Option 1: OLB Reform

Council meeting 12th June elected to support Option 1

Equity has invested significantly in this branch and this option looks to make the most of that investment. This means retaining the existing branch hosted by NetXtra, and making some small changes to the functionality which have already been identified by the committee.

Four more significant changes are required in order to make it a safe space for members, particularly the members that the branch was set up to serve:

1. Members of a General and/or Variety Branch should not also be able to be members of the Online Branch, and vice-versa, and the Rules of the three branch types must be changed to reflect that.

2. Moderation should be shared by the OLB committee and not left to one individual. Completion of recognised training in online moderation should be mandatory.

3. Moderators must be empowered to close down abusive, bullying or intimidating postings sooner.

4. Notifications, which enable the activities of the branch to enter the public domain, should not be restored in their current format and should be replaced with a simple notification that a post or posts have been made with a link to view them online.

The one-off development budget for the changes required will be in the region of £3,000, with ongoing hosting and maintenance provision in the region of £4,000 per annum.

Moderators Response

Immediate concerns:
- Netxtas capacity to deliver
- The potential of alienting the branch network
- Fueling fears that Equity is going to close down the physical branch network
- Fueling fears that Equity is going to close down the Online Branch
- Limited delivery period of 6 months from time of June decision

Consensus in Agreement:
Separating physical branch affiliations (duel members) and solely online affications (digital dependants) for purposes of democracy is a priority.

Immediate Objective:
- Communicate via a newsletter the Branch's current status
- Elect a 2018 - 2019/2020 Online Branch Committee.
- Analyse with current members to identify the digital dependant members vs dual branch members.
- Report findings and present proposal for a further 6 months.

Solution Suggestions

Point ONE

Members of a General and/or Variety Branch should not also be able to be members of the Online Branch, and vice-versa, and the Rules of the three branch types must be changed to reflect that. The new website frames Branch affiliation as shown below.

A suggestion to initiate primary voting rights for a branch could be implemented as shown below. This also acknowledged the existence of professional networks too.

Point TWO

Moderation should be shared by the OLB committee and not left to one individual. Completion of recognised training in online moderation should be mandatory.

The committee agree but the platform knowledge accompanying the moderators role can't be handed over with the click of permissions. The primary moderation back office is held in a Google Drive folder in the folders listed below.

- * OLB Committee 2016-18
- 2016 New Website
- OLB Handbook
- OLB Moderator's Desk
- OLB Pod/Web-casts
- PeterWilson Correspndance
- Regional Branch Network
- REVIEW: Aug 2016 - first 6 month
- REVIEW: June 2018
- Roleplay
- z ARCHIVE - OLB Committee
- z ARCHIVE - OLB Development

Within the Moderators Desk Folder the following folders

- 00 Loomio
- AgeUK
- OLB July Beta's
- OLB Member DATA
- OLB PROPOSED MOTIONS
- Top Draw
- Chat Room Thread MARCH 2018 - Should Equity Members be Campaigning to Stop Brexit
- Chat Room Thread MARCH 2018 - Should Equity Members be Campaigning to Stop Brexit.pdf
- Chat Room Thread: The defence of BBC salaries by Equity
- Moderator Manual.docx
- OLB Moderators Manual.doc
- POST ARC 2015 Strategy Timeline
- Tess Whittaker
- transcript_The defence of BBC salaries by Equity.pdf
- Webmaster report Jan 16 Caron.doc

There was never a formal process in which to hand over the 'reins' and no one when approach wanted to take the role or had time to schedule a hand over induction.

Also there are NO moderator tools.

There is a badge and additional tabs. (see screenshot below) No moderation control to modify behaviour when the rules are breached. The manual for the moderator was written with the proposed facilities all being completed. Netextra never delivered a full build.

Functional Specifications Document PDF

This is the manual to take over moderation I received.

Point THREE

Moderators must be empowered to close down abusive, bullying or intimidating postings sooner.

There are NO moderator tools

Point FOUR

Notifications, which enable the activities of the branch to enter the public domain, should not be restored in their current format and should be replaced with a simple notification that a post or posts have been made with a link to view them online.

QUESTION?

The one-off development budget for the changes required will be in the region of £3,000, with ongoing hosting and maintenance provision in the region of £4,000 per annum.

Can the Moderation tools and the Notification problems be addressed with the budget? Will Netxtra engage in any dialogue to make that happen during this 6 month time frame?

Current Status and Legacy

[Chronological context taken from Equity annual reports](#)

March 2016 - March 2017

In March of 2016 Equity launched its Online Branch in an open beta phase. This was announced to the press and reported in The Stage and following a 6 month trial again to announce its success.

[Moderators Aug 2016 Report to Council](#)

The Stage: March 2016
- [Equity Launches Pioneering Online Branch.](#)
The Stage: September 2016
- [Equity's Online Only Branch Made Permanent After Successful Trial](#)

EQUITYREPORT

A digest of decisions taken at 2016-2018 Equity Council meetings   No. 2 — 6 SEPTEMBER 2016

Online Branch becomes permanent fixture

The Equity Council agreed that the Equity Online Branch, which was launched earlier this year for a six month trial, should become a permanent part of the union's democratic structure with immediate effect.

Members can sign up to the Online Branch by visiting the Members Area of the Equity website.

Since the start of the trial, 247 members have registered with the Online Branch. There have been 42 different discussions opened in the Online Branch Chat Room. Topics of discussion have included unpaid dancers in pantomimes, bogus model agencies, working in music videos, expenses for attending Equity meetings, Equity elections and the crisis in housing. This last topic became the subject of a motion from the Online Branch to the Equity Council.

The idea of an Online Branch was first raised in 2009 to give members who for personal reasons or geography could not attend Equity branch meetings and so did

not have access to that aspect of Equity's decision-making structure. Such an entity has not, as far as Equity can establish, ever been built by any trade union in the UK or internationally so the task was a very ambitious one for a union as small as Equity.

A Working Party of members worked with Equity's website providers on creating an Online entity which closely matched the workings of meetings of Equity's face-to-face geographic branches.

The result is a fully functioning Online Branch. At the heart of the Branch is a forum, called the Chat Room, where any issue can be raised by a member. At any time, a member of the Branch can chose to convert one of these informal discussions into a motion by pressing the "Move to debate" option.

The Online Branch Moderator, the Online equivalent of a Branch Chair, puts the motion on to an agenda and gives it a timeframe for discussion and invites a someone to second it. The mover and sec-

onder make postings in favour of the motion. Members of the branch can also make one posting each during the discussion. Any member can move an amendment to the motion which in turn must be seconded and debated.

When the Moderator has closed the discussion the mover of the motion gets a "right of reply" posting then votes are conducted firstly on any amendments and finally on the motion.

Some elements of the Online Branch are not working as they should – for example notifications from the Chat Room and the ability to reply to posts from an email alerts. Following Council's decision to make the Online branch permanent these will now be fixed.

Now the Equity Council has agreed the Online branch should become permanent there will be elections for a branch Committee. To take part, simply log in to the Equity website members area to register for the Online branch.

The first Online Branch Committee was elected and announce before the end of that year using the main website's built in election module to establish. The committee first met on Tues 29 Nov 2016.

The 2016 - 18 committee

Helen Raw	Cliff Evans
Caron Lyon	Nana Bartholomew Brown
Rhubarb The Clown	Paul Valentine

George Callender (resigned due to ill health)
The Committee constitutionally has 9 seats.

Regular meeting have been schedule and held on the 2nd Tuesday of each month since November 2017 as meeting by meeting scheduling proved unsuccessful.

OLB Update 2017

ARC 2017 OLB Update from the Moderator (circulated at ARC 2017)

In Sept 2016 Equity Council made the Online Branch a 'permanent fixture' of the Equity Branch Network.

In Jan 2017 the very first elected branch committee met online and began collaborating to continue to work on the methodology for effective and sustainable digital communications to ensure the branch functions as a parallel proposition along side the regional and variety branches in the UK as well as providing an outpost for democratic participation across the world where members are working internationally.

So we are here. We made it. Here are a few numbers...

- On May 19th 2017 the branch members count stood at 720.
- At the 2016 ARC x60 representatives were among the branch membership.
- For the 2016 Council Election 39 candidates were branch members
- 25 candidates elected to the Equity Council are members of the Online Branch.

Establishing an awareness of members to participate and the time frame needed to enable timely engagement was the primary drive during the pilot and continued in the first 6 month of officialdom.

2017 was the branches first opportunity to participate with in the democratic framework of the union.

- Selecting a motion for submission to the ARC
- Sending a representative to ARC
- Deciding collectively to nominate or support candidate requests for Council or Committee elections
- Progressing a motion from online branch chat to proposed debate through to a vote, a submission to the general secretary and back from the council or committee with advice or permission to proceed enacting the request of the motion.

2017 Lessons

In short a decision taken between 6 and 8 weeks. The Branch's Rules states A.6.6.2 In initiating each online vote, the currently serving Moderator shall stipulate a date and time by which voting must be completed. The period of time for a vote shall never be less than one week nor more than two weeks.

With this in mind the timeframe to facilitate members engagement frequency. A single post interative is assumed to have been encountered in 72hrs. So everything moves forward 3 days at a time.

In December 2016 a presentation was delivered at Guild House to outline the new website following a members consultation by Colin Farrow. ***Audio and session notes are held on file.***
Email linked permission to these note are available on request.

Ever since March of 2017 the Online Branch has been anticipating the dawn of the new website. Living in the full knowledge that the branch would not be migrated to the new site. Consequently Netxtra would no long be services the existing platform.

The recommendations from the August 2016 report to address the notifications, digest and newsletter faults were never fixed. From this a campaign to promote and grow the branch would have followed.

[Moderators Aug 2016 Report to Council](#)

2017 was waiting for the new site to manifest.

The Online Branch made a first attempt to get a motion to the ARC but in interpreting its rules the committee and staff confused the committee capacity and the members requirement meaning the decision taken by the committee on the suggested motions should have been taken by the wider branch in a collective vote. As a result the 2017 Motion to ARC from the Online Branch was proposed by Council and presented by the branch representatives.

> *This ARC notes the successful development of an online branch, which helps facilitate branch involvement for members, particularly when they cannot attend a geographical branch. However, it is noted that there are still barriers to participation in the online branch, particularly from those who are not familiar or confident in using computers. This ARC asks Equity Council to build on the work of FEU Training by offering and delivering workshops and training in the use of information technology so that the reach of the online branch can extend as far as possible.*

There was no Online Branch review in 2017. A Report was finally compiled by the Moderator for February's Council - Report: [Moderators Jan 2018 Report to Council](#)

January - March 2018

The Branch proposed and selected a motion for ARC

> *Last year, a branch member was proposed and seconded to stand for the Screen and New Media Committee. The nomination was accepted but Equity Senior Management informed the candidate that, although the evidenced experience was valid, there was no seat on the Screen and New Media Committee for a New Media Creator.*

There is no seat on the Screen and New Media Committee for a New Media Creator!
Is this correct?

This ARC urges Council to accept this request that "New Media" be better defined by the union to help members working in this field with relevant experience to sit on committees continually breaking new ground in the digital realm via a working party inviting the specialist committees innovating in the digital sectors of our industry to contribute.

This would enable entertainment industry media talent whose work resides exclusively on digital platforms producing "for-platform and original" content (YouTube is just one example) to stand for election to a relevant industrial specialist committee should they wish.

Members of Equity identifying as New Media Creators would then be developing an industrial voice in this growing sector with rapidly evolving work opportunities also raising awareness within our organisation of how New Media Creators are increasingly exploited by management companies and media producers.

...and made the decision NOT to invite candidates to request branch nomination and support.

In March a debilitating chat thread illuminating the divide and aggression contained within the membership in regards to Brexit transpied. It was the inability for the moderator to authoritatively moderate with the lack of any moderation tools led to the forced yet timely commissioning of the Online Branch review.

This review led to the June 2018 Council decision advocating Option 1 - Reform. Had it not been for this insengury discussion, the review to evaluate the branch would not have taken place. As the moderator I welcomed this review and the decision to focus a timeframe to deliver a selected strategy.

DOCUMENTS
Commissioned review - Report
Commissioned Consultation Data appendix
Online Branch Moderator Response

The new site was launched in June 2018 midway through the Council elections.

SEE PAGE ONE

The priority is now for September 2018 - February 2019 to report back March 2019
1. Elect a new Committee (re-align with the branch rules 1 yr term or review rules to extend to 2yrs)
2. Established if the Branch platform can be returned to operation
3. Survey the 800 OLB members to understand digital and physical branch affiliation.
4. Present a strategy plan for this to take place.