

TRADE UNION
COMMUNICATIONS
AWARDS 2009

Focus on
the winners



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Introduction by Brendan Barber

Many thanks to all the unions that entered the competition this year. We benefited from a healthy number of entries showing the full diversity of union communications across many sectors. The judges were once again hard pressed to scrutinise all the material in the time we gave them, but as always they gave it their all and their comments provided some great insights.

Unions, no less than other outward-facing organisations, are constantly striving to improve standards in all areas. We all know how much hard work goes on at every level to represent members and build union strength. But it is a fact of life that no matter what happens behind the scenes, in this media-driven age a union's reputation often depends on what it says and does in the public arena. That is why high quality union communications are so important, and why you as union professionals act as a crucial interface, whether it is with members, potential members, the public, MPs or employers.

The aim of this competition is to showcase the best. Whether you are a winner or not, take time to look at your colleagues' efforts and be inspired by the vitality of the work on offer. As the judges said again this year, union communicators are showing a breadth of skills that would be the envy of many commercial publishers, promoters and campaigners.



Judges

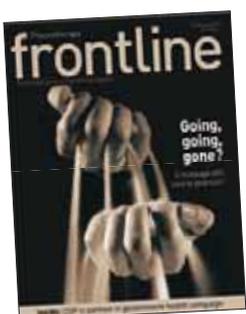
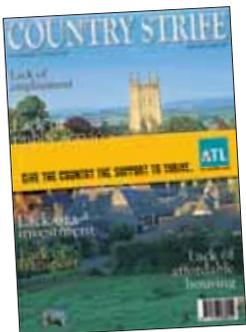
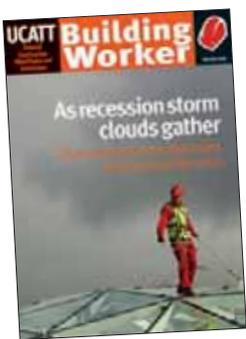
Ian McCartney MP

Hilary Fisher Director, End Child Poverty

Stephen Hayward Consumer Correspondent, *Sunday Mirror*

Len Mulholland Political Reporter, guardian.co.uk

Ellie Campbell-Barr Journal Editor, NUT



Best journal or magazine



↑ WINNER FBU



↑ HIGHLY COMMENDED USDAW

It was great to see such a wide range of well-produced journals and magazines, reflecting the diversity of union membership today. Public and private sectors were well represented, and entries varied in size between the broadsheets of *The Voice*, *The Landworker* and *Telegraph* down to many different A4 publications. All seemed to have a good understanding of the expectations of their readership. Of course commercial titles live or die by their sales, so unions will always find it hard to judge how their materials are received by members, but the judges felt that in most cases each union audience was very well served. The best entries had well focused editorial and beautiful layouts.

The judges this year were inclined to favour journals that didn't shy from promoting the union and what it stood for. They also took the view that union members, whether as workers, consumers or activists, are a rich source of real-life stories. They liked the fact that the winning magazines exploited that material with well written case studies, features on real people as much as issues, and strong letters pages. FBU's *FireFighter* took the top prize for its dynamism and passion, closely followed by the unashamed populist appeal of USDAW's *Arena*, and the thorough, professional reporting of Nautilus' *Telegraph*.



↑ COM MENDED NAUTILUS UK

Best feature



↑ WINNER PCS

The best feature category is always a favourite with the judges, as it allows them to get an in-depth look at the issues unions are focussing on, and it was no different this year. It was a strong category, with evidence of good – and occasionally superlative – research, some great writing, and, importantly, imaginative and thoughtful presentation. Words alone don't make a winning feature – it is the whole page layout, and the use of creative imagery, from photos to graphs, to illustrate the words. A final question that the judges considered in this category was how relevant a particular feature was to members; a superb piece was considered to be 'off-topic' if members couldn't relate to it.

The winning entry was **PCS** with its superb feature arguing the case for better pay in the civil service. The quality of writing was excellent, but just as impressive was the presentation – with subheads, tables and quotes that all helped enhance the union's case. **Nautilus UK** came in second with its topical, heavyweight issue concerning piracy on the high seas, involving a comprehensive mix of fact, opinion and case studies backed by strong research. **BECTU** in third place continued the theme of its winning photo, considering the relationship between police and the press in a well-written, carefully researched and balanced piece that asked all the important questions.

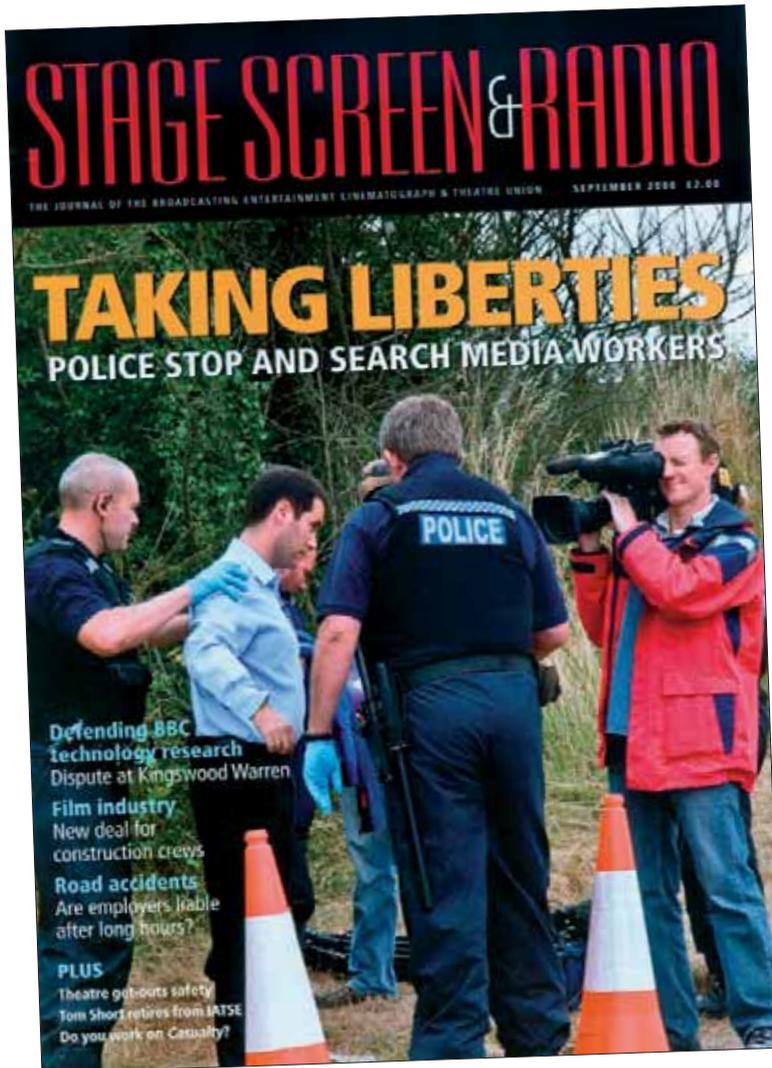


↑ HIGHLY COMMENDED NAUTILUS UK



↑ COMMENDED BECTU

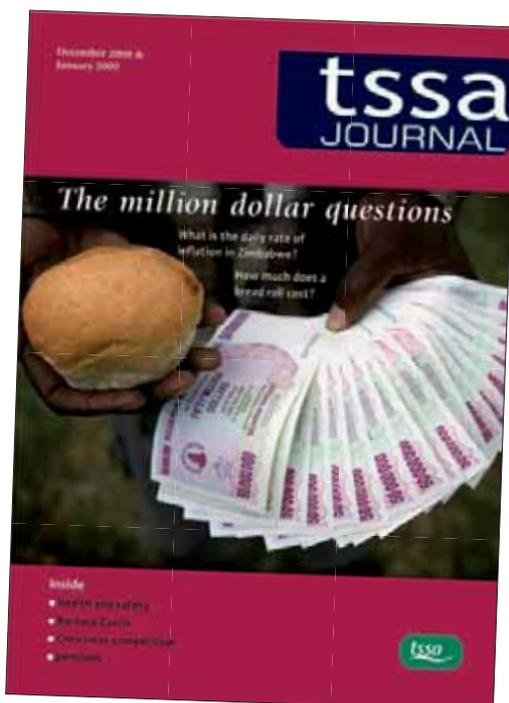
Best use of a photo or illustration



The second year with photography and illustration in the same category brought an almost equal number of entries of each kind, but the judges tended to favour the pictures, which seemed to have more impact overall. Will illustration always struggle against its photographic sibling? Interestingly a few entries seemed to blur the distinction, with pics being montaged or manipulated to create a new image or, in the case of the NUJ, the seamless combination of two specially taken pictures. In all such cases the unions were careful to point out where any digital alteration had occurred.

All the winning entries comprised a great picture with simple supporting text, used dramatically on front covers. Co-incidentally, two of them focused on the same theme, but that did nothing to diminish them in the judges' eyes: if the aim is to get the reader to open the magazine then all achieved that. **BECTU's** shocking real-life picture of police harassment of media workers had the drama and impact to make it the winner; whilst the **TSSA's** highly commended picture of Zimbabwean dollars weighed against a single loaf made a telling comment on the human cost of rampant inflation. The **NUJ** came in third with its confidently executed representation of the current state of the police/media relationship.

↑ WINNER **BECTU**

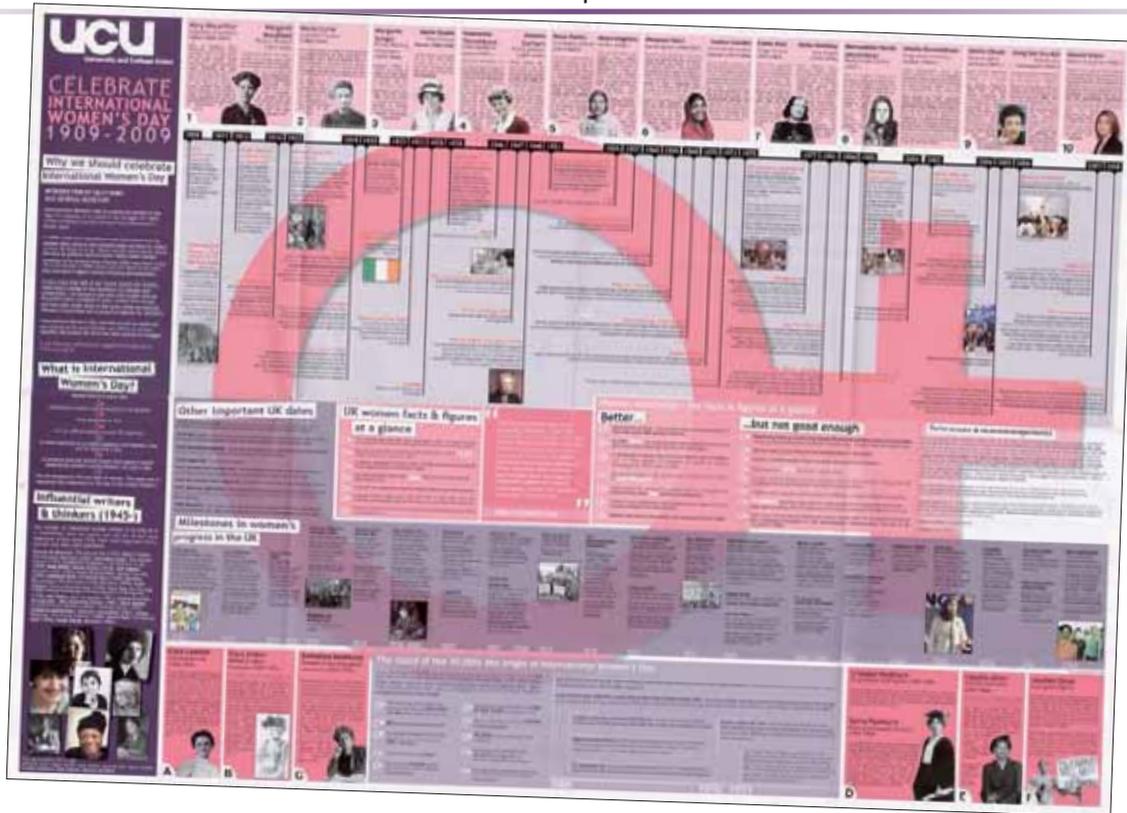


↑ HIGHLY COMMENDED **TSSA**



↑ COMMENDED **NUJ**

Best one-off publication

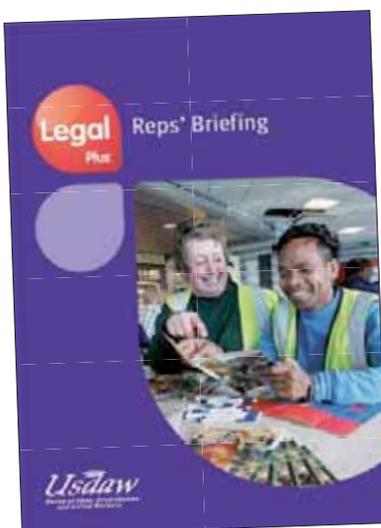


↑ WINNER UCU

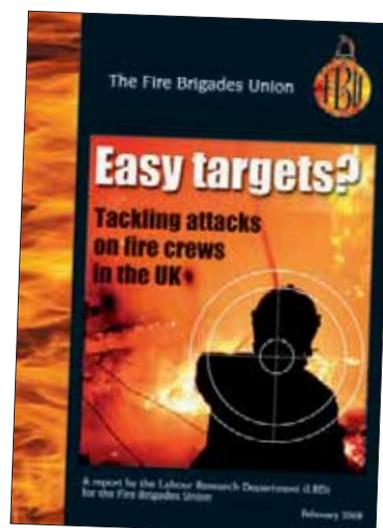
It is also the second year of this new category, which brings together recruitment and campaign literature, special reports, wallcharts, yearbooks, and indeed anything that does not meet the test of 'regular journal'. The number of entries was perhaps a little low given the generous parameters of the category; the judges expressed a hope that more unions would enter in the future, as it gives a chance to shine, away from the glare of the flagship publications.

The judges spent considerable time comparing the different media submitted – and their very different aims. A clear sense of a target audience was important – and how effectively that audience seemed to be addressed.

UCU's International Women's Day wallchart was the clear winner, offering a wealth of information in a striking design. There was so much attractively presented detail that you would want to go back to it again and again, which was appropriate for something that could easily grace a noticeboard over a long period. **USDAW's** Legal Plus reps pack was highly commended for its "fabulously comprehensive" information presented in a folder of goodies, including a thorough and well written handbook for reps on how members can be supported in injury claims. The **FBU's** Easy Targets publication won commended for a well researched report on attacks on fire crews, which also benefited from a solid supporting statement.



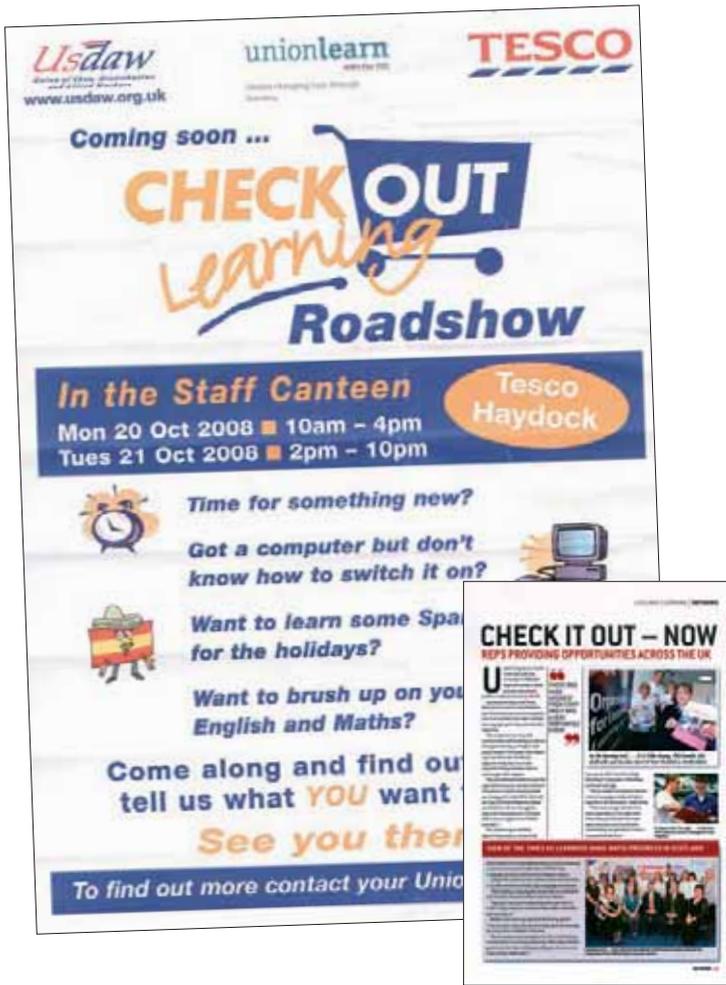
↑ HIGHLY COMMENDED USDAW



↑ COMMENDED FBU



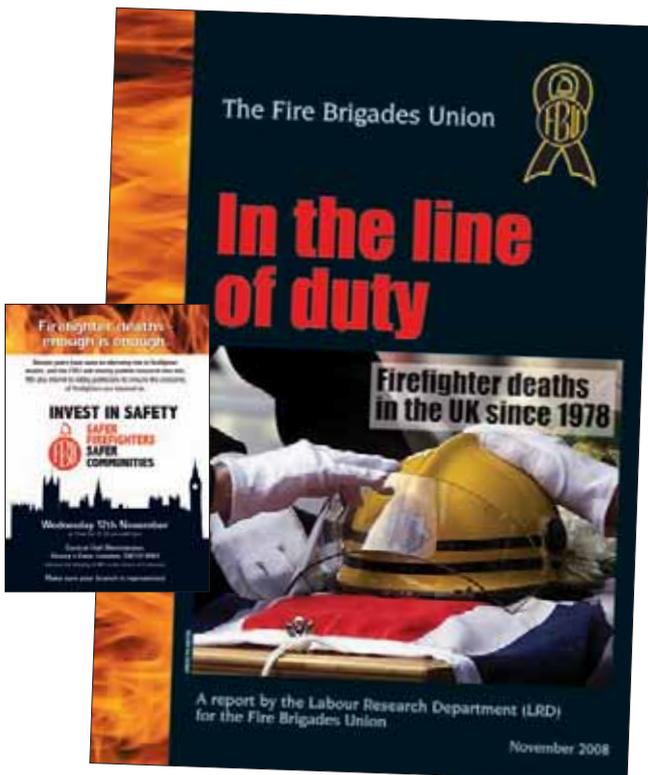
Best campaign



↑ WINNER USDAW

This category provoked the liveliest discussion among the judges, who pondered, debated and finally disputed over the merits of ‘outcomes’ versus ‘impact’. We know from previous years just how valued the outcomes are – how can you have a successful campaign that can’t prove its goals have been met? – but campaigns also need the oxygen of publicity and so media impact is an important dimension. Some entries were reasonably convincing on outcomes but missed making a wider impression; whilst others caused a short-term media storm but still stumbled on the way to their goal. Supporting evidence was of course crucial in this category: budgets, aims, achievements, evaluation and media coverage (press cuttings, not press releases!)

Of those that got everything right, it was **USDAW**’s Check Out Learning that made the judges most excited, with its clear objectives and confident orchestration. The on-the-ground results (including the recruitment of new members) ensured it the top spot and made it a model of union campaigning. A totally different approach came from the **FBU**’s Safer Firefighters, Safer Communities campaign to reduce fatalities in the service, built around an impressive research report and a lobby of Parliament, prompting a re-think in government policy, and winning it the highly commended award. **NASUWT**’s Is Your School Breaking the Law? engaged members, the wider education community and MPs and ministers in delivering a strong and confident message, gaining a deserved third place. Finally, an honourable mention went to Prospect for a campaign that clearly had the makings of a fine achievement but which seemed to be a ‘work in progress’ rather than the finished article.



↑ HIGHLY COMMENDED FBU



↑ COMMENDED NASUWT

Best website



↑ WINNER PCS



↑ HIGHLY COMMENDED FDA



↑ COMMENDED CWU

Many unions are now well up to speed with their online comms and this category contained some great examples of websites that feature huge amounts of useful information and resources. There was also plenty of evidence of attempts to increase interactivity with members and to create web-based communities and lively comment areas. Unions were reminded to keep thinking of the website as a separate publishing vehicle that demands different writing and presentational skills to publishing for print – there was still evidence, for example, of a lot of ‘pdf dumping’ to fill information space. Some judges

were concerned that a lack of information about budgets made it hard to compare the entries and so we may ask unions to provide that in the future.

PCS took the top spot with a site that offered good resources, easy navigation, attention to accessibility and a topical debates area where comments could be posted. They narrowly pipped the **FDA**, whose site was also packed with information divided neatly into sectional interest and whose navigation was clean and clear. In third came **CWU** with their high production values and their TV viewing option.

Best use of electronic communication

The judges felt that the rather small field in this category reflected the fact that the majority of union web investment is channelled into the main website, rather than the many other options available, including e-newsletters, microsites, DVDs, social networking sites and so on. The manifold opportunities available through these new developments are not, the judges felt, being fully exploited currently and – a few choice examples aside – they felt publishers should be putting more time and budget into expanding these additional marketing and PR avenues. A second concern raised was the occasional failure to recognise that e-comms are not just offline comms inserted into emails: there were a few examples of (very good)

publications that felt like offline editions made web-ready rather than designed to take advantage of the interactivity offered by 2.0 developments.

The two winners stood some way apart from the other entrants in terms of creativity of approach and confidence of execution. The **CWU** took pole position for its accessible broadcast channel CWUTV, a slick, polished product featuring the latest union news and views designed around the expectations of the YouTube generation. Equally professional – and even more specifically targeted at YouTube visitors – was the **FBU**'s FBUTube, featuring the views and voices of FBU members in interesting and engaging chunks of interview.



↑ WINNER CWU



↑ HIGHLY COMMENDED FBU