

# Building the jobs for tomorrow's unions

What unions need to consider for jobs for today and the future

Becky Wright

# Transparency

We collated insight and reports across the union and membership space. AI was used to help synthesise and work through scenarios and options.

# Introduction

For members, it is vital that unions as organisations are fit for purpose.

Effective capacity building means ensuring those within the union have the necessary skills and knowledge they need to build the power of the union, requiring appropriate development for staff or for the union to consider hiring new roles/people.

To help unions to think through these changes, Unions 21 explored the technological, labour market and societal shifts we know are taking place right as well as jobs that we can see emerging in other membership organisations and unions across the globe.

This created a list of jobs that will be completely new to many unions.

However, we know that those changes we identified will have an impact on *existing* union roles and have also explored what that will mean for unions in an everyday context. Across unions and roles, we will need the following skills:

- Change management
- Agile project delivery
- Interdisciplinary collaboration
- Digital storytelling and visual comms

# What are the future jobs in unions?

## Industrial focussed

### AI and workplace automation Advocate

As automation and AI continue to reshape industries as we enter the Fourth Industrial Revolution, unions need experts in this area to assess and negotiate on behalf of workers.

#### Key Skills:

- Understanding of AI, robotics, and workplace tech
- Ability to evaluate job impact and retraining needs
- Policy analysis and negotiation
- Collaboration with employers on ethical AI use
- Retraining and upskilling coordination

### Worker data rights & surveillance officer

We have already seen the use of tracking and productivity software used in industries to employers increasingly use tracking and productivity software. Unions must defend worker privacy.

#### Key Skills:

- Data protection laws (e.g., GDPR)
- Algorithmic accountability
- Ethical tech auditing
- Member education on data rights

### Learning experience designer

Internal capacity building of activists is crucial to the operations model of unions. As technology develops, and even as the demand for lifelong learning grows, these roles are an extension of our traditional education officers and create tailored, tech-enhanced education programmes.

#### Key Skills:

- Instructional design
- eLearning tools
- Micro-credentialing and badging systems
- UX design principles

### Digital Community Manager/Experience Designer

Across member organisations we are seeing trends to use hybrid or digital technology to build and nurture member communities.

#### Key Skills:

- Community platform management
- Engagement strategy
- Data-driven content planning
- Empathy and communication

### Digital organiser/Campaign technologist

While organising remains central to the building of union capacity, traditional organising methods are evolving. While previously, digital tools were seen purely in communications roles, increasingly we will see a need for organisations to also use them to reach and engage members.

#### Key Skills:

- Social media strategy & platform analytics
- Digital mobilisation tools
- Email campaign design
- Online campaign storytelling

## Communications

### Generative content specialist

Communications departments have been impacted by the introduction of AI. Roles in content creation now move to produce high-quality, tailored content at scale ethically using generative AI.

#### Key Skills:

- Prompt engineering
- Editorial judgement
- AI content tools
- Digital storytelling

## Operations

### Cybersecurity Lead

We have already seen unions affected by hacking and the growing reliance on member data means more need for securing it and complying with regulations like GDPR, AI Act, etc.

### **Key Skills:**

- Cyber risk assessment
- Incident response planning
- Secure system design

### **AI and automation Specialist**

Moving past IT, unions will need to integrate, manage, and oversee AI tools across a whole range of union operations.

### **Key Skills:**

- Machine learning and data analysis
- AI ethics and governance
- Prompt engineering

## **Membership**

### **Member Intelligence Analyst**

With more data and more ways to store that data easily, unions will be able to create actionable insights from members' behaviour, preferences, and feedback.

### **Key Skills:**

- CRM and analytics tools
- Data visualisation
- Survey design and analysis
- Predictive modelling

## **Research**

### **Future of work researcher**

Unions need to be prepared to adapt to changes not only the wider world of work but more specifically their industries and to work with staff to adapt or advocate to changes..

### **Key Skills:**

- Trend forecasting
- Workforce planning
- Scenario development
- Change management
- Business process automation

# How will existing jobs change?

Role	Key changes	Emerging skills
<b>General Secretary</b>	Increased breadth of law and regulation in the world of work, especially regarding AI, tech and platform work. Greater focus on the use of data and digital and the necessary governance of that work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic leadership on AI issues</li> <li>• Digital transformation oversight</li> <li>• Public speaking/media handling in AI and automation contexts</li> </ul>
<b>Deputy/Assistant General Secretaries</b>	Will need to be able to lead cross-departmental work, especially as digital is more in use. More oversight of tech driven member touch points which remain inclusive and sustainable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change management and systems thinking.</li> <li>• Understanding of digital infrastructure</li> </ul>
<b>Regional/National Secretaries</b>	The use of hybrid tools to engage members will be backed up by the use of data to track member needs and employer practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data literacy and CRM tools</li> <li>• Remote mobilisation and campaign tech</li> <li>• Understanding algorithmic impacts on workplace rights</li> </ul>
<b>Regional/Negotiations Officer</b>	Increasingly, this role negotiates on algorithmic management, data surveillance, and remote work terms as well as normal everyday negotiations on pay and conditions. With more people working hybrid and using AI, there is an increased role in employer tech policy scrutiny.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AI and surveillance literacy</li> <li>• Digital negotiation</li> <li>• Ability to interpret data policies and workplace software contracts</li> </ul>
<b>Caseworker</b>	Have to deal with a rise in tech related disciplinarys and grievances as well as internally having a greater reliance on case management platforms and chat functions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Digital case tracking systems</li> <li>• Knowledge of employment tech regulations</li> <li>• Cybersecurity basics for confidential data handling</li> </ul>



<b>Organiser</b>	Digital-first and hybrid organising are now essential.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social media mobilisation</li> <li>• Platform economy dynamics</li> <li>• Digital tools for community building</li> </ul>
<b>Legal Officer</b>	Legal focus shifting toward AI, data rights, and gig economy classification. Involvement in national-level litigation over tech and employment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tech -related employment law (AI, privacy, algorithmic decisions)</li> <li>• Strategic litigation and media communication</li> <li>• Familiarity with AI Act and data protection updates</li> </ul>
<b>Head of Communication</b>	Oversight of AI-generated content and digital reputation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AI content review and risk management</li> <li>• Multi-platform content strategy</li> <li>• Data analytics for audience segmentation</li> </ul>
<b>Digital/content officer</b>	<p>Crisis comms increasingly driven by viral online campaigns.</p> <p>AI-assisted content creation</p> <p>More rapid, data-driven campaign cycles</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prompt engineering for generative tools</li> <li>• SEO and web analytics</li> <li>• Ethical use of AI in media</li> </ul>
<b>Media/PR Officer</b>	<p>Navigating misinformation and deepfakes in the media landscape.</p> <p>Increased use of short-form video and podcast formats.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AI media verification and fact-checking</li> <li>• Multi-channel media content production</li> <li>• Narrative development using digital tools</li> </ul>

<b>Membership Officer</b>	<p>Personalised member engagement driven by data insights.</p> <p>Stronger emphasis on inclusive digital communications.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CRM tools and data segmentation</li> <li>• Inclusive design for comms (accessibility, language sensitivity)</li> <li>• Omnichannel member experience management</li> </ul>
<b>Finance Officer/Manager</b>	<p>Tech will automate many manual tasks. Focus shifts to data interpretation, scenario forecasting, and ESG budgeting.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cloud accounting</li> <li>• Data visualisation</li> <li>• Impact tracking</li> </ul>
<b>HR Officer/Manager</b>	<p>Will manage tech implementation, ensure fair use of AI tools in hiring/performance, and address worker wellbeing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AI in HR &amp; algorithmic decision audits</li> <li>• Mental health first aid &amp; burnout prevention</li> <li>• Equity &amp; bias mitigation training</li> </ul>