions *with* us rather than get them from us.
- Staying extremely calm and assuming everybody is working in good will
 - Don't want to cook up unreasonable expectations or encourage cynicism
 - We've also warned people that the tone of the blog is a lagging indicator
- Want to be the members source of facts and education
 - *Miracle of 34th Street* when the Board publishes something
 - Source of advice and preparation
- Wrote for a specific target: conservative, suspicious of unions, interested in systems and “game theory”

Combined with face-to-face townhalls/presentations

- What's involved in a lockout/strike? bit.ly/LockoutStrike
- How does bargaining work? What is different? bit.ly/NegotiationProtocols
- Opportunities to share concerns and give tips and pointers to us

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Understanding Lockout/ Strike in the Post Secondary Sector under the Alberta Labour Relations Code



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Bargaining “Meet and Greet”

Paul Hayes and Daniel Paul O'Donnell



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Results

- As Paul said:
 - Members report great satisfaction
 - Tell us they understand what is going on
- Surprising result was that they aren't always sure we know what's going on
 - Had several delegations come to check we understood the implications of what is being reported in the blog
- Requires discipline
 - Write the blog and then take everything that's good out of it
 - Have multiple eyes look at everything
 - Are going to use letters and others to express opinion