



FAGFORBUNDET

Digitalisation or technological transition?

Same, same, or different?



I am:

- Håvard Sivertsen
- National Union Secretary in Fagforbundet, where my former employer; Postkom- the Union for Postal Workers, has found a safe haven.
- Union secretary for more than 25 years, primarily worked with processes of transition the Postal and Financial sectors.
- I have never worked with «digitalisation»
 - › But in the last 25 years, technological innovation has been the main driver behind 75% of the job losses from the old way of delivering money and post in Norway.
 - › E-mail and Internet-banking are two examples.



Norwegian system of negotiation

- All collective agreements have a Basic agreement as the first part. This sets the rules for cooperation and negotiations between the social partners on all levels, both in the sector and in the individual firm or business.
 - › Here we find a duty to consult and negotiate as early as possible if the company is planning changes (§ 31).
- We find the same obligation to consult in our legislation adapted from the EU when it comes to businesses planning collective redundancies.
- It is not possible to use industrial action, such as strikes, in these negotiations. The partners have to agree.



How to handle change the Norwegian way – whatever the driver

- Analyze!
 - › Scenarios, timelines, other countries, other businesses.
- What are the challenges?
 - › Political? Technological? Economical? Ecological? Substitution?
- What are our options?
 - › Negotiate an agreement, fight, concede?
- What is the time perspective?
 - › Today, tomorrow, too late?

Technological change in the Postal sector

- Our analysis in 1995 concluded that a lot of our members' jobs would disappear due to technological substitution.
- We concluded that fighting technological development is senseless.
- Focus was put on diminishing the consequences.



Strategy for a just transition

- Anchor our reality to our member groups
- Negotiate while there is still something to negotiate on
 - › Every delay burns money or other resources (time, people)
- Set clear goals for the negotiations
- Ensure that there is enough time to implement acceptable solutions
- Implement measures in a timely and planned manner

Communicating possible outcomes to members

- We accept fewer jobs, but the remaining jobs must be full-time, and sustainable in regard to health and safety, security and wages.
- Those who lose their job shall get an opportunity to further their education or get another job in the company.
- Future jobs may have a different content but not lower wages.



Goals for the negotiations

- No dismissals
- Those who lose their job must have time to find something else, or time and money to start a re-educating process
- Keep the same ratio of full time jobs
- No race to the bottom regarding wages
- Sustainable jobs regarding education and Health and Safety
- Modern equipment
- The same remedy/tool shall be offered to everyone who are at risk of losing their jobs



Results

- Special agreement negotiated
- Since 1997 the number of employed workers reduced from 34 000 to approximately 8 000.
- The number of involuntarily dismissals can be counted in tens, not in hundreds or thousands.
- Most have found new work elsewhere.
- In a survey, by the research institute Agenda, most members said they regarded the process as fair.



Where we are today

- Less part-time work
- More modern equipment
- The same wage development as others
- Reduced absence due to sickness
- Increased employee satisfaction among the remaining workforce



Lessons learnt

- Whatever the reason for change, the impact on our members should be the main focus
- Resisting technological development is not an option. The point is to influence how it is implemented, owned and used.
 - › Some parts of this is in the Union's area of interest, some of it belongs to politics.
- It's important to pick the fights that belong on our arenas.
- Make alliances with politicians for those fights that take place outside our arenas.
- Make an agreement before the wolf is at your door.



Our own fights

- What will happen to the existing jobs?
- How can we avoid unemployment, lower quality jobs and part-time jobs?
- How should the process be organized?
- How much time do we have?
 - › Time is a great solver of problems. Its always important to win more time
 - › The time should be used to find or create solutions
- How do we make our members understand why change is inevitable?



Thank you

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