

Interview with Uniofy

1. Your work, briefly

I am Antti Mäki, Product Owner at Uniofy. Uniofy builds an organising-native SaaS platform for trade unions, helping them visualise and use their existing data to support workplace-level organising and groundwork.

I should also say that these are my personal reflections. I work for Uniofy, but I am also a trade union activist, and my views here come from both of those perspectives.

What drew me to this work is a belief that organising is the foundation of union power. Technology does not replace organising, but used well, it can make organising easier, more focused and more scalable.

2. What hostile actors do well

Hostile actors are often very good at moving quickly. They know what they want to say, they say it clearly, and they use every available platform to spread it. They do not always spend too much time worrying about perfect wording, process or consensus before acting.

Unions, by contrast, often think more carefully and democratically, which is a strength. But the democratic cogwheels can also turn too slowly. By the time a union has agreed its response, the moment may already have passed.

The lesson is not that unions should copy hostile actors' methods or ethics. The lesson is that unions need a clearer, more proactive communications strategy: a stronger common voice, a clearer story about what the movement stands for, and the confidence to speak before being forced only to react.

3. The opportunity for unions

The biggest unused opportunity is data. Unions often have large amounts of valuable information about their members, workplaces, sectors and organising structures, but too often that data is not used strategically.

Used responsibly and lawfully, data can help unions understand different groups of members, target messages better, support organisers, identify opportunities and make better decisions. GDPR should be respected, of course, but it should not become a convenient excuse for doing nothing. If

the data has been collected properly and can be used properly, unions should put it to work.

Technology can help unions stand up to hostile actors by making their own organising more systematic, targeted and timely. But the starting point is not the tool. The starting point is deciding what the union is trying to achieve and then using technology to support that strategy.

4. Where it's easy, where it's hard

Good results often come quickly when unions understand the basic idea: if you organise more systematically, use your data better and focus on workplaces, you can start to see results. Many people in unions understand this at a high level quite quickly.

The hard part is implementation. Real change requires changes in workflows, responsibilities, habits and sometimes internal power structures. That is where progress often slows down. People may agree with the idea, but when the work needs to change, it can suddenly become someone else's responsibility.

So the difficulty is not usually that unions cannot understand the need for change. The difficulty is turning that understanding into daily practice.

5. What unions misunderstand

The biggest misunderstanding is that buying technology is the same as changing how the union works. It is not.

A new platform, database, website or AI tool will not automatically bring in hundreds of new members. Technology does not do the union's work on its own. It can support the work, make it more efficient, help scale it and make it more measurable, but it cannot replace strategy, organising discipline or leadership.

In many cases, obtaining technology is the easy part. Using it strategically is the hard part. That requires culture, structure, skills and commitment.

6. Being better partners

Unions would be better partners if they invested more seriously in internal technology competence. I do not mean simply having people who are interested in technology or willing to try new tools. I mean having people who understand technology strategically.

When unions buy digital services, they often know their operational needs, but they may not fully understand what they are ordering. That makes them vulnerable to being sold the wrong thing, or something that cannot be integrated properly into their wider work.

Unions need people who understand systems, integrations, data flows, information security and long-term maintainability. Better internal competence would help unions brief suppliers better, challenge suppliers better and make sure technology actually lands and lasts.

7. Preparing for the future

On AI in particular, I think unions need to be honest about where they are. Many unions are still behind on basic digitalisation, and there is a risk of trying to jump straight from a pre-digital stage into an AI stage. AI will not solve the digital work that has not yet been done.

To prepare for the future, unions should first build stronger digital foundations: good data, clear processes, integrated systems, staff skills and a willingness to experiment. They should hire and empower people with strong technology and strategic skills, give them room to test things, and accept that some experiments will fail.

Being genuinely ready does not mean having an AI policy document alone. It means having organisations where technology, data and organising strategy are connected in everyday work.

8. What Unions 21 could do

Unions 21 could play a very useful role as a hub for digital and technology capability across the movement. But for that to work, unions would need to invest in it seriously and give it enough freedom, resources and mandate.

There is a strong case for a shared digital hub supported by many unions, not just a small handful. Such a hub could connect unions to each other, connect them to credible providers, support shared learning and help unions understand what good digital adoption actually requires.

The key is that this should not only be about showcasing tools. It should also be about helping unions make the cultural and structural changes needed for technology to work.

9. Anything else

The main point I would want unions to hear is this: organising is still the key. Successful organising does not require technology, but technology can make good organising easier, faster and more scalable.

Digitalisation should not be treated as a shortcut around strategy. It should be treated as a way to strengthen strategy. If unions are clear about what they are trying to build, who they are trying to reach and how they want to organise, then technology can be extremely powerful.

But without that clarity, even the best tools will disappoint.