Future of Work Collection

The Benefits and Challenges of Introducing Automation at Unions

In several industries, the pandemic changed how people are working and increased the reliance on technology for communication, relationship building, and day-to-day tasks. Many unions feel pressured to evolve based on changing member expectations and an increased need for remote collaboration. How can unions effectively leverage technology to ensure staff are effective in their work environments and meet the needs of their members?

One area of opportunity is in automating repetitive, labor-intensive tasks, using computerized programs. What are the benefits? What are the challenges? How can we embrace change and still have comfort and consistency in the union activities for its members and staff?

There are several benefits of automation that when thoughtfully applied can add tremendous value to strengthen the union administratively as well enable organizing or engagement activities.

Process Large Data Set
with Speed and Accuracy

The ability to process a large data set with speed and accuracy is one of the key benefits of automation. Not only can this type of automation minimize errors and speed up processing time, but it can also increase timeliness and confidence in union data.

For example, with increased data accuracy, unions can have a more accurate snapshot of its membership and be confident utilizing its membership data as a basis for organizing initiatives.

Business Insights to
Support Decision Making

A second benefit of using computerized programs for data processing is the ability to visualize the dataset in a timely manner. Oftentimes, modern computer programs have analytic dashboards built in so that unions can pinpoint and proactively address issues before they become bigger problems.

For example, unions can use this knowledge to keep employers accountable for checkoff submissions, bargaining unit list submissions and other administrative responsibilities.

Streamline Repetitive Tasks

Finally, unions can streamline repetitive tasks through the use of intelligent forms that simplify data entry efforts (e.g. auto complete) and improve accuracy (e.g. address validation against the US Postal address database). More advanced intelligent forms in the union space can also automatically create member records from checkoff submissions or bargaining unit lists.

Such automation can free up time against administrative tasks. In turn, staff will have more time to focus on key areas such as direct member engagement and support, organizing enablement or special projects. A study published by Smart Sheet found that 78% of employees agreed that automation allows them to spend more time on the interesting and rewarding aspects of their job.

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The Challenge

While there are great benefits, successful implementation of automation at unions can also be challenging. One of the key challenges surrounds the fear of the unknowns. Here are some considerations to address the reluctance to automate:

❖ Turning unknowns into knowns by investigating and understanding what automation could bring to the union can quickly break down concerns.

❖ Automation is not about changing for the sake of change, but evolution and improvement. Change can be difficult, but once people see the results and embrace the 'new normal' it can be a rising tide that can float many boats.

❖ The people side of adapting to any change is of key importance. Improvement of this nature is not something you introduce and 'see how it goes'. Careful planning of how changes are introduced and engagement of staff in the process is critical to success.

Looking Ahead

As illustrated above, automation can improve productivity, enable staff to work on higher value activities, improve staff engagement and most importantly, further create value for members.

While the upfront investigation and focus on change management required can be considerable, a study by McKenzie & Company found that the benefits typically are between 3x and 10x the organizational investment. As technology continues to mature and gain sophistication, the potential reward continues to multiply as well.

About Bursting Silver

Bursting Silver works with North America's leading associations, regulatory bodies, and unions. We specialize in digital transformation. Our unique ability is in finding the simplicity in the complex. We are nimble, responsive and client driven.

Want to learn more?
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About WeRise

WeRise is a software platform that enables unions to efficiently administer all aspects of their memberships and provides a platform for organizers to rally union members.

WeRise is 100% cloud-based with security, accessibility, and scalability built-in to future proof your operations. The solution has been architected to provide a cohesive software solution across all locals, while keeping local data segregated and secure.

With a powerful platform as a foundation, WeRise is multifaceted with the member information at its core. Clients can use the out-of-the-box capabilities as they are released and participate in product development plans through feedback or take a more direct role in specific engagements to expand the system to meet organizational goals.

Some key features include:

❖ Membership Data Management
❖ Dues Management
❖ Dashboard & Data Visualization
❖ Member List Segmentation
❖ Email/SMS Blast to Members