

# CONNECTIVE ACTION



## DIGITAL TOOLS FOR TRADE UNIONS 2019 REVIEW

**Connective Action**

**Digital Tools for Trade Unions: 2019 REVIEW**

**version 1.0**

**By the Young Workers' Lab at UNI Global Union**

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# INTRO

UNI Global Union's Young Workers Lab division is tasked to answer:

## **“HOW CAN DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES BE USED BY UNIONS AND YOUNG WORKERS TO IMPROVE YOUNG WORKERS’ JOB QUALITY AND VOICE IN THE DIGITAL WORLD OF WORK?”**

This report is a result of our scanning of digital tools that we believe can boost union outreach to members, particularly young members. Some tools are designed by unions, others not. Some are free to use, others not. Some are hugely successful, while others have only just begun their journey. The tools we present here give a taste of what is available.

New apps and services are popping up all the time. The ones we present for you in this report are neither conclusive, nor exhaustive. But they are some of the best, and the most innovative.

At the heart of each tool we profile is the aspiration to harness information to boost impact. We’ve asked each development team to share lessons learned

along the way. You’ll find lessons like ‘co-build with users, not just for them’ and ‘scale slowly even if the world wants you to scale fast.’ Our aim is to shine a light on how pioneering groups have merged digital tools with the spirit of collectivisation.

In what follows, we also outline more than a dozen off-the-shelf digital tools (many of which are free) that you can put to use today to become more organised in planning, making budgets, making presentations, or just staying in touch with members or your team. We welcome your thoughts, feedback and experiences!

***OUR AIM IS TO SHINE A LIGHT ON HOW PIONEERING  
GROUPS HAVE MERGED DIGITAL TOOLS WITH THE SPIRIT  
OF COLLECTIVISATION.***



## SECTION 1



Photo by Carl Heyerdahl on  
Unsplash

# CUSTOM OUTREACH TOOLS

# 1. ACTION BUILDER

developed by Action Network and AFL-CIO, USA

Action Builder is a powerful, easy-to-use organising tool that is built by, with, and for organisers. The app is a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) platform custom rigged for on-the-ground organisers to manage interactions with members or potential members to build power effectively in communities and workplaces. You can use it to easily map solidarity in your community, house by house, and to find similarities between workers.

Check out [this 1-minute intro video](#).

An interview with Martha Grant, Product Manager

**What's your mission?** We are a tech nonprofit, cooperatively building the infrastructure to create a more just world.

**What makes people sign up?** Our clean design and focus on ease of use.

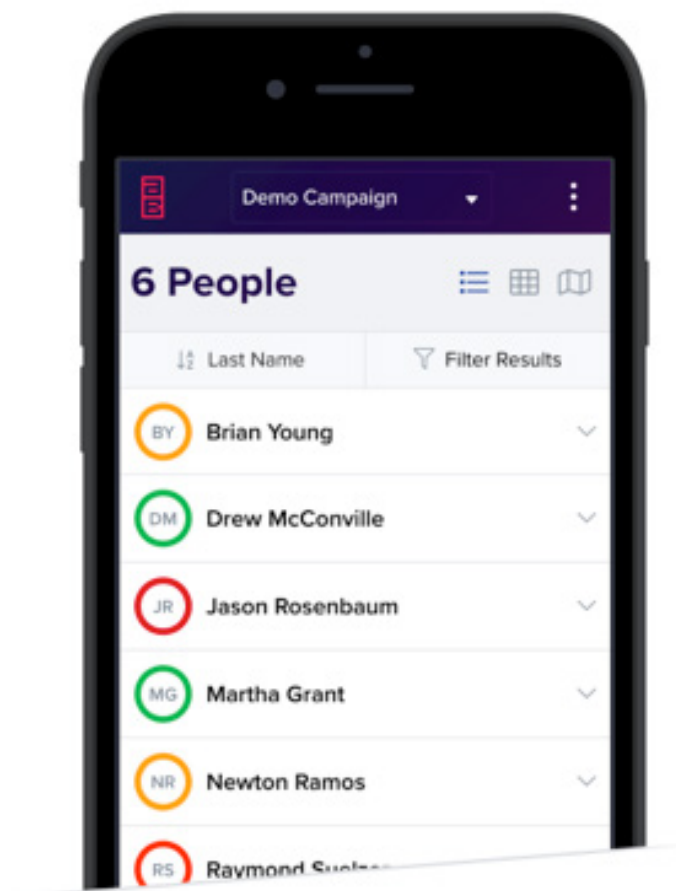
**What is one moment you are most proud of since starting?** A significant part of my role is facilitating regular meetings between our development partners - AFL CIO affiliated unions. My proudest moment was at a recent training where a member of our table credited another union for a particular feature of our tool. The sharing of knowledge and insight in a way that has a direct impact on the usefulness of our tool is a regular joy of our cooperative process.

**One key lesson:** Build cooperatively. The users know best - give them real power over your process and what you build. Not power in name only.

**What makes people stay?** Our attention to details, like our ability to store intuitively ranked addresses, emails and phone numbers.

## THREE LESSONS YOUR COMMUNITY HAS TAUGHT YOU

1. Organising has more similarities than differences across movements and unions.
2. Seeing how a feature works in the field is invaluable, ride alongs are a crucial part of our development process.
3. Listen - and then listen some more.



# actionbuilder

## **Fact Sheet:**

- **FOUNDED:** 2017
- **USER BASE:** 320 (rolling launch mode)
- **MILESTONE:** Make the tool available to any progressive group in the US and Canada. Join the waitlist!
- **WEBSITE:** <https://actionbuilder.org>

**Free?** No.

**Union Built?** Yes.

### **Young Workers' Lab Reflections:**

When the Young Workers Lab team were first introduced to Action Builder we were stunned by the potential of the tool. By offering organisers a simple and secure phone-based way to organise and remember minute details about the members they have spoken to, such as their personal contact information, interests, concerns, work situation and degree of solidarity (on a fun, color-coded scale from one to seven), Action Builder gives organisers the sort of functionality that businesses around the world now use to optimise and personalise their outreach.

The Action Builder smartphone app relies on rigorous data logging. The development team are now interested to meet with partners in Europe to see what a GDPR-compliant version of the system would look like. They have an ambitious roadmap ahead. With strong AI analyses potential, the app could well become the union movement's matchmaking tool par excellence.

Don't be surprised when you receive a message to come and meet up with people in your geographical proximity who share the same concerns as you. Again, for young workers, this tool could be the means through which to build community and collectivity via personalised interventions.

### **Add Assessment**

**1** Leader

**2** Activists

**3** Member

**4** Supporter

**5** Engaged

**6** Prospect

— No Assessment

*The hardest part of my job is...  
"LIMITED DEVELOPMENT TIME MEANS  
THAT WE CAN'T IMPLEMENT EVERY  
GREAT IDEA, SIMULTANEOUSLY!  
THERE ARE SO MANY GREAT, WELL  
VETTED, WELL THOUGHT THROUGH  
IDEAS THAT WILL IMPROVE OUR TOOL  
GOING FORWARD."*

- *Martha Grant, Product Manager*

## 2. ALIA

developed by the National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA), USA

Alia is the world's first portable benefits platform for domestic workers. NDWA kept hearing from domestic workers: we need benefits. In 2015, they launched NDWA Labs to develop a solution. Alia was created for domestic workers, and has been designed first for house cleaners, who are some of the most difficult workers to provide access to benefits to. Clients originally volunteered payments of \$5 per job that allow cleaners basic insurance coverage and paid time off. Most house cleaners have many clients, so Alia now allows for prorated contributions. Alia Benefits are attached to the worker, not the job, making them truly portable.

An interview with Fiona Ramsey,  
Director of Communications

**What's your mission?** The mission of NDWA Labs is to experiment with new ways to organise domestic workers and improve their working conditions. The mission of Alia is to provide domestic workers with access to benefits that are typically provided to employees in the US, like paid time off, and insurance products like life or accident insurance.

**What makes people sign up?** Most cleaners have never had a paid day off. For them, Alia provides some financial security that is critical. So many clients recognise and appreciate the invaluable role played by the person who works in their home, but don't know how to do the right thing. In many cases, they've been looking for Alia before they even knew they wanted to do it.

**What is one moment you are most proud of since starting?** The first time we demonstrated Alia to NDWA's worker assembly, the workers in the room gave a standing ovation. The pride, joy and gratitude in the room was incredibly moving, and we heard from worker leaders that this was a "dream come true."

**One key lesson:** Aim to create ten times more value than you capture. Unfortunately, most commercial ventures tend to do the opposite. Test, learn, build. Repeat.

**What makes people stay?** The relationship between a client and domestic worker is interconnected, and Alia Benefits help to strengthen that relationship. There are some cleaners using Alia who will drop clients who won't contribute to their benefits.

### THREE LESSONS YOUR COMMUNITY HAS TAUGHT YOU

1. All of us or none of us. We will leave no one behind!
2. Domestic workers are unstoppable.
3. There are people who want to do the right thing (but it has to be easy).

*The hardest part of my job is...*

**"WE ARE WORKING ON  
ENTRENCHED PROBLEMS,  
WITHOUT KNOWN ANSWERS.  
THERE IS NO FORMULA TO  
FOLLOW. NO ONE KNOWS HOW TO  
RAISE STANDARDS IN INFORMAL  
MARKETS. AND, THE MARKETS ARE  
CHANGING."**

*Fiona Ramsey, Director of  
Communications*



# alia

## **Fact Sheet:**

- **FOUNDED:** 2018

- **MILESTONE:** When we discovered Alia taking on a real virality. Seeing clients pick up on this and encourage other clients to contribute was a real confirmation that we've created the right solution.

- **WEBSITE:** <https://www.myalia.org/>

**Free?** Yes.

**Union Built?** Yes.

### **Young Workers' Lab Reflections:**

"All of us or none of us" is music to our ears. As more and more workers are forced on to contracts or into work that offers few, if any, protections and rights, solutions such as Alia Benefits are needed more than ever. Alia bridges the growing divide between insiders and outsiders on the labour market and rewards every type of worker for the value of their work and their person. 'Work is work!' A mantra UNI repeats in all circles across the world. All workers, no matter their form of work, should have the right of leave, to social protection, and, where needed, to insurance. We cannot have the flexibility of the market with no security for the workers.

The call for portable benefits has been heard. For the Young Workers' Lab, this call is echoed as young people today face a far more insecure labour market than the generations before them. NDWA's success on this venture illuminates an organisational model for other unions to follow--one that leverages external grant funding to fund productive innovation. Hurra to Alia!

alia

Logout

Home

Clients

Contribution History

Benefits

**Summary**

Request PTO

Benefits History

Profile

Logout

## Your benefits

Paid Time Off

+ Request Day Off

\$120 credit = 1 day off

You have

Paid Time Off

\$683

=

Days available

5

Insurance Protection

Insurer	Insurance type	Policy number
Colonial Life Insurance	Disability insurance	2345678901

9



## 3. TEACHER TAPP

developed by Education Intelligence Ltd, UK

At 3:30pm each day, thousands of phones across the United Kingdom buzz and a community of teachers spend a minute answering questions about their work and learning from short articles sent via a viral new app: TeacherTapp.

An interview with Laura McLnerney, CEO

**What's your mission?** To help teachers and education policy and product makers to get smarter through 3 questions a day.

**What makes people sign up?** Curiosity about what other people are saying!

**What is one moment you are most proud of since starting?** The [UK] education secretary mentioning answers from our thousands of teachers in one of his speeches, and imploring school leaders to craft policies based on it. What a win for teacher voices!

**One key lesson:** Know your community and try to solve ONE problem at a time

**What makes people leave?** When the questions don't feel relevant to people we know they are more likely to leave, and rightly so, as it's pretty dull to have to say 'not relevant' each day.

### THREE LESSONS YOUR COMMUNITY HAS TAUGHT YOU

1. That 'teacher' is not a single job. Being an art teacher in a large secondary school is completely different to being a primary teacher, for example.

2. That work flexibility isn't necessarily good. The more we have surveyed people about their working life the more we see that while some people LOVE work flexibility, for others it is a real burden, and it's not so easy to say 'well those who like flexibility should have it and the others don't have to'. There are consequences for everyone when working hours expand all over the place. (Those consequences aren't all bad. We just need to be careful about balance).

3. People really like a simple product. The thing we constantly hear about Teacher Tapp is how nice it is for people to use something that's simple and doesn't take up much time. It's a good reminder that not every new idea needs to be all things to all people.

*The hardest part of my job is...  
"TRYING TO EMBRACE OUR COMMUNITY'S  
ENTHUSIASM AND LOVE OF THE PRODUCT WHICH  
MEANS THEY WANT US TO EXPAND IN A THOUSAND  
DIFFERENT WAYS WHILE KNOWING THAT, TO KEEP IT  
WORKING, WE HAVE TO CONCENTRATE REALLY HARD  
ON DOING THE IMPORTANT THINGS REALLY WELL."*

*Laura McLnerney, CEO*



### Fact Sheet

- **FOUNDED:** 2017
- **USER BASE:** 3,400 teachers each day
- **MILESTONE:** Reach 1000 teachers!
- **WEBSITE:**  
<https://teachertapp.co.uk/>

**Free?** Yes.

**Union Built?** No.

### Young Workers' Lab Reflections:

TeacherTapp is a great example of a simple idea that has both a community building and a policy advising impact. Whilst a daily nudge at 3:30pm to respond to the questions asked might for some feel like a burden, the growth and expansion of TeachTapp proves the opposite. This tool seems like an effective way to boost the collective identity of a group of workers. It enables them to have a voice, learn from one another and build a sense of power by cohesion.

The secret of this app is that it is fun! Questions often draw on pop culture and current events. Apps are like social media in this way. Behind the scenes, TeacherTapp skillfully analyse data received from their users. Their small but driven communications team work tirelessly to always have a clearly defined purpose with the questions asked. They treat their user's time as precious. Commitment is also key; dropping days of questions would quickly harm the collective's energy and the group's sense of purpose.

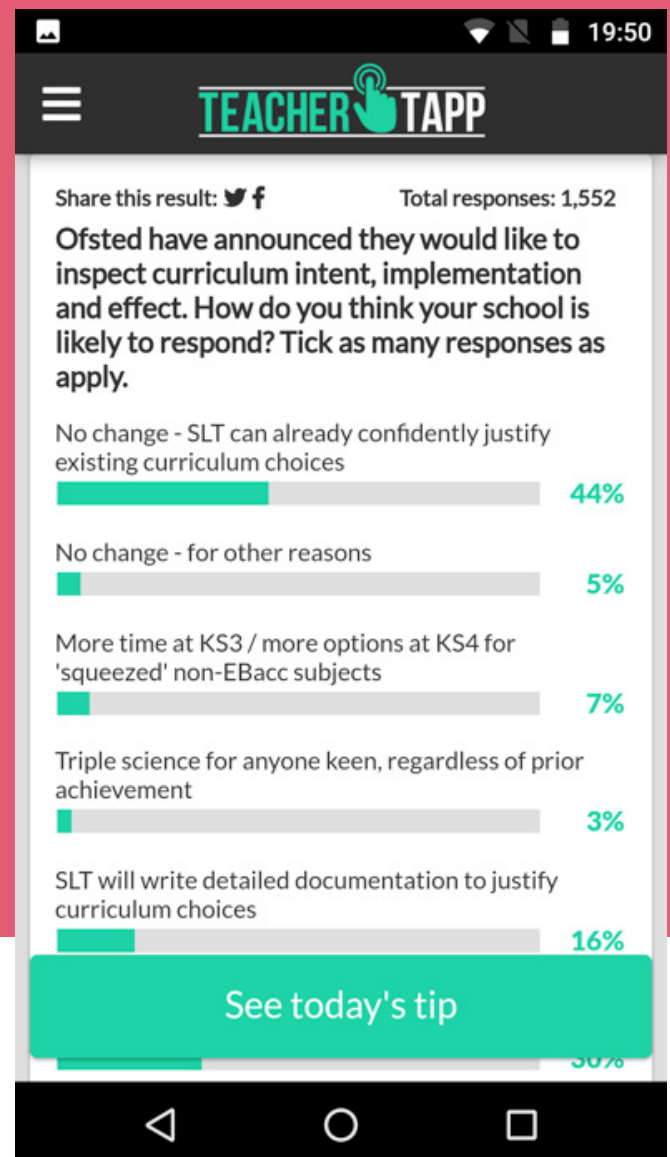
In relation to young workers specifically, TeacherTapp is a good model of how unions can reach the next generation. Less is more. The app's consistency during the work week at a set time each day, its limit to three questions, and it's

emphasis on having fun and sharing results is a promising recipe for how others could put the dreams, struggles, thoughts and aspirations of young workers into the spotlight.

If you're thinking of designing a digital app or service, check out our blog on **5 Design Lessons Learned.**

*an effective way to boost  
the collective identity  
of a group of workers*

**A SCREENSHOT OF  
TEACHERTAPP  
IN ACTION**



## 4. WORKIT

developed by Organization United for Respect (OUR), USA.

WorkIt is an app to help people working in hourly jobs get answers to questions about workplace policies and rights from trusted and trained peer advisors. WorkIt also connects you to coworkers who share your experiences and can provide support + care.

An interview with Catherine Huang, CTO

**What's your mission?** WorkIt mobilises workers by leveraging collective wisdom, AI assisted information flow, peer support, and experiential data.

**What makes people sign up?** People experience a workplace challenge, frustration, or crisis which affects their ability to work and have little to no access to support or information. Google searches do not pull up useful information on specific company policy and asking questions on social media returns unreliable answers, commentary, and judgement. WorkIt is a trusted, private, and secure place to ask questions about work and get trusted advice from peers trained on workplace rights and policies, often immediately with the help of artificial intelligence.

**What is one moment you are most proud of since starting?** Within the span of 2 years, we have scaled the technology to support thousands of people who work across low wage industries through partnerships with unions, worker centers, and community groups. We have six organisations leveraging our shared technology and experimenting with building power for their constituents via the platform. These organisations are international and span multiple industries, from retail workers, to domestic workers, to teachers, to parents - WorkIt's reach is growing!

**Two key lessons:** Partner with groups already doing the work and embedded deeply within the user base you are trying to reach with your technology AND invest in resources to help with change management - user adoption grows at a faster rate than organisational adoption. If you don't have the right infrastructure and workflows internally, your platform will fail despite all the great tech you've spent significant resources building. People are much more forgiving of technology than they are of service.

**What makes people leave?** Poor service delivery is the number one reason people uninstall the app. Poor service delivery can range from a delay in a response (usually if it's more than 24 hours), unhelpful response from our bot, or limited conversation with one of our trained peers.

### THREE LESSONS YOUR COMMUNITY HAS TAUGHT YOU

1. People should be the architects of their own solution
2. Access to information and support are two of the key fundamentals to mobilisation and systemic change
3. Functional organising is powerful, but takes a tremendous amount of internal capacity, resources, and strategic will

people are much more forgiving of technology than they are of service !!!

On why people stay...

**"GETTING THE INFORMATION YOU ARE LOOKING FOR REINFORCES THE BELIEF THAT WORKIT IS THE PLACE YOU CAN GO TO TO GET WORKPLACE SUPPORT. BUILDING A COMMUNITY WITHIN THE PLATFORM ALSO KEEPS PEOPLE ENGAGED AND INVOLVED."**

Catherine Huang, CTO



#### **Fact Sheet:**

- **FOUNDED:** 2016
- **USER BASE:** +25,000 workers
- **MILESTONE:** 1% adoption from our target user base (1.5 million Walmart Associates in the USA) in Year One, 2% adoption in Year 2 and 15% retention.
- **WEBSITE:** <http://workitapp.org>

**Free?** Yes (White label versions may have restricted access for non members)

**Union Built?** No.

#### **Young Workers' Lab Reflections:**

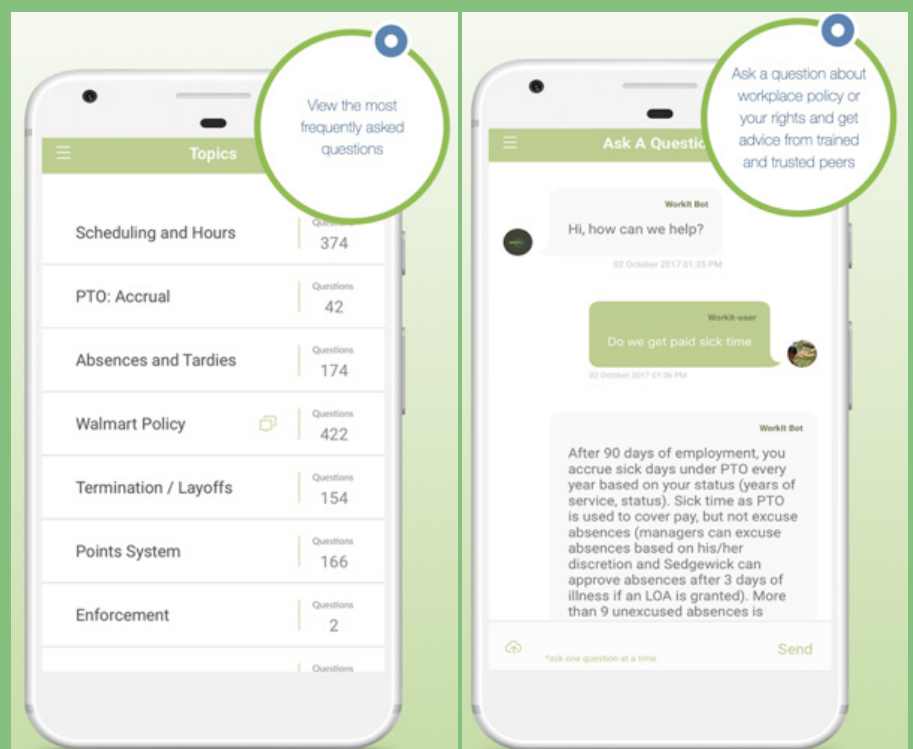
Community community community! WorkIt offers a place to go for workers in need of support and advice (ideal in an often fragmented labour market that marginalises workers). By using IBM's question-answer **Watson** technology, WorkIt is an advanced system that gets more accurate and smarter every time it is used. This is of value for unions looking to free up personnel time for organising campaigns/actions and to offer support for more complex work-related questions, queries and cases. It is being adopted by United Voice, an Australian union, and the Pilipino Workers Centre in Los Angeles.

Whilst resource demanding (it might require a new full time hire), WorkIt is certainly a fine example of how unions can use cutting edge technology to serve their members and communities in the most optimal way. Note that, in the US, Walmart has **allegedly** instructed their store managers to tell employees that the app is a scam developed to collect their personal information.

For young workers, this tool is an invaluable support as they seek to know their rights, and build community in an increasingly precarious labour market.

#### **Feedback from user, SDA Australia**

"If adopting WorkIt," says Joshua Peak of SDA in Australia, whose team uses the tool, "Make sure to spend enough time in Beta to get the optimal answer rate, which is the % of instances when the user gets the answer they want. You can customise the product so that that rate grows (Our goal is to move from 10-25%). We've had to invest in staffing this tool, which involves training as well. We have a full time person on it now. If I could change one thing in the learning process it would be to design the experience from the perspective of the user -- the worker -- rather than from the perspective of the organiser. The words organisers use tend to be more professional, which isn't necessarily how the worker wants to relate to a chatbot. Many prefer something more fun and colloquial. Including emojis in responses, for example, makes a big difference for engagement!"





## 5. WORKSMART

developed by the Trades Union Congress (TUC), UK

WorkSmart is here to help you get ahead at work. We're a new kind of job advice app, here for everyone - whether you're starting out in work, looking to build a career, or just want to improve your current situation at work. We're actually just starting out ourselves, and we want to be able to help you more and more as we grow.

An interview with Clare Coatman, Leads TUC's Young Workers Programme

**What's your mission?** We empower young workers to get ahead in their careers, support one another, and work together with unions to change their jobs for the better.

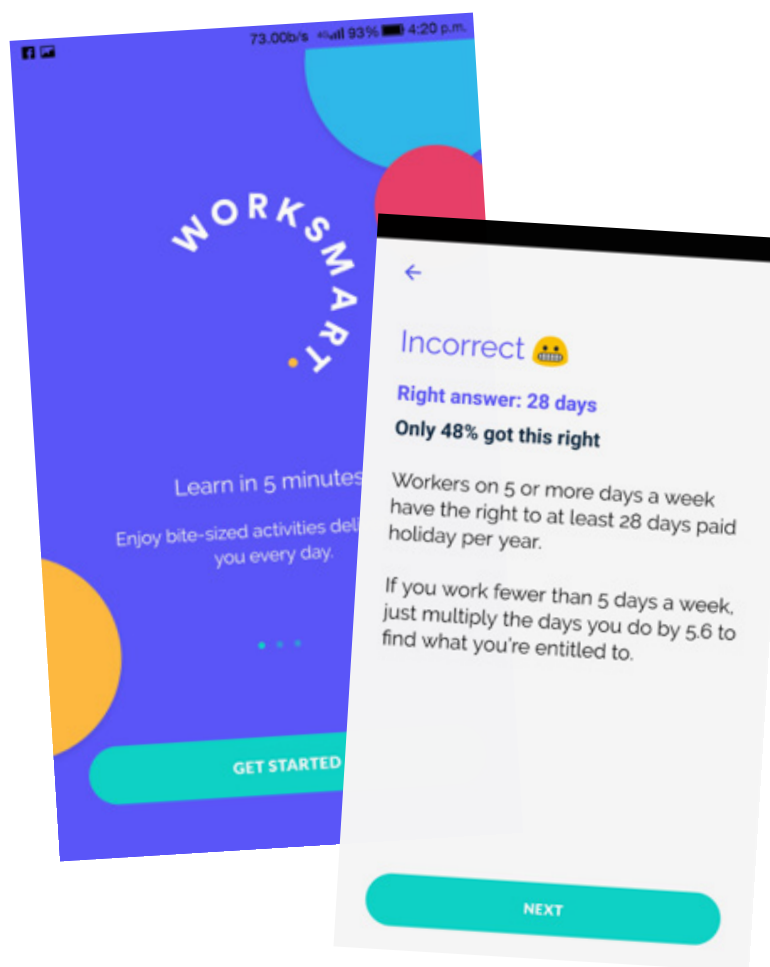
**What makes people sign up?** We are meeting a strongly felt need that no one else is: helping young people get ahead at work.

**What is one moment you are most proud of since starting?** A young woman gained such confidence just taking part in our research that she got a promotion and challenged her company's bad behaviour. !!!

**One key lesson:** Fail fast - have an idea, don't spend long mocking it up, show it to 5 of the people you want to reach, change it based on their feedback, repeat.

**What makes people leave?** We don't yet have enough content to keep users for long.

**Do you have plans to expand?** We are targeting workers in their 20's, in the UK, on low to average wages in the private sector.



### THREE LESSONS YOUR COMMUNITY HAS TAUGHT YOU

1. Don't make assumptions about what people want and need - ask them and really listen.
2. Go to where people are, don't expect them to come to you.
3. Given the opportunity, people will naturally help each other.

*go to where people are  
don't expect them to  
come to you*





**Free?** Yes.

**Union Built?** Yes.

### Young Workers' Lab Reflections:

WorkSmart combines several elements from some of the other apps: It works as a reach out tool, a training tool, a mentoring tool and a tool to gather important information about the well-being of workers. Designed for all kinds of workers, but with a youthful twist, this app can be a great way for unions to boost their visibility and presence in the lives of busy young workers.

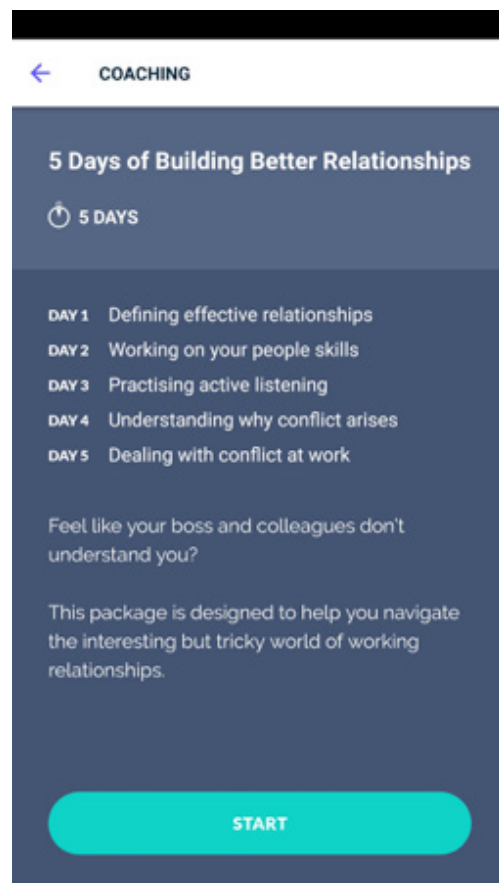
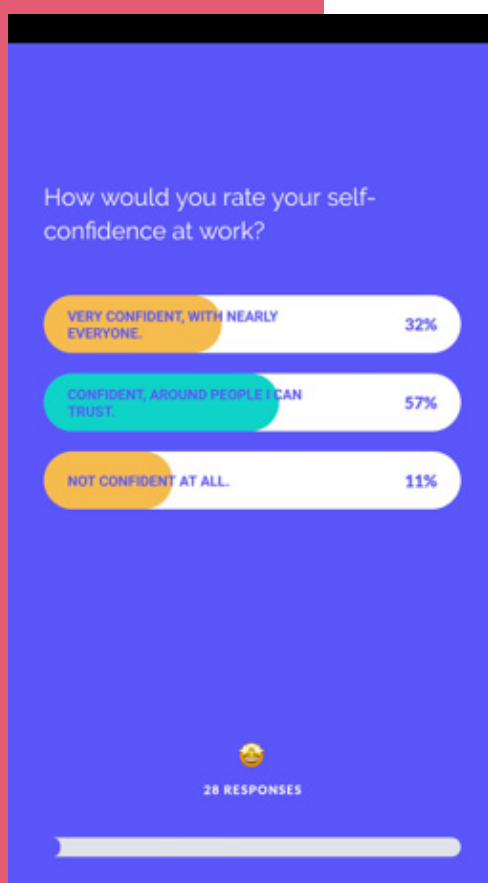
Like WorkIt, WorkSmart also has the aim to build a community - a space for young workers to virtually meet and share ideas and issues. This is the only tool we are reviewing in this report with the specific

goal to target and support young workers. It's a shame there aren't more similar projects making headlines.

As we have learnt in the Young Workers' Lab, WorkSmart is being developed in conjunction with the workers themselves. A true trial-and-error approach aimed at meeting the needs and wants of young workers. We appreciate that they emphasise the importance of visiting young people where they are -- seeing the physical world(s) they inhabit to inform the development process. Bravo. Our support takes no end!

### **Fact Sheet:**

- **FOUNDED:** 2018
- **USER BASE:** 300+ (pilot phase)
- **MILESTONE:** Social media campaigns with varying levels of targeting.
- **WEBSITE:** <https://worksmart.org.uk/>



*The hardest part of my job is...*  
**"RUNNING AN AGILE PROJECT  
 WITHIN A TRADITIONAL  
 ORGANISATION."**

*Clare Coatman, Leads TUC's  
 Young Workers Programme*

## 6. WORKERBIRD

developed by Johanna Herman, UK

WorkerBird helps workers understand and improve their working conditions. With WorkerBird, workers collect their own data, on their own terms and for their own benefit. They receive advice and support if needed. We want workers to realise the power in their data.

An interview with, Johanna Herman, Founder

**What's your mission?** We help workers understand and improve their working conditions by collecting their own data, on their own terms and for their own benefit.

**What is one moment you are most proud of since starting?** Getting a Tech to Unite Us grant from the Social Tech Trust. This demonstrated how much we achieved as part of the Bethnal Green Ventures accelerator, which kick-started our journey.

**One key lesson:** This is a very exciting area with the potential for great impact and lots of active organisations, so make as many connections as you can, it's a supportive community.

**What does your role involve, in a nutshell?** As founder of an early-stage start-up, I do some of everything at the moment! From user research and testing, to fundraising and project managing our design and product development.

### THREE LESSONS YOUR COMMUNITY HAS TAUGHT YOU

1. Everyone has 'imposter syndrome', no matter their level of experience or qualifications!
2. The most important factor in success or failure is the team.
3. No-one gets it right first-time round.



*everyone has imposter syndrome no matter their level of experience or qualifications!*





#### **Fact Sheet:**

- **FOUNDED:** 2018
- **USER BASE:** Seeking test cases now.
- Please be in touch!
- **WEBSITE:** <http://www.workerbird.co.uk/>

**Free?** Planned to be free for individual workers with a paid model for organisations and businesses.

**Union Built?** No.

#### **Young Workers' Lab Reflections:**

WorkerBird is a one-woman dream being realised through hard work. With the view to help workers map their working day through manual inputs such as break time, commute time and task mapping, the app aims to provide users with a data-driven overview of what constitutes work.

Keeping track of hours worked, tasks done, commuting times performed is a great place to start in the quest to gather proof and flush out injustices. Nonetheless, it is always difficult to have users manually input their data. As WorkerBird is still the earliest stages of development, there are no users yet, they are looking for interested testers. We look forward to following the development of the app and finding synergies with the wider work in the Young Workers' Lab.

*The hardest part of my job is...*

**"JUGGLING TWO YOUNG CHILDREN WITH THE DEMANDS OF START-UP LIFE!"**

*Johanna Herman, Founder*



# 7. THOUGHTEXCHANGE

developed by Fulcrum Management Solutions Ltd., USA/Canada

After a decade in business, Thoughtexchange has learned a thing or two about how to uncover thoughts from people who often don't get a chance to have their voice heard or don't feel comfortable speaking up in public. They describe their dynamic software tool as a community intelligence platform. It works like this: you choose one question and send users a link (on SMS, Facebook, WhatsApp, email, etc.). They can answer it as many times as they want. Users can then rate thoughts on a five-star scale based on how much they agree or disagree. The response data gives you a qualitative understanding of what's most important to the group, and where people agree or disagree. You can use the results to make better, faster decisions and inspire ownership from participants.

An interview with Dave MacLeod, CEO

**What's your mission?** Our mission is to bring people together by involving them in decisions that affect them.

**What makes people sign up?** People sign up because they want to drive change and they know the value of great ideas and fair process. Our clients are typically leaders who focus on people feeling heard and are looking for new ways to bring people together—because surveys and townhalls are not cutting it.

*THIS!* **What is one moment you are most proud of since starting?** We get to see thoughts from participants, and I can think of many that sound like this: Thank you so much for finally involving me and valuing me for what I think. We've heard many versions of this kind of thought over the years, from leaders who involved their members, community, employees or customers in decisions that affect them. It's cool to run a company that creates this sort of feeling in people.

**One key lesson:** I think one solid idea is to start with analog. Thoughtexchange is effectively writing ideas on recipe cards and then rating them using stickers or a felt pen. Digitising that has had a huge impact on the world. I think there are many valuable analog processes still remaining that could be transformative if digitised. Using the analog world as a guide is a great way to ensure you're creating tech with lasting value IMHO.

**What makes people stay?** Well isn't it great that we just asked a whole bunch of our customers about this! See for yourself [here](#).

**What does your role involve, in a nutshell?** As founder of an early-stage start-up, I do some of everything at the moment! From user research and testing, to fundraising and project managing our design and product development.

## THREE LESSONS YOUR COMMUNITY HAS TAUGHT YOU

1. Put your people first.
2. Admit you don't know everything.
3. Fight to stay in your creative brain so you can add energy instead of taking it away.



#### **Fact Sheet:**

- **FOUNDED:** 2009
- **USER BASE:** Several million people have used Thoughtexchange to inform decisions that affect them. We're working towards hundreds of millions soon. :)
- **MILESTONE:** Our first milestone was becoming a core product in school systems to help them drive much-needed change.
- **WEBSITE:**  
<https://www.thoughtexchange.com/>

Free? No.

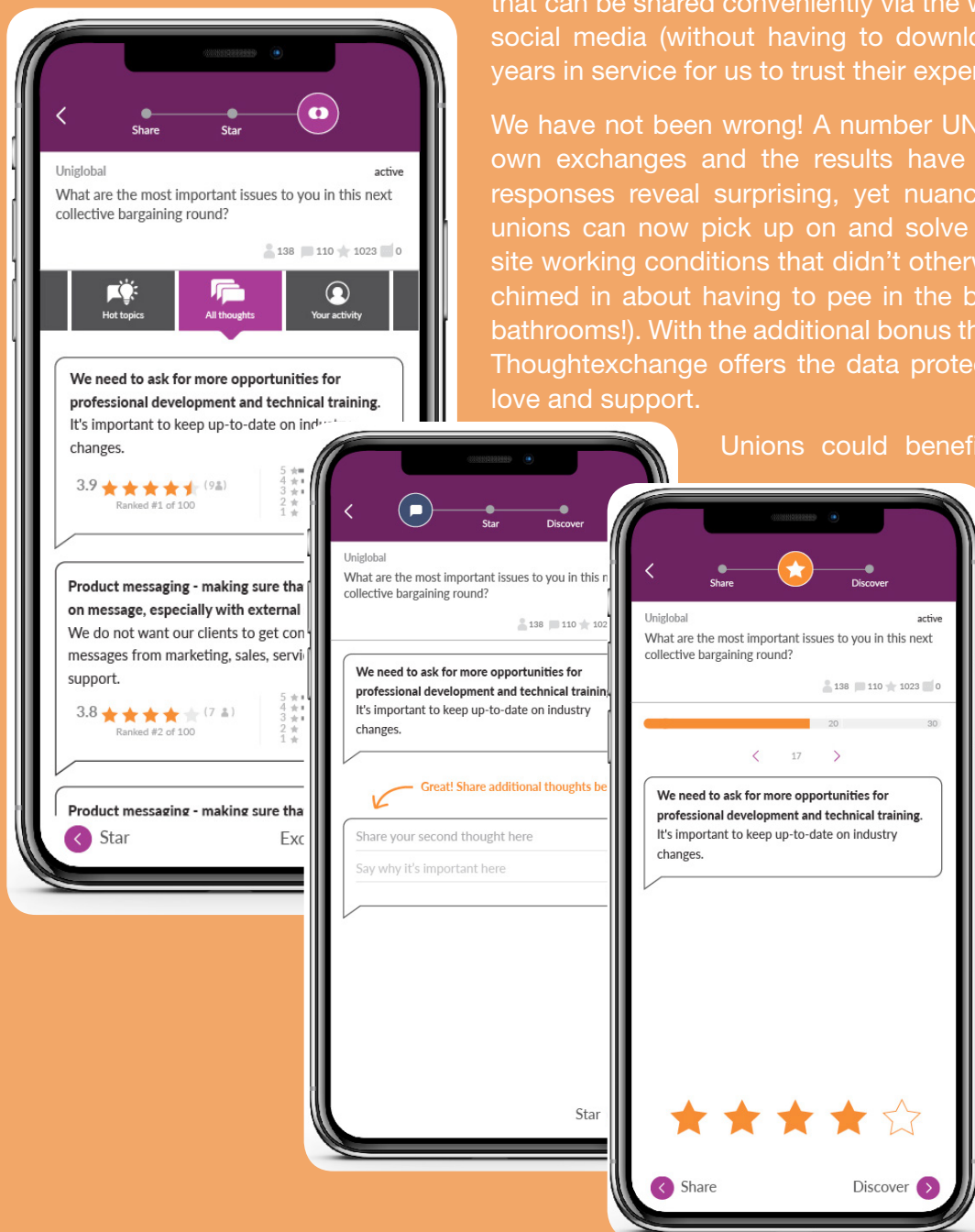
Union Built? No.

#### **Young Workers' Lab Reflections:**

After having scanned the market for good, interactive communication tools, the Young Workers' Lab shortlisted Thoughtexchange. Not only did it offer its services via a simple Web Messaging App (WMA) that can be shared conveniently via the web, SMS, WhatsApp or other social media (without having to download an app), it has sufficient years in service for us to trust their expertise.

We have not been wrong! A number UNI affiliates have now run their own exchanges and the results have been great. Their members' responses reveal surprising, yet nuanced aspects of daily life that unions can now pick up on and solve with their members, like on-site working conditions that didn't otherwise get reported (one worker chimed in about having to pee in the bushes because of no on-site bathrooms!). With the additional bonus that responses are anonymous, Thoughtexchange offers the data protection and privacy-respect we love and support.

Unions could beneficially use Thoughtexchange in the lead up to big congresses or meetings. Or to periodically test their members' opinions and feelings about what is happening around them at work or in the union. As a bonus, the WMA functions seamlessly in a long list of languages, which means you can send it out to members of any background. Send us a note if you'd like to try it.





## 8. GOLDEN DREAMS

developed by the Issara Institute (Burma/Thailand)

The Issara Institute is an independent NGO based in Southeast Asia and the United States tackling issues of human trafficking and forced labour through technology, partnership, and innovation. Since their establishment in 2014, they have linked over 150,000 migrant workers into an Inclusive Labour Monitoring system (multi-lingual hotline, Facebook messenger, and smartphone messaging apps Line and Viber) empowering them with worker voice and channels for information, assistance, and remediation. Golden Dreams is their custom app/platform.

An interview with Lisa Rende Taylor,  
Founder & Executive Director

**What's your mission?** Our mission is to transform the lives of millions of workers in global supply chains through worker voice, partnership, and innovation.

**What makes people sign up?** That's a good question for them! We've heard that our worker voice channels give Burmese migrant workers abroad everything they need to know their rights, and what to do if they have problems. The Golden Dreams platform allows the

community to share the latest on worker experiences with different employers, recruiters, and service providers....workers from so many different industries and geographies are sharing, so it's a massive resource for job seekers and migrants alike.

**What is one moment you are most proud of since starting?** Despite all the hype and pressure about "achieving scale", we are still very proud of the role we have played in the lives of trafficking survivors, and the role they have played in our lives - for example reuniting enslaved fishermen with their wives and children who thought they were dead years ago, and seeing these men go on to rebuild their lives, many becoming advocates and organisers that other workers now thank for protecting and empowering them. We're proud to have built an organisation with and for these workers in some of the most precarious circumstances.

**One key lesson:** We actually really like the Five Design Lessons from the Young Workers Lab - when we read it, it really resonated with us. It really matched our experience and we couldn't have said it better!

*The hardest part of my job is...*  
**"OUR TEAM REGULARLY FACE EXPLOITATION AT A LARGE SCALE, AND CONNECT WITH WORKERS INDIVIDUALLY - ANSWERING THE PHONES AND MAKING VISITS DAY AND NIGHT. IT'S HARD, ESPECIALLY IN THE CASES WHERE BUSINESSES DON'T, OR DOESN'T UPHOLD THEIR OWN CODES AND STANDARDS TO STOP INJUSTICES AGAINST WORKERS."**

*Lisa Rende Taylor, Founder & Executive Director*

### THREE LESSONS YOUR COMMUNITY HAS TAUGHT YOU

1. We work on some of the more serious situations of exploitation and modern slavery in global supply chains in Southeast Asia, and one big lesson has been that job seeker and worker empowerment are vital, and tech can play a great role in this (though the ground game is still critical!), but it all has to be within a larger system of accountability or else it's just tech in a vacuum, or worse, harvesting of worker data for the purpose of due diligence that benefits business but not workers.
2. Some duty bearer has to assume responsibility and respond to those grievances and needs for assistance.
3. Worker feedback technologies are pretty sexy these days but can do more harm than good if they are deployed just for the purpose of corporate due diligence, with no attention to worker safeguards, power, or remediation.



### Fact Sheet:

- FOUNDED: 2014

- USER BASE: 150,000+

- WEBSITE:

<https://www.issarainstitute.org/issara-labs>

**Free? Yes.**

**Union Built? Yes.** Issara work closely with a network of 20+ grassroots groups and CSOs in Myanmar and Thailand, and one of these is the Confederation of Trade Unions Myanmar (CTUM). CTUM have played an integral part of the whole process from co-design, worker feedback, etc. to launch and outreach to support distribution and education.

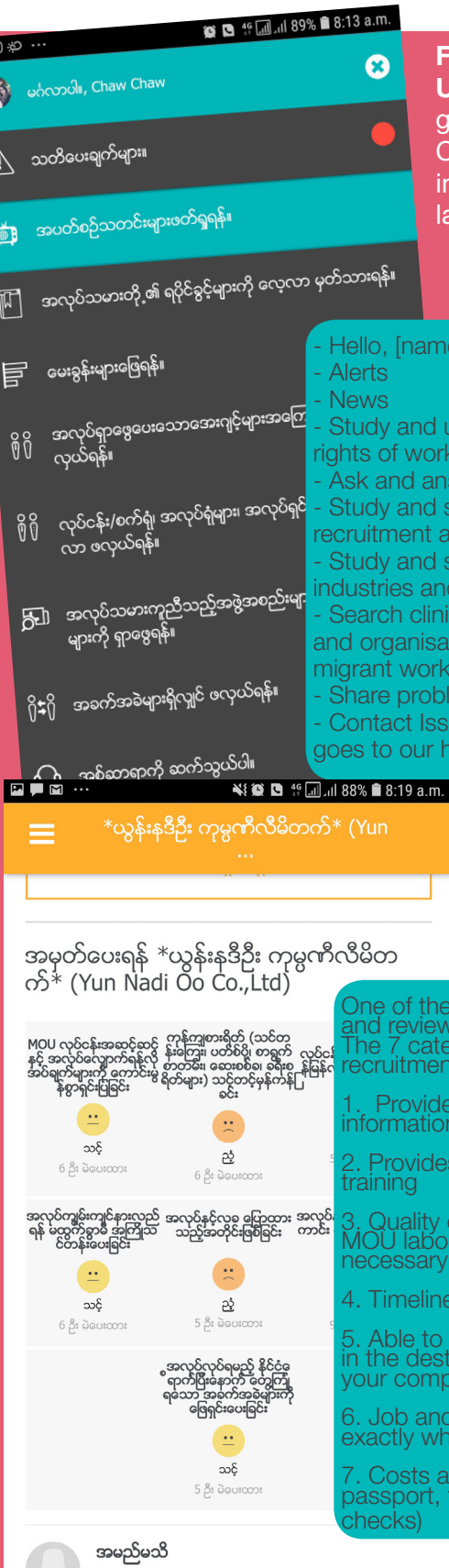
### Young Workers' Lab Reflections:

The numbers are impressive. In 2018, Issara's worker voice channels handled as high as 3,570 calls and messages per month, which is considerably more traffic than both the US and UK national anti-trafficking hotlines combined. Issara recognised the need to cater to different worker preferences and needs for security, reach, and rapport, which is why they place Golden Dreams alongside other offerings, rather than positioning it as a replacement. This is smart thinking as it allows workers to learn and communicate in whatever way best suites them.

We know from being in touch with Lisa that the great majority of calls and messages to come into Issara prior to 2018 were handled through a free helpline. In 2018, as it became clear that workers in Myanmar were savvy on Facebook, Issara used that platform to promote Golden Dreams (as well as 'Know Your Rights' materials and other handy info). By 2019, about 50% of the calls and messages are handled via their free helpline, and about 50% are through Golden Dreams, Facebook, Line, and Viber. Issara use social media as a way to bring people to the helpline, which provides a medium that is more secure and better for in-depth discussions. This multi-pronged approach is admirable, as its success! We see this as a positive way to reach young workers in particular, who are often savvy on social media but appreciate a personalised approach.



Graph taken from Issara's 2018 Reach & Impact Metrics



- Hello, [name]
- Alerts
- News
- Study and understand the rights of workers
- Ask and answer questions
- Study and share info on recruitment agencies
- Study and share info on industries and employers
- Search clinics, hospitals, and organisations helping migrant workers
- Share problems
- Contact Issara (button push goes to our hotline)

One of the pages where you can rate and review a recruitment agency. The 7 categories users can rate recruitment agencies are:

1. Provides clear and relevant information on the employers and job
2. Provides useful pre-departure training
3. Quality of explanation about the MOU labour migration channel and necessary documents
4. Timeliness
5. Able to follow up after you arrive in the destination country to listen to your complaints
6. Job and salary turn out to be exactly what the recruiter told
7. Costs and fees (eg training, passport, travel documents, health checks)

# 9. JOBPATRULJEN CHATBOT

developed by the HK Labs (Denmark)

HK Labs is an outcropping of HK union, the second largest union in Denmark. It was setup in November 2017 with a three year budget of around \$2.3m and a waiver to operate slightly outside of the bounds of HK's traditional rule structure, meaning that they can pick their own projects and work with any external collaborators they choose. Ideas are developed and piloted at no more than around \$25,000 per project, often in conversation with relevant colleagues at HK. Prototypes that pass this phase are then fed back to HK to be approved and implemented. One successful prototype, profiled here, is HK Lab's new chatbot!

An interview with Mathias Askholm,  
Programme Manager

**What's your mission?** Our mission is to create the building blocks for the future trade union and the future labour market for our members.


**What makes people sign up?** They want an easy channel to get answers to their questions. They don't want to interact with another human as they don't want to risk having to admit all the things they don't know. They are afraid that their questions will be seen as stupid.

**What is one moment you are most proud of since starting?** I was proud when we were invited by Oracle to present at their Open World Conference highlighting ours as one of the most interesting chatbot cases. None of the organisers could ever remember having a union present at one of their flagship conferences.

**One key lesson:** Always start with the potential users. Fixate on their problems not your own idea.

## THREE LESSONS YOUR COMMUNITY HAS TAUGHT YOU

1. Fall in love with the problem - not your idea of a solution.
2. Ask for help - most people are willing to share their knowledge if you ask.
3. Turn abstract ideas into concrete examples - we are able to lead and inspire through very concrete projects and tangible learnings.

*fall in love with the  
problem not your idea of a  
solution* 

*The hardest part of my job is...*

**"REMEMBERING TO CHALLENGE AND TEST YOUR OWN INTUITION AND ASSUMPTIONS. IT'S EASY TO BELIEVE THAT YOU ALREADY KNOW AND UNDERSTAND THE MEMBERS / USERS / CUSTOMERS, ETC. BUT YOU DON'T. THE ONLY WAY TO ACHIEVE THAT UNDERSTANDING IS BY LISTENING AND THEN TESTING IF WHAT YOU HAVE HEARD IS ACTUALLY TRUE."**

*Mathias Askholm, Programme Manager*



### Fact Sheet:

- **FOUNDED:** 2017
- **USER BASE:** 300 weekly users. In the chatbot for young aple time workers: ca.
- **MILESTONE:** Our MVP reached 12x the amount of users as the previous phone hotline. Now we are at 50-60x.
- **WEBSITE:** [www.jobpatruljen.dk](http://www.jobpatruljen.dk) and <https://messenger.com/t/jobpatruljen>

**Free?** Yes.

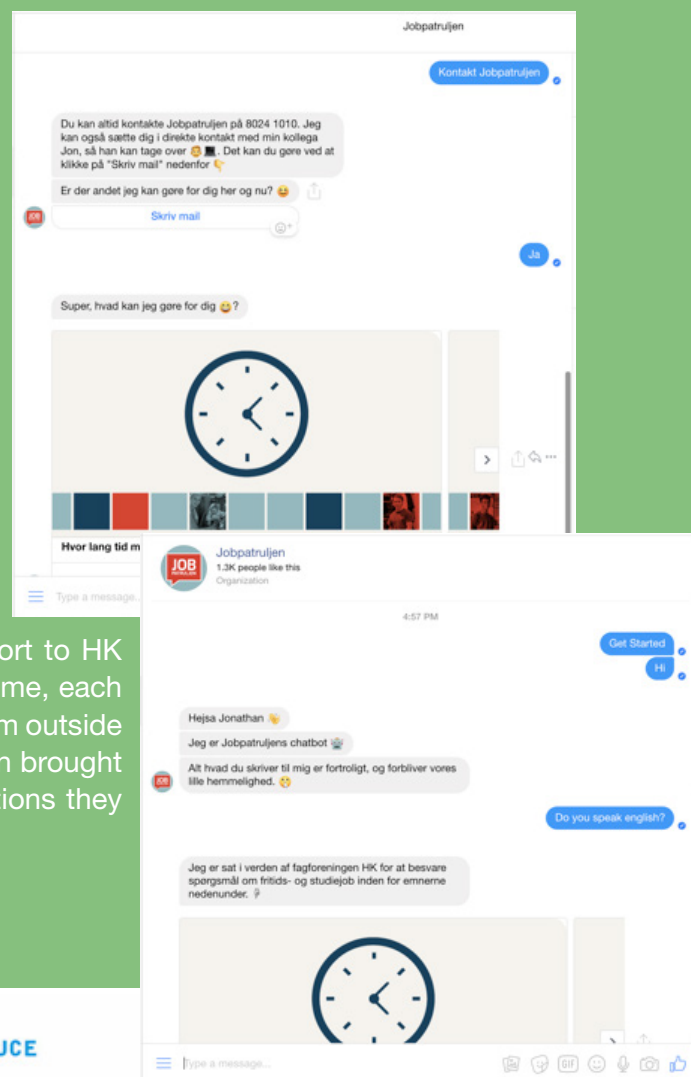
**Union Built?** Yes.

### Young Workers' Lab Reflections:

"How hot can it legally be at work?" No one at HK Labs expected this to be the top question users asked of their new chatbot when it launched in 2017. The system has since lead to a 50-60x increase in engagements with members.

In addition to the success with their new chatbot, HK Labs have thought carefully about how to integrate the experimental ethos of digital tech into existing union structures in a manner that empowers, rather than destabilises, existing union strengths. They have a three-year budget of around £1.8m, and can, on their own accord, decide what projects to pursue. They report to HK management. They oversee about 10-12 projects at a time, each for no more than around £20,000, and often with help from outside contributors. Each project is taken to the pilot stage then brought to HK to assess how it could be used. The three questions they ask themselves are:

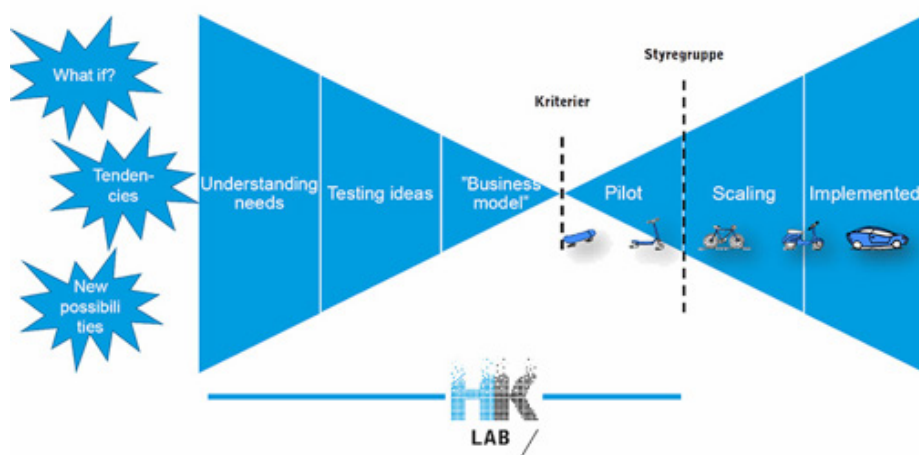
- Is it desirable? (will users want it?)
- Is is feasible? (can it technically be done?)
- Is it viable? (does it fit HK's goals and capacity?)



**HORIZON  
SCANNING**

**CO-CREATE**

**CO-PRODUCE**



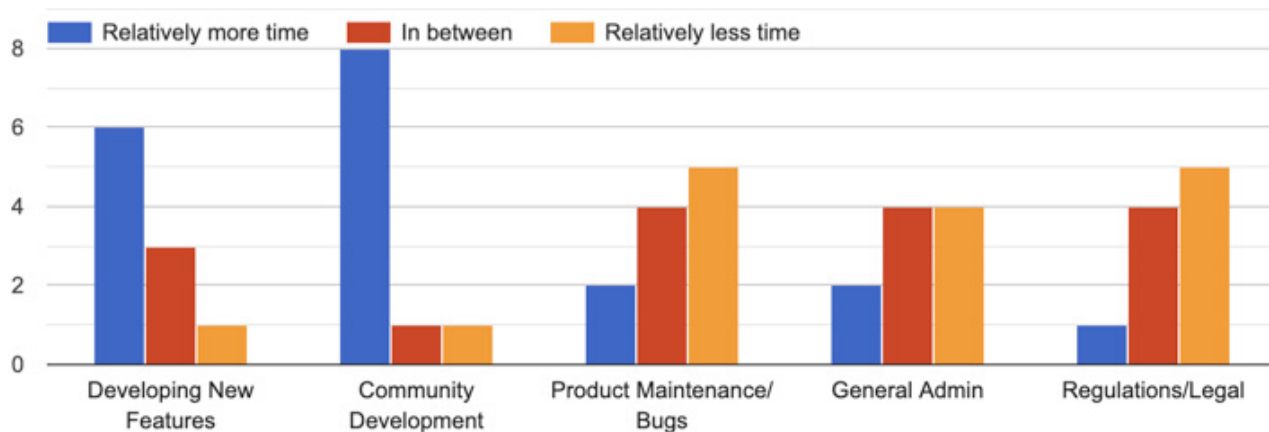
For an excellent and in-depth overview of HK Lab's work, [see this great blog from the TUC.](#)



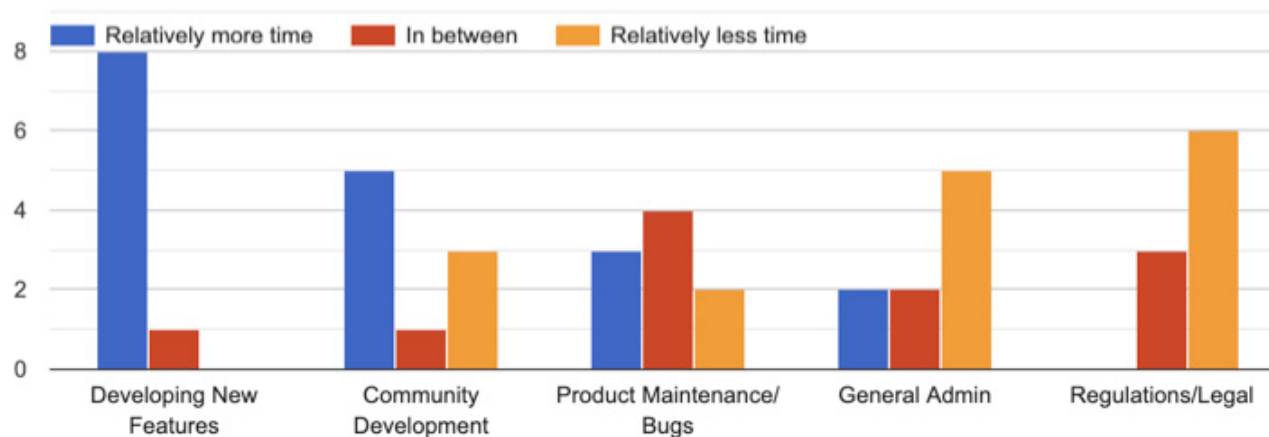
# CUSTOM OUTREACH TOOLS

## TIME AND BUDGETS

### WHAT TAKES UP MOST OF YOUR TIME?



### WHAT TAKES UP MOST OF YOUR BUDGET?





## SECTION 2

# GENERAL OUTREACH TOOLS



Photo by Sergey Zolkin on  
Unsplash

## SHARED RESOURCES



### *Google Drive*

How will you and your team share your common calendar, files, reports, meeting agendas and minutes, along with all the other parts of your organisation's ongoing work? Google Drive is free for everyday users. It is not ideal to store your work in the cloud, but for those working without any basic digital services, Google Drive and Google Calendar offer a free service for individuals. Used by [Extinction Rebellion](#)



### *MightyNetworks*

MightyNetworks makes setting up an online community as easy as setting up a website. With it you get direct messaging, events, a landing page, a newsfeed; all the essentials. In theory this could all happen on Facebook, but a private social network is sometimes more powerful (and private...) than a Facebook group. One word of caution: it's not free. Used by the [Mindful School Society](#).



### *AllOurIdeas*

AllOurIdeas makes it easy to crowdsource survey results. Like the tip-jar at your local cafe, it asks you to like either option A or B (ex. Gryffindor or Slytherin). The nifty backend then makes sure that no matter how many options you add, they're all seen an equal number of times by your participants. Plus... it's free and kind of fun! Used by the OECD, UN, and Wikipedia.

## BUDGET PLANNING



### *Open Collective*

Open Collective describes itself as 'Organising the internet generation.' Create a community ('collective') with members who participate via tiered responsibilities with a transparent ledger for all expenses, with easy tools to make the data open. Used by [Vegan Brussels](#).



### *CoBudget*

Cobudget makes it easy for organisations and groups to allocate funds collaboratively and transparently. Think of it like the dream app for a co-op housing arrangement. It enables all members of an organisation to get involved in decision-making by proposing projects and allocating funds to the proposals they like. Used by [Outlandish](#), a worker owned cooperative in the UK.

# PROJECT PLANNING



## *Meistertask*

Meistertask is a colorful and free task management tool. With it, you can assign responsibility for certain tasks to certain team members and then follow each other's progress, ticking off tasks that get completed in a way that keeps the momentum going.

Used by [DataJournalism](#), part of the European Journalism Centre.



## *Trello*

Trello is the visual way for teams to collaborate. It's a project management tool centered around lists. Like Meistertask, you can assign responsibility for certain tasks (called 'cards') to certain team members and then follow each other's progress on a shared virtual 'board.' It's API makes it easy to integrate into your existing email workflow.

Used by [Kickstarter](#).



## *Loomio*

Loomio facilitates decision making with people spread out all over the place. You open a forum, make it private or public, specify how long it will be open for, and then everyone can submit their opinions and upvote what they like, with a summary generated for newbies. Founded in 2012, Loomio is an open source software written by a cooperative social enterprise in Aotearoa, New Zealand. Used by [Co-operative Assistance Network \(CAN\)](#), a worker's co-op.



## *Bitrix24*

Bitrix24 is a collaboration platform with a suite of tools including project management, calendars, file sharing, Customer Relationship Management (CRM), and more. It has over two million customers. Not free but worth a look if considering a full system.

Used by [IServeAfrica](#).



## *Plectica*

Do you like white boards? You'll love Plectica. It helps you and your team visualise & connect information so you can get on the same page.

Used by the US government.

# STAYING IN TOUCH



## Zoom

Been on a video conference recently? It was probably hosted on Zoom. Zoom is free to use for up to 100 users for 40 minutes per session, which is usually long enough. It's nice to see your members and co-organisers when you chat with them.

Used by the [Service Employees International Union \(SEIU\)](#).



## Zulip

Zulip is like Slack, but open-source. It combines the immediacy of real-time chat with an email threading model (so conversations stay organised). You can invite people to use it without asking them to sign up, which makes things easier. ([Rocket Chat](#) is another Slack-like tool.)

Used by [Kickstarter](#).



## Facebook

Meet your members where they are with easy to use groups, message boards, message bots (for automated answers to Frequently Asked Questions) and livestreaming functionality when needed. Targeted ads make Facebook the powerhouse that it is.

Used by [Movimiento Cosecha](#) to engage volunteers with live streamed videos and a free Messenger bot.



## Doodle

When you need to coordinate multiple people's schedules to find a time to all meet, a Doodle 'poll' is a lifesaver. First you go to Doodle and choose a broad time (ex. this day or week in June). Next, you email everyone with a link. They plug their availability in and voila, you have the best time and date to meet. It saves countless emails.

Used by UK based union and digital organiser, [Stuart Melvin](#). (\*Thank you Stuart for your suggestions to this report!)



## Signal

Signal is like WhatsApp but with better privacy protections. It's a cross-platform encrypted messaging service that uses the Internet to send one-to-one and group messages, which can include files, voice notes, images, calls and video calls.

Used by the [Young Workers' Lab](#) at UNI Global Union!



STAYING  
IN TOUCH

MAKING THINGS  
PRETTY



### *Hustle*

Hustle is a web and mobile app that allows you to text 1000+ people an hour. Your contacts see a normal SMS from a local number. The app allows you to create customisable scripts. Example: "Hi this is (union), we're thinking of organising an (event) on (date). Are you free?" As always, this sort of campaigning must be compliant with the law and respect members privacy.

Used by [The New York Civic Engagement Table](#), the organising body for sixty community based NGOs



### *Beautiful.ai*

Think of Beautiful.ai as Powerpoint + artificial intelligence. Their free presentation creation software makes it easy to create Powerpoint-compatible presentations that are eye-catching yet simple. No matter how you design things, the AI underneath their builder makes sure your final product comes out looking professional. It also makes it easy to incorporate high quality, royalty free stock images.

Used by the [Young Workers' Lab](#) at UNI Global Union!



### *Vyond*

Vyond lets you create videos easily with a library of templates, sounds, props, and so much more. Great for building attention.



### *LICEcap*

Want to make gifs for your blog posts? Use this nifty screen capture tool, which works on both Mac and PC. Be advised: the file size of a gif can grow very large, very quickly. This means that they can take forever to load in a web browser, so long that visitors might not even know the gif is there! Try to keep your gifs to below 1-2 megabytes in size when possible. You can do this by limiting their size and duration.



### *Canva*

Want your newsletters, flyers, or logo to grab attention? Canva has a host of templates that upgrade your work. They also offer access to a network of graphic designers for bigger projects.



### *Unsplash*

Free-to-use stock images for your website, pamphlets, newsletters or latest campaign. It makes a big difference to have quality photos to use... for free.

## OTHER SERVICES

WHO'S IN?

### *WhosIn*

Like crowdsourcing but for events; users can sign up to areas they're interested in and then get notified if a sufficient number of others also agree to join in.



### *Autopia*

Autopia is a tool for organising co-created gatherings with features for accommodation, transport, and newsfeeds.



### *MiniVAN*

MiniVAN is a mobile canvassing application.



### *Spoke*

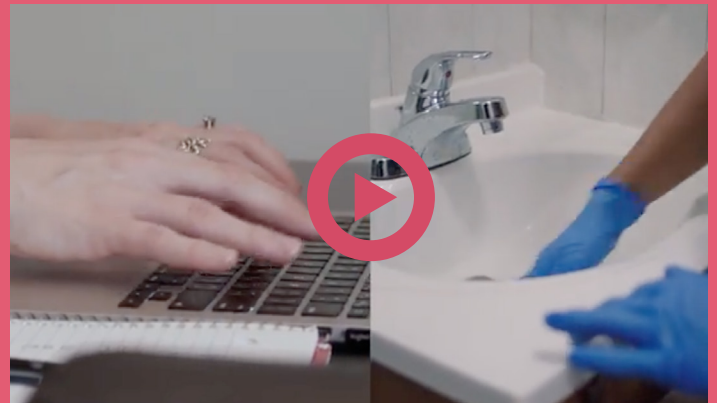
Spoke is an open-source peer to peer SMS tool operated by MoveOn.org. It's web browser-based online tool is accessible from any smartphone, tablet or computer. With member data inputted, your team can quickly reach them with a text message alert containing the information you need them to see--and how they can take immediate action on your request.

## VIDEO GALLERY

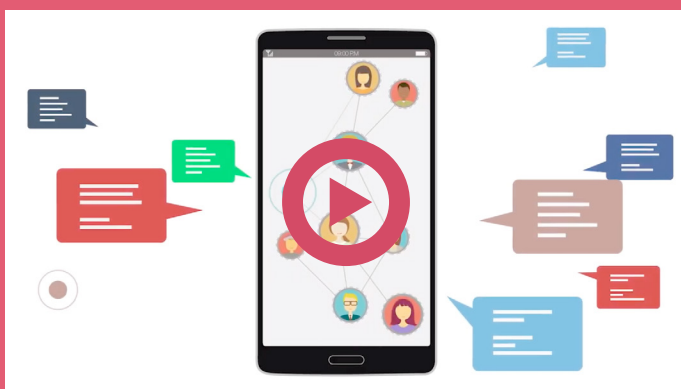
ACTION BUILDER



ALIA



THOUGHTEXCHANGE



ISSARA INSTITUTE



# REFLECTIONS

## FROM ADVISORS TO THE YOUNG WORKERS LAB, UNI



*If a data person can't explain what they're doing to a non-expert, they aren't trying hard enough! Demand transparency, and in turn, be transparent about how you make use of data. (And ask DataKind UK to help you do data science for free!)*

Giselle Cory, Executive Director, DataKind UK



*Data and data-driven technologies are powerful, but **these technologies aren't a panacea or a silver bullet**—and treating them as such can be misleading and counterproductive. Instead, focus on what your larger goals are—e.g. improving accountability, helping workers build power at their workplace, gaining insight into working conditions, negotiating algorithms—and think of how data and digital technologies can help you get there. By focusing on your political visions first, you won't lose sight of what digital technologies are in service of; and you're more likely to adopt and deploy them in ways that empower you and your members, rather than distract from your core mission.*

Salome Viljoen, Fellow at the Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society



*Don't think of technology as furniture—something you can just install and forget about. Think of it like a cat—you have to keep it fed and watered, and sometimes it will do things you don't expect. Technology can be great, but it's something else you're responsible for.*

- Keith Porcaro, co-founder, Digital Public



# REFLECTIONS AND NEXT STEPS

## FROM THE YOUNG WORKERS LAB

Trade unions are using digital services to reach out to their members in new original ways. Non-Union groups, likewise, are finding ways to build collective identity that unions can take inspiration from. This report has introduced tools in each category. We hope that these developer's personal reflections will inform or inspire your own digital strategies.

Ours is not an exhaustive survey. Most examples come from English-speaking countries like the UK, US, and Canada. We welcome suggestions of other projects that are working in your area. Similarly, while this survey provides a glimpse at where we are now, it does not speculate on where we can go next. Fredrik Soderqvist at the Swedish Union, Unionen, for instance, has [commented](#) on steps already taken by groups in Scandinavia toward 'predictive unionism,' in which unions leverage data science to identify the optimal time for workers to ask for a raise or take action in response to an (algorithmically) anticipated round of lay-offs accompanying the arrival of a new executive.

As sophisticated data collection and structuring techniques come down in cost, the list of available digital tools and services will continue to grow longer. New offerings will emerge to meet new needs. One obvious gap, from a worker perspective, is a simple way to intervene in the data that flows from your daily work. Who controls this data? Consider, for example, [Isaak](#), a for-profit software platform that recently [made headlines](#) for surveilling office worker's minute-to-minute activity: including how many emails they've sent, to who, the changes they've made to a document, etc.

In response to industry's adoption of such techniques, unions will need to negotiate on the impact of digitalisation in their collective bargaining. The Young Workers' Lab is currently looking at how unions could intervene in this sort of data extraction by collecting such data themselves--not always, but at well chosen strategic moments.

In the months to come, UNI will address these broader workplace changes by gathering insights and good practices from affiliates on bargaining in the digital economy. At the core of all of these tools and strategies is data; the facts and figures that fill Excel spreadsheets, notebooks, databases etc. The question remains: how do we best handle these data, learn from them, embed powerful analysis techniques into the daily life of our union work and the strategies we pursue?

To advance discussion on this question, UNI's Future World of Work division has published [10 Principles for Workers Data Rights and Privacy](#). The Young Workers Lab is now looking into these questions in relation to Millennial and Post Millenials. If you are curious to learn more, try scoring how 'digitally mature' your union is with this [Digital Maturity Framework](#).

