

04. Berne Union Strategy - (Internal) Networking

For discussion

Networking, peer learning, knowledge sharing and collaboration between the Members and with various international institutions, academia and private sector remain the *core functions* of the Berne Union.

This section outlines the Berne Union Members' networking framework by firstly summarising the current practices. It focuses on possible areas for improvement, with the emphasis on how to balance and stimulate Members' attendance and participation at the Berne Union events and considers ways to increase cross-committee all-member interaction both during the events and via the online platform.

1. Objectives

Berne Union's 85 Members have a diverse range of mandates and business lines within the global export credit and investment insurance industry. As a fully-fledged internationally recognised membership association, Berne Union provides extensive *networking and peer learning opportunities*.

The Berne Union facilitates *knowledge exchange, the building of relationships with peers, and promoting of good business practices* as appropriate for the government-backed official export credit agencies, multilateral financial institutions, and private credit insurers.

Berne Union Members are reasonably transparent in sharing the information and do so on a voluntary basis.

2. What We Offer / Current Practices

The Berne Union regularly brings together its Members to share industry insights, trends and challenges. It does so mainly by organising *meetings and workshops*. The association provides a platform for building *in person and online* opportunities to enhance relationships between individuals across business functions at Members' institutions.

Members' attendance across various events varies. General Meetings are attended by representatives from the majority of Member companies. Specialist Meetings draw a more limited audience depending on Members' business lines and geographic location.

Throughout the year, Berne Union holds *two main annual meetings* as well as several *specialist meetings, workshops and webinars* to enable Members to network, learn from each other and from expert practitioners.

- **General Meetings**

The two, four to five-day annual general meetings, one in Spring (Spring Meeting) and one in Autumn (AGM), provide Members with the opportunity to spend time together in a closed, non-commercial forum. Emphasis is on member-led presentations, panel discussions, and knowledge sharing. The meetings include smaller breakout sessions and practical workshops as well as keynote speeches delivered by global industry leaders and government representatives.

- Large attendance – 250 to 300 delegates
- Similar attendance level at both Spring Meeting and AGM
- Attended by more senior level individuals, usually with previous Berne Union experience
- Cover both business line specific and industry wide or global topics

- **Specialist Meetings and Workshops**

The shorter, usually two-day specialist meetings and workshops present an opportunity for specialist knowledge sharing within a peer group. Confidential sessions promote open and in-depth discussion while also offering cross function learning opportunities. Member driven agenda and content is offered at a frequency dictated by the Members' requirements.

- Smaller attendance – 60 – 120 delegates
- Attended usually by specialists, not always with previous Berne Union experience
- Cover more business line or business function specific topics
- Workshops offer knowledge sharing in a less structured environment
- Prague Club Workshop mixes technical and management training level topics

- **Webinars / Online Seminars**

Webinars give Members easy access to expert knowledge and offer a platform for reaching wide and geographically disperse audience. It is a cost-effective alternative to attending meetings and is suitable for selected topics.

- Unrestricted attendance opportunity
- Somewhat limited in time and scope

- **Online Platform**

The Berne Union is developing its webpage / online platform to be more collaborative and as a publication channel for information exchange. Members utilise the online framework for peer learning to continuously improve their business outcomes.

3. How We Deliver Members' Active Participation

Changes to things we already do:

- **Engage all Members in Sharing Relevant Member Led Content**

- The Secretariat conducts Members' surveys to identify topics of interest; these are not well responded. The topics are validated and expanded on through discussions with the Elected Officials as well as by keeping an eye on wider industry developments
- Approach Members in person during the meetings to encourage "volunteering" and feedback
- During the breaks and lunch times and at the end of the meetings use whiteboards with questions "What topic would you like to see discussed in the next meeting?", adding names and company info at the same time for follow-up
- Communicate clearly that everyone's contribution and mutual exchange of information is a must to ensure a successful meeting
- Allowing ample time for questions and feedback at the end of the sessions

- **Target Group meetings within the event, i.e., the President's lunch, possible new Private Members Insurance Forum, etc.**

- Would arguably attract a different, more senior level / higher-ranking audience
- Breaks down current Committee based barriers
- Eliminate focus from the main speaker (max 10 – 15-minute headline speech)
- Focus on round-table teamwork and problem solving instead
- Leave time for discussion and good old catch-up in a relaxed environment

New things:

- **Create a Members' Guide on how to register, prepare for and what to expect from attending the Berne Union Meetings**

- Address administrative matters and expectations for attendance (from how to choose daytime sessions and evening functions, to availability and timing of online presentations, etc.)
- Make pre-meeting materials available in a timely fashion
- Give delegates a chance to submit specific questions before the meeting
- Make the Members' Guide to attending Berne Union meetings permanently available online and distribute during the booking phase

- **Berne Union Communication Strategy**

- Define and execute a clear communication strategy to ensure regular flow of information. Reinforce the message in multiple ways
- Address what is considered "too much" contact – who gets what notifications
- Summarise in the Members' Guide or add a link

- **Encourage attendance of delegates with a mixed level of seniority**

- In order to stimulate both the continuity and renewal of delegates' attendance, actively encourage the Members to include attendees from various business functions and in addition to more seasoned Berne Union delegates
- Directly invite speakers and panellists who have not previously attended Berne Union meetings
- What else can be done???

- **Introduce Berne Union Awards**

- A light version of awards to encourage sharing during Plenary or the Dinners (Green transaction of the year, etc)

4. How to Increase Cross-Committee Interactions

Changes to things we already do:

Networking time between the sessions can and should be increased. Breaks for Committee meeting days especially should be coordinated even better to allow easier networking between different Committees. Assuming the current committee structures continue, the following can be considered:

- **Open and joint / shared sessions**

- A relatively new but tried and tested feature during the Berne Union general meetings. Some Committees have more overlapping interests than others (Short Term and the Prague Club, MLT and INV)
- Offer more open sessions to give everyone a choice of attendance if possible (would need larger rooms)
- Offer first come first served limited slots for specialist sessions outside the main Committee membership including for the Prague Club Workshop
- Share outside speakers across the Committees should the venue logistics not allow for open or joint sessions (also already a practice especially between Short Term and the Prague Club)

- **Breakout sessions during the Plenary day**

- These offer true cross-membership networking and knowledge exchange opportunities and are therefore very popular
- Allow for longer more interactive sessions to encourage more sharing amongst the peers
- Mix country specific topics with industry specific topics
- Communicate content and findings better

- **Bilateral Meetings**

- Promote bilateral meetings more and leave time in the agenda to accommodate these

- **Personal (Emotive) Networking**

- Use our Member assigned voting tablets in alphabetical order out on display during the MC / RCG / CSM days which are earlier in the week and have “silly” questions on the board (i.e., “Ideas are best created... 1. In the office 2. On a park bench
- Use these as light warm ups to get everyone talking in a friendly way
- The Prague Club Committee recent workshop (which was open to all Members in Hyderabad) on decision making using the techniques of poker playing created a wonderful sharing atmosphere that carried on to the main meeting day

New things:

- **Create an open Problem Hackathon session**

- Pick one or two problems faced by a Member(s)
- Run a timeboxed facilitated session to find a joint solution
- Publish outcomes in post meeting documents and online, followed up with a real-life case study in due course as applicable

- **Create “Alternative” Events and times for Networking**

- Introduce games (bowling in Singapore) or other outings / activities before the Dinners
- Offer free flow or additional seating arrangements during the Dinners to allow “table hopping”
- Offer a lighter tourist or locally based option for informal activity during the “free” night
- Encourage attending excursions on the last day
- Experiment with excursion at the start of the General meeting

- **Emotive Networking**

- Utilise the breaks, lunches etc by providing activities, Q&A's and / or games for people to partake in
- Industry focussed and useful for on the spot feedback along the lines of “What did you find most useful during this meeting?”, “Suggestions”
- Each of these questions will be colour coded with same colour post-its for responses to stick underneath each question
- The Secretariat will collect the answers and use as emotive feedback form each stage of the meeting
- Delegates will be able to see each other's answers to spark up conversations, introductions and common grounds with opinions

5. Online Platform as an Extension to Networking and Peer Learning

To capture ongoing interest, the content should be *innovative* - with emphasis on the sharing of best practices; *relevant* - with emphasis on topical issues, including the use of practical lessons learned; and *collaborative* - done with Members for Members' benefit in mind.

The main content specific and education related recommendations are covered in the Visibility / Influence and Education sections of the strategy document.

The Berne Union should continue to actively encourage exchange of views on topics of common interest and of specific relevance amongst its Members online.

- **Discussion Forums**

- Members often have one-off technical queries and look for ways to connect with their wider Berne Union peer group. Communicate (as part of the communication strategy) better to the Members that this platform exists. Address who gets notified and how often
- Can we find champions to stimulate the conversations? Or - is this function potentially redundant?

- **Peer Assistance Requests**

- The newest Berne Union Guests and Members especially often look for advisory or consulting services. Ad hoc requests are currently published via the website
- Consider creating an unofficial list of BU Members who offer consulting services and the broad scope of work available
- Consider the feasibility of creating a list of recommended outside experts. Do the risks outweigh the benefits?

- **Young Professionals**

- Some Members already engage in direct one to one junior level employee exchanges. Would learning about these programmes encourage others to follow suit?
- No adverts for "internships" yet – why not?

- **Social Media**

- What is appropriate for networking in addition to Berne Union LinkedIn and Twitter presence?
- Facebook closed group one step too far?

6. Resources

TBD