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Engaging Young Professionals in Credit Unions: Reviving a Movement through Online Social Networking, Meet-ups, and Events

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Engaging Young Professionals in Credit Unions: Reviving a Movement through Online Social Networking, Meet-ups, and Events

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PIM 70

A Capstone Paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of Sustainable Development at SIT Graduate Institute in Brattleboro, Vermont, USA.

May 2013

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Student Name: *Becky Spachek* **Date:** *May 24, 2013*

Dedication

First and foremost I must acknowledge my family and SIT friends.

Your guidance and faith in me lead me to this point.

I must thank the Cooperative Trust community for building my passion for the credit union movement and all of the tremendous support in the completion of this research.

Finally, I am thankful for the Kansas City snow-pocalypse of 2013 for providing me with the time and space to complete this.

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Abstract

Credit Union young professionals feel distanced from their jobs and comparatively less satisfied than their older coworkers. The industry is failing to retain young talent causing a growing gap between the young professionals and aging leaders. The Cooperative Trust is a network of young professionals working to close this gap by connecting and engaging members with the larger Credit Union Movement. This paper will examine the question, “Have active members of the Cooperative Trust experienced an increase in engagement in the credit union movement since joining the Cooperative Trust?”.

Background

Cooperatives and Credit Unions

Offering an alternative business model based around social responsibility cooperatives already play a role in our daily lives. From Cabot Creamery in Vermont to credit unions, Land O' Lakes brand, Sunkist growers, the Dairy Farmers of America, and Ace Hardware, cooperatives are making an impact through offering fair paying, sustainable careers in democratically run and worker owned companies.

A co-operative is “an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise” (International Cooperative Alliance, 2007). Businesses, groups, and organizations that operate with a cooperative structure are united through 7 key principles: voluntary and open membership; democratic control; member economic participation; autonomy and independence; education, training, and information; cooperation among cooperatives; and concern for community (International Cooperative Alliance, 2007). According to these principles membership in a co-operative is open and voluntary meaning that anyone who meets the membership criteria is allowed but not required to join. Co-operatives must be democratically controlled meaning they are controlled by their members and maintain autonomy and independence from other organizations. Members are required to have equal economic participation meaning they contribute equally to and receive equal benefits from the capital of the cooperative. Cooperatives must commit to assisting other cooperatives from other co-operatives in their neighborhood to cooperatives at the international level. Finally according to

these principles co-operatives must be dedicated to educating members and they must work towards the betterment of their community.

Founded in Germany in 1864 by Friedrich Wihlem Raiffeisen, Credit Unions have been operating under the cooperative principles for almost 150 years (Moody & Fite, 1971). The Credit Union movement was created upon nine principles separate from the seven principles of Cooperatives. Edward Filene, William Stanton and Augustus Thorndike established 9 principles under which Credit Unions must operate. These CU principles are: CUs organize on a cooperative basis; a CU is an association of people, not shares; each member's shares are limited to a single vote; CUs exclude thriftless and improvident borrowing; CUs admit membership only to honest and industrious men and women; CUs restrict membership to communities and groups; CUs offer small loans, with frequent partial repayments; Credit is offered by judging character and industry; and prompt repayment of loans is required (Molvig and others 1999, 49). The first principle assures that Credit Unions operate under the cooperative principles. According to these founding principles Credit Unions offer loans based on the character of the person, not just their credit score. Credit Union's loans must be made in a modest way, in small amounts with regularly scheduled payments. Loans given by Credit Unions should only be awarded in amounts that the member will be able to payback.

Personal Context

In July 2011, I began working at Holy Rosary Credit Union as an AmeriCorps Volunteer with little prior knowledge of or interest in the credit union movement. Holy Rosary Credit Union is a community development financial institution located in the historic district in inner-city, north-east Kansas City Missouri.

The members of Holy Rosary Credit Union live primarily in the zip codes of 64124, 64123, and 64126 which surround the credit union. These zip codes are known throughout the city for their low income levels, high crime rates, and large number of immigrants. The Percept Group is a company that compiles regional demographic reports using information collected from the U.S. Census; from Claritas, a market research agency; and Percepts own data collection around beliefs and concerns. According to a report by the Percept Group (2010) this area is comprised of less than 1% affluent families and 27% households below poverty (compared to a 12% US average of households below poverty). 16% of this area reports their primary concern as “the basics”: namely, access to employment, affordable housing, and adequate food. These three zip codes are densely populated. According to the 2010 Census, there are 30,169 residents in the Holy Rosary field of membership. The population however has been slowly declining over the past decade with expectations of further decline. The projected 2015 population is 29,557. This decline is occurring during a period of projected national population growth. (Percept Group Inc. 2010)

With a rich history of immigration and a recent trend of refugee settlement, the area surrounding Holy Rosary Credit union is highly diverse. According to the Percept report, 66% of the population, in the Holy Rosary Credit Union membership area is considered in the demographic of ethnic and urban diversity. The Percept Group classifies this area as one of “extremely high racial diversity” when compared to the US average of 18%. Only 25% of the population identified themselves as white during the 2010 census, this is significantly less than the 65% United States average. Representing 44% of the area’s population, the largest racial minority identified themselves as Hispanic (compared to a 16% US average). The Percept Group (2010) forecasts that the Hispanic population will increase by 15.3% by the year 2015. Of

related significance, Residents of Asian heritage make up 8% of the population compared to 4% US average (Percept Group Inc. 2010).

One month after joining Holy Rosary Credit Union as an AmeriCorps Volunteer, I applied to “crash” the Missouri Governance Conference, a conference typically reserved for the Presidents, CEOs, and board members of area credit unions. Crashing is a slang term used to mean attend when not invited. The participants, or crashers, of the first crash attended the Governmental Affairs Conference (GAC), a national conference for credit union leadership, without invitation.

The invitation to crash is an opportunity for young professionals in the Credit Union Industry to have personal discussions with state and national leaders of the Credit Union movement. In turn, Crashers are often invited to represent the voice of young CU professionals and advocate for their interests during the discussions on key issues facing credit unions. Following the Crash, Crashers are then invited to connect with Crashers across the country to share ideas and support each other through an online social network called The Cooperative Trust, formerly known as The Crash Network.

Applicants to crash answer several short essay questions regarding purpose for working in the credit union movement, personal interest in Crashing, and personal vision for the credit union movement. The crashers are then chosen by previous crashers. The crashers for the state of Missouri were chosen by two previous Crashers of national credit union conferences from Missouri; Laura Eblen, a branch manager with Missouri Central Credit Union, and Brandon Michaels, at the time the CFO (now the CEO) of Mazuma Credit Union in Kansas City.

Brandon and Laura stated that they chose their Missouri Crashers by how closely the responses aligned with Edward Filene's original mission of Credit Unions of "Not for profit but for people". They stated that when they came across essays that expressed their goals for Crashing as "networking" then they were immediately taken out of consideration. They stated that they had done this because they were looking for those who were passionate about the core values of credit unions and not solely focused on personal professional advancement. In order to encourage honest responses, this criterion was not made known to applicants during the application process.

Introduction to the Cooperative Trust

The Cooperative Trust was founded in February of 2010 by Brent Dixon, from the Filene Institute. He started the group by organizing the original Crash. Participants at the original Crash attended the Credit Union's annual Governmental Affairs Conference (GAC) without a formal invitation. The GAC is a time for leaders of credit unions to come together, attend speeches on legislation that will impact Credit Unions in the upcoming year, and unite at a rally on Capitol Hill advocating for credit union interests.

The GAC is traditionally only attended by CEOs/presidents, board members, CFOs and other upper-management of credit unions. Dixon had the idea to find young leaders in the credit union industry and attend the conference even though they were not CEOs, presidents, or board members and therefore they had not been invited to the event. Brent invited 10 credit union young professionals (CUYP) under the age of 35. They attended the larger conference and they created their own smaller-conference within the conference. The 10 CUYPs sat down with the keynote speakers after their speeches for informal discussions on the topics presented. They

spoke to the credit union CEOs and the presidents of the state leagues as a representative of the voices of CUYPs across the country. (Hilinski, 2012)

Enthused by this event, Brent Dixon and the 10 others returned to their home states and planned new crash events. They invited local CUYPs passionate about Filene's motto "not for profit but for people" to join them in these new Crashes. They formed an online social network to connect these young professionals and titled it "The Crash Network".

With an expanded vision to include young professionals working in cooperatives outside of the Credit Union Movement the Crash Network transitioned into the Cooperative Trust in November 2011. In September 2012 the Cooperative Trust began to include young professionals from all cooperatives, not only credit unions. Three years ago, the Crash Network began as an experiment with only 10 members. Today the Cooperative Trust has over 300 members and formal groups in 12 states, and is continuing to rapidly grow. (Hilinski, 2012)

The online social network at *www.trust.coop* functions as the main hub for the Cooperative Trust. Through individual profiles, individual messaging, and group message boards organized by topic focus and member location, the website connects the individual members to other young professional members and older mentors across the country. On the message boards at *www.trust.coop* members organize events (such as future crashes), professional meet-ups, and professional development opportunities. Members may use the website to seek professional advice from other members. I have personally used the member message boards to ask other members for advice in how to involve youth in finance courses. I have also used the online social network to find other young professionals who work in small business lending and obtain their

professional opinion in regards to technical aspects of beginning a small business lending program in a smaller credit union.

Theresa Hilinski serves as the current Community Manager of the Cooperative Trust. According to Theresa Hilinski new members for the CT are chosen for the qualities of humor, humility, professional drive, and dedication to the Credit Union motto “serve people, not profit”. In a personal interview Hilinski stated, “[we look for people] who are serious, but don’t take themselves too seriously. Sometimes it’s hard to see this through typed responses/applications. In general we are looking for people who are passionate and really excited about credit unions and their work, as well as other issues. We look for go-getters with a touch of fun and a sense of humor. We want to invite people who don’t just talk the talk, but walk the walk. (Hilinski, 2012)

According to the Cooperative Trust they are working to combat an issue emerging in the Credit Union movement:

“The leadership of the credit union industry is growing older, and the gap between veteran talent and new talent is spreading. And all of this while credit unions – with their social focus, higher levels of opportunity to influence strategy immediately – are a more relevant and desirable opportunity for young talent than ever.

But because of this age gap, many young people working in credit unions feel like they’re on an island with limited connection to other industry youth. And the bottom-line is: Most young people have no idea of these opportunities credit unions present in the first place.

Credit unions and cooperatives need to invest in the next generation of talent and fill this gap so we can grow and learn to be more effective at helping our communities.

The Cooperative Trust is working to make that happen.” (The Cooperative Trust, 2012)

The Cooperative Trust’s places an emphasis on the professional development and engagement of young professionals. The purpose of the group is to “educate and grow young

talent in credit unions through development opportunities, mentorships, and peer idea-sharing.” The Cooperative Trust is working to engage young professionals that may feel isolated in their positions at their credit union by connecting them to other young professionals and leaders in the credit union movement. On the Cooperative Trust website they display their mission to “design a community of young leaders that enables ongoing connections to like-minded people, opportunities for growth and development through action, and opportunities for mentorship (The Cooperative Trust, 2012).”

The Crash Network serves as a way to connect and engage young Credit Union professionals with the larger credit union movement. In my research I sought to discover in what ways the Cooperative Trust is actively engaging CT members in not only their credit unions but in the larger Credit Union Movement.

Literature Review

Credit Unions and Young Professionals

It was not long into my experience working in Credit Union that I first became aware of the current push in the Credit Union Industry to not only capture the younger generation in the market but also to hire and develop young professionals, or as they are frequently referred to in the Credit Union Industry, Gen Y. There is frequent discussion of how the next generation is needed to secure a prosperous future for the Credit Union Industry.

The Credit Union movement has made an effort to engage young employees in various ways. There is a regular column dedicated to young CU professionals in the Credit Union Times,

a major publication for credit union leaders, titled “Gen Y Back Talk”. The Credit Union Times recognizes 12 young CU professionals through the award “Trailblazers, 40 Below.” The Credit Union Executive Society, a professional membership organization for credit union employees, has a competition called “The Next Top Credit Union Exec”. Each year in this competition, 15 young professionals are nominated and compete for the title of “Next Top Credit Union Exec” through pitching new ideas to revolutionize the CU industry. Many state credit union leagues now have Young Professional groups for networking and employee development purposes. These are just a few of the most popular initiatives among the many ways in which the Credit Union Industry is using to engage younger employees.

However even with all of these initiatives to engage younger employees, many younger employees remain unengaged. When I experienced my “crash” of the Missouri Governance Conference with the Cooperative Trust out of the 11 Crashers only 1 had sought out a career in the credit union industry. While all 11 of the Crashers had basic previous knowledge of and had been chosen for their passion for the cooperative principles of credit unions, most admitted a feeling of a lack of involvement with the larger movement, not challenged in their current positions, and a lack of hope for professional advancement. At the beginning of the conference 3 of the crashers stated that they had been considering careers outside of the credit union movement. These young credit union professionals chosen to be recognized as Credit Union leaders for the next generation admitted to feeling lack of commitment and engagement. Through our conversations, I believe that this lack of engagement is not due to their lack of commitment to the principles of Credit Unions, but is because of the reasons stated above (the feeling of a lack of involvement with the larger movement, of not being challenged, and the loss of hope for professional advancement).

The issue expressed by the Cooperative Trust of a gap between emerging talent and aging credit union leadership along with the feeling of lack of engagement and the urge to search for a career outside of the credit union movement that was expressed during the Crash of the Missouri Governance Conference are largely representative of other young credit union employees.

According to a study conducted by the Filene Institute “employees failing to gain a sense of commitment almost invariably move along in a few years.” (Gatewood, 2008, p.44) The issue of lack of commitment occurs among the most educated of credit union young professionals. Like with the Missouri Crashers, who all had undergraduate degrees and many with post-graduate degrees, the Filene study discussed how credit union professionals with higher educational attainment have less commitment and feel less engaged than those with lower levels of educational attainment. “[More educated employees] feel they can make more money elsewhere, and one- third would just as soon be working somewhere else. They see more “dead wood” among credit union employees and are more likely to feel credit unions talk one way but act another. In summary, the most educated may feel underpaid, but mostly they feel distanced from the organization in which they work.” (Gatewood, 2008, P.62) Like the sentiment expressed by the Missouri Crashers who were considering new careers, it is possible that more highly educated employees do not feel intellectually challenged in their current positions.

Younger credit union professionals also have lower job satisfaction. A study conducted by the Filene Institute found that “factoring out the effects of job longevity job satisfaction is markedly lower for employees who are less than 30 years of age (Gatewood, 2008, p.47). Educated young professionals are dissatisfied with their jobs and failing to gain a sense of commitment which is causing credit unions to lose potential future leaders of the movement and

increase the age gap between the older, more engaged current leaders and the young talented professionals.

Employee Engagement

Current research on employee engagement provides insights as to why younger CU employees may be comparatively uncommitted to the movement. According to Gibbons (2006) “employee engagement is a heightened emotional and intellectual connection that an employee has for his/her job, organization, manager, or co-workers that in turn influences him/her to apply additional discretionary effort to his/her work”. When researching engagement a pattern emerged among the scholars describing characteristics of engagement. As you will notice in the paragraphs below, the articles describe engagement as being indicated by the attitude and in the actions in the employee.

The Missouri Crashers, who had been considering careers outside of the credit union industry, described a lack of hope for professional development with their current employers. According to Tasker (2004) and Kahn (1992), employee engagement is more than a commitment to the organization, engagement is a dual investment. Engaged employees feel the organization is invested in them and they in turn express an attitude of investment in the organization. They actively go beyond completing their duties to work to improve the organization. Tasker (2004) defines engagement as a beneficial two way relationship where employees and employers “go the extra mile” for one another. Engaged employees are individuals, committed to the organization, who take action to improve business results for their organizations and who are willing to help out colleagues.” Kahn (1992) also expressed the dual benefits, for both the organization and the individuals, which are the outcomes of this dual investment. Kahn reports

that employee engagement leads to better individual performance as well as increased productivity of the organization as a whole. Engaged employees experience an increased commitment to their organizations and are less likely to leave their organization.

As stated previously, young credit union professionals feel distance from the organizations in which they work. According to Meere (2005) this feeling of distance signals employees who are not engaged at best, and disengaged at worst. In “The High Cost of Disengaged Employees”, Meere describes attitudes and actions of employees in three levels of engagement. When employees are actively engaged with their work they feel a deep connection to their larger organization and they work with passion. Engaged employees are innovators, who work to create better solutions for the organization. Employees who are not engaged attend work and accomplish the tasks in which they are responsible. They work without passion and do not receive energy from their work but feel drained of energy after working. The last level of employee engagement is disengagement. Disengaged employees feel dissatisfaction and discontent with their jobs and the larger organization. A disengaged employee does not contribute to the functionality and progress of the organization. They act on their discontent and unhappiness at work and will undermine the work of others.

By increasing employee engagement in young professionals, the Credit Union industry would benefit in ways other increased commitment and talent retention. Engaged employees have better job performance than non-engaged and disengaged employees. In the article “Towards a model of work engagement” (2008), Bakker and Demerouti list four benefits of working towards having engagement of workers. “Engaged employees often experience positive emotions, including happiness, joy, and enthusiasm; experience better health; create their own job and personal resources; and transfer their engagement to others. A goal-directed behavior is

facilitated when people are engaged in their work because they have the energy (can do) and the motivation (want to do) to undertake action.” These positive benefits, which translate to a positive work environment, fewer sick days, and drive towards task achievement, also explain why engaged workers perform better than non-engaged workers.

If the Cooperative Trust succeeds in creating employee engagement in the young, especially the educated, professionals this will do several things. Fewer young employees would seek jobs outside the credit union industry and they would actively seek to improve their individual credit union and contribute to the larger movement. The credit union industry would, in this manner, not only bridge the gap between the young employees and the current leaders, but they would also be creating the leaders and innovators of tomorrow’s credit union industry today.

Research Questions, Design and Methods

In my research, I explored changes active members of the cooperative trust have experienced since joining the group. The central question explored in my research was “Have active members of the Cooperative Trust experienced an increase in engagement in the credit union movement since joining the Cooperative Trust?” To determine the level of engagement of the active members of the CT in the credit union movement, I asked the sub-questions “Have active members in the Cooperative Trust experienced changes in attitude about the credit union movement since joining the Cooperative Trust?” and “Have active members in the Cooperative Trust experienced changes in behaviors related to the credit union movement since joining the Cooperative Trust?”.

To begin looking into this question I designed a short survey to be answered by active members of the Cooperative Trust. The survey was designed to collect quantitative data through a five point likert scale and qualitative data through comment boxes and a final open-ended question. The survey asked respondents' to use the likert scale to rank their agreement/disagreement to statements about personal attitudes and personal activity in the credit union movement outside of their day to day work tasks. I chose to use a 5 point likert scale offering a middle neutral response. I chose to offer this option to allow if the respondent believes that no personal change has occurred since joining the CT. The survey was conducted using a single-shot design, collecting individual respondents' answers to the questions at a single point in time.

Since most of the activity in the Cooperative Trust is hosted at the online social network, I chose to use this as an avenue to find participants for the survey. I first discussed the goals and objectives of the survey with the Cooperative Trust Community Manager, Theresa Hilinski and asked for permission to post the link to the survey on *trust.coop*. Theresa granted me permission and suggested I write a blog explaining my goals and objectives with the survey to the *trust.coop* blog before posting the link to the survey (see Appendix B). The blog quickly explained the purpose of the survey and how the results would be given back to the Cooperative Trust for their use.

In order to find the members who are most active in the Cooperative Trust to participate in the survey, I posted a link to the Cooperative Trust social network on www.trust.coop, main message board titled "Crash". The "Crash" message board can be accessed by all members of the Cooperative Trust when they log on to the *trust.coop* social network. "Crash" is also an internal message board that cannot be accessed by those outside of Cooperative Trust membership. The

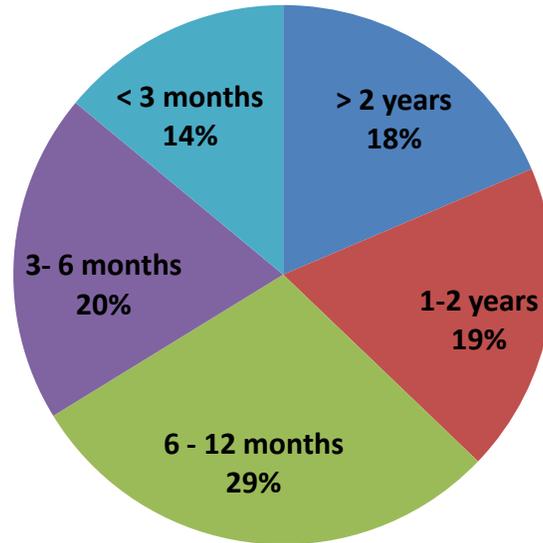
link to the survey was accompanied by a message explaining the purpose of the survey and asked for members' participation. This allowed me to target only members of the Cooperative Trust who actively participated in the online social network. 86 CT members responded to the survey and 81 respondents completed the survey (5 people only completed the first page of the survey). According to Hilinksi, there were just over 300 members of the Cooperative Trust during the time that the survey was administered. It is possible that a number of registered Cooperative Trust members are inactive, meaning they no longer access the CT social network regularly.

Results and Analysis:

Validation of Cooperative Trust participation

The first page of the survey was designed to validate the respondents' membership in the Cooperative Trust. In order to do this, my first two questions focused on participation in the Cooperative Trust. I first asked the respondents the length time they have been a member of the Cooperative Trust. The second question focused on the activities in the Cooperative Trust that they participate in. All 86 respondents answered these first two questions validating their membership in the Cooperative Trust. 5 of these respondents did not continue on to the second page of the survey.

Length of Cooperative Trust Membership

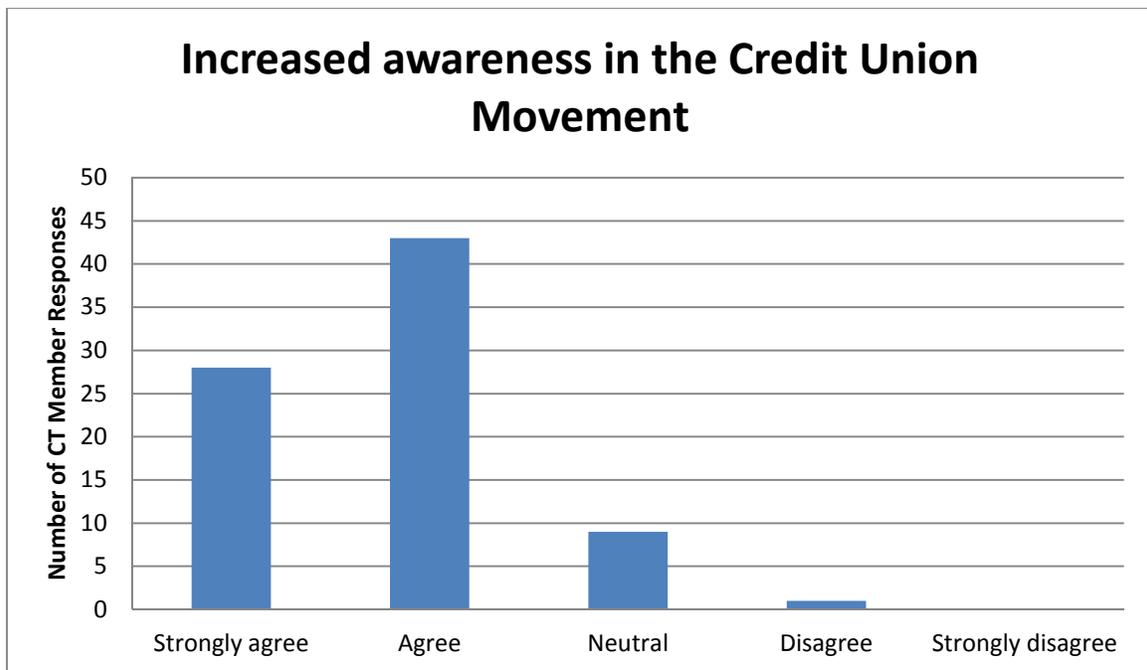


37% of respondents report being a member of The Cooperative Trust, formerly the Crash network for longer than a year. 29% of respondents have been a member of the Cooperative Trust for 6 months to a year. The largest group to respond to the survey, with 34% of responses, was those who had only been members of the Cooperative Trust for 6 months or less.

Only 67% of respondents answered that they participated in the online social network, even though they received the link to the survey on the social network. This low level of respondents' participation in "The Network" could signify that many respondents are not aware that the title of the Cooperative Trust social network is, "The Network". The low selection of this possible response could also be due to the lack of clarity in the question asked. Respondents may not have responded that they have participated in the Network because they have not actively posted or responded to any message boards, even though they were actively participating in the survey that they were solicited to take on a message board in the Network.

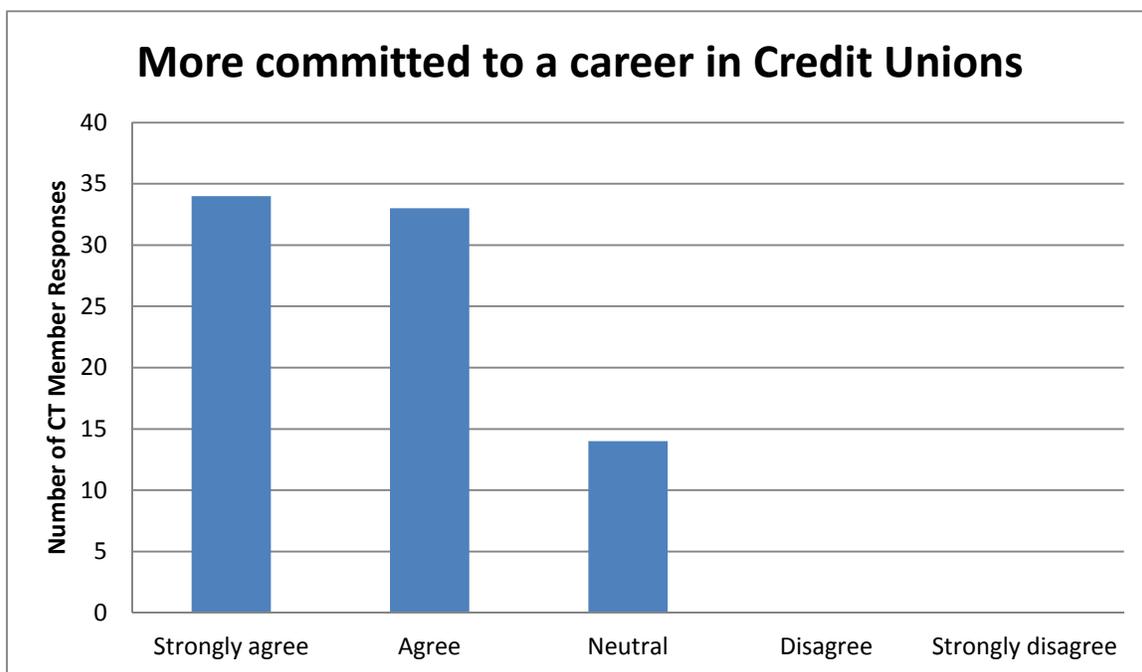
Change in attitude

The second page of the survey focuses on the central research question of “Have active members of the Cooperative Trust experienced an increase in engagement in the credit union movement since joining the Cooperative trust?”. The first three questions seek an answer to the sub-question “Have members of the Cooperative Trust experienced a change in their attitude about the Credit Union Movement since joining the Cooperative Trust?” The indicators I measured for the change in attitude are awareness of the larger Credit Union/Cooperative Movement, commitment to a career in the credit union industry, and commitment to the mission of credit unions.



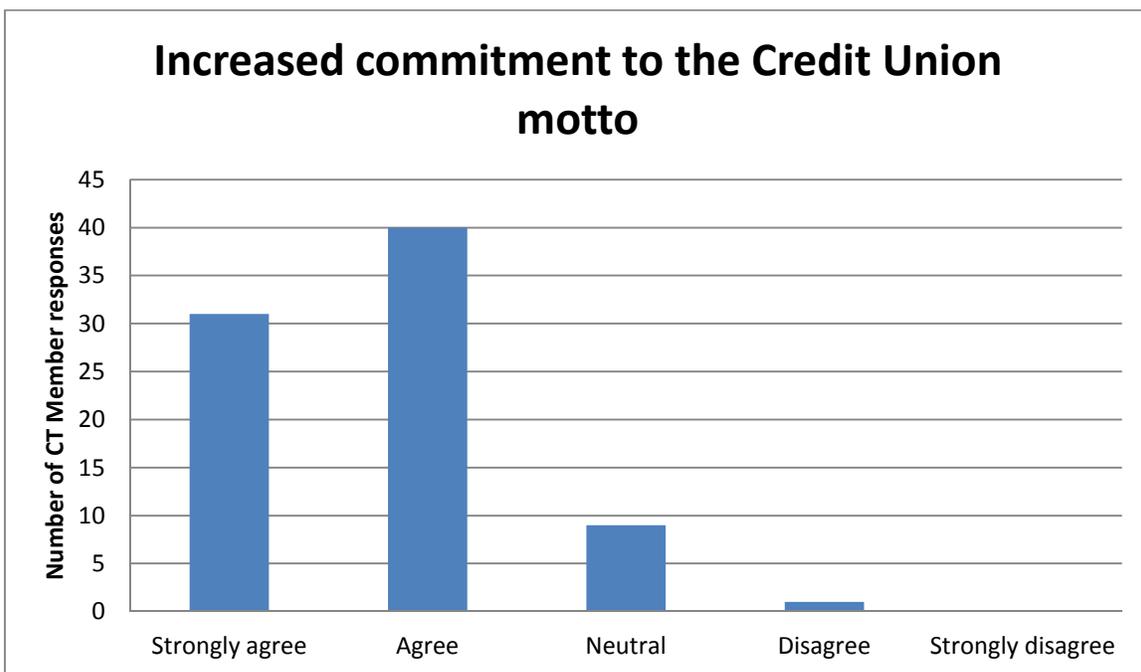
The first question I used to explore a change in attitude was focused on the awareness of the global credit union movement. I asked the respondents how well they agreed with the following statement, “Since joining the Cooperative Trust, I have an increased awareness of the

credit unions as financial cooperatives in a global movement of credit unions.” 87.7% of all respondents answered positively to this question. 34.6% of all responses were “strongly agree”. One neutral respondent explained their answer by writing, “I had a strong understanding of this before joining the trust.” Another neutral respondent explained, “Becoming a Credit Union Development Educator 4-years ago opened my eyes to the global cooperative movement and the work of credit unions more so than Cooperative Trust. Though, I can see someone without the CUDE (Credit Union Development Education) background gaining much knowledge and exposure to the global movement through the CT.” Another “neutral” respondent explains, “I’ve felt strongly about the credit union movement long before joining the Cooperative Trust.”



Secondly, to explore a change in attitude I asked respondents how strongly they agreed with the statement, “Since joining the Cooperative Trust, I am more committed to a career in the Credit Union industry.” 82.7% of respondents responded positively to this statement. 17.3% responded with neutral. I was reminded in the comment box that this question is not a

determinant of commitment to a career in the Credit Union industry but a change in commitment level after joining the CT. The same “neutral” respondent from the previous question responded “neutral” once again and explained their answer by writing “I was committed to a long-term career with credit unions before joining the trust.” One “strongly agree” respondent explained their answer by writing, “I was ready to move to another industry, feeling alone and like I was trying to do didn't matter. Then I met a bunch of young professionals who felt the same way. The Trust has been a huge support network and is often what sustains me when my individual job is frustrating.”



The final question was used to gauge other changes in attitude. I asked the respondents how strongly they agreed to the statement, “Since joining the Cooperative Trust, I have an increased dedication to the mission of credit unions to “serve people, not profit”. 87.7% of respondents responded positively to this statement. 11.1% responded with a “neutral” and 1 person or 1.3% responded “disagree”. A respondent who agreed with the statement elaborated,

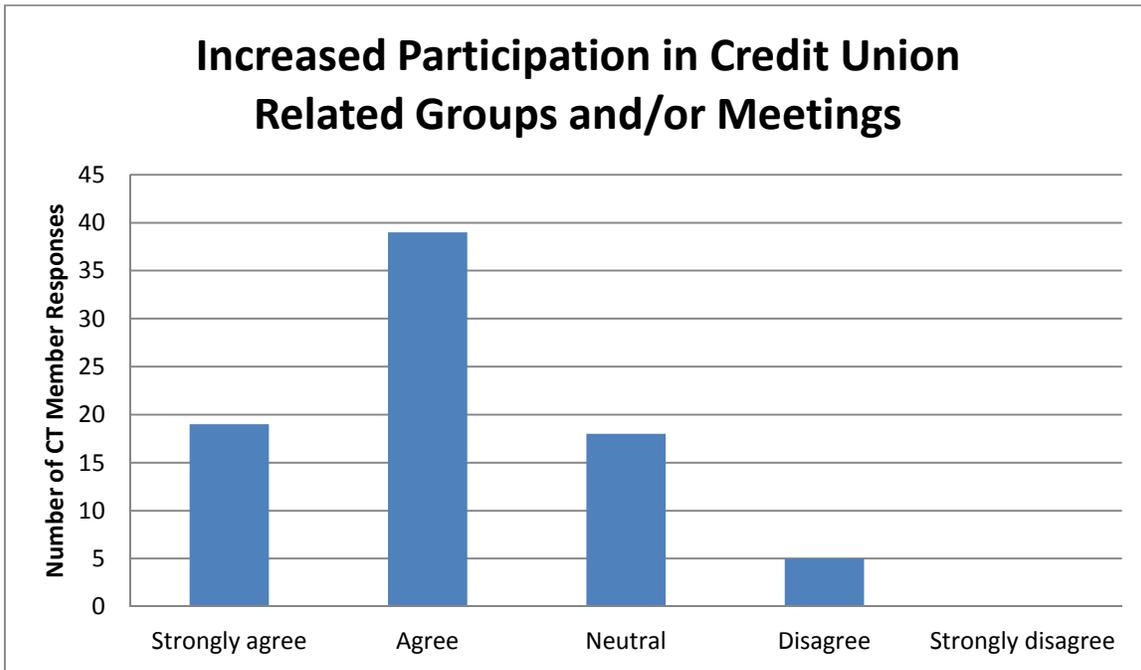
“Credit unions and cooperatives in general need more people working on 'their side' to make changes for the better in the world. I want to do what I can to bring greater awareness of the CU philosophy.”

Overall, most of the responses to the questions regarding changes in attitude were positive. Quantitatively we can see that the questions regarding increased awareness of the CU movement and increased commitment to the CU motto received 87.7% positive responses and the question regarding commitment to a career in the industry received 82.7% positive responses. The qualitative data left in the optional comment boxes below each question supports the quantitative data. Some of the comments further went to attribute their change in attitude to the CT. After responding positively to the question regarding commitment to a career in the CU industry a respondent stated, “The Cooperative Trust has refreshed my outlook on my career and my industry.” According to the indicators used to determine a change in attitude, many of the active members of the Cooperative Trust have experienced an improved attitude since joining the CT.

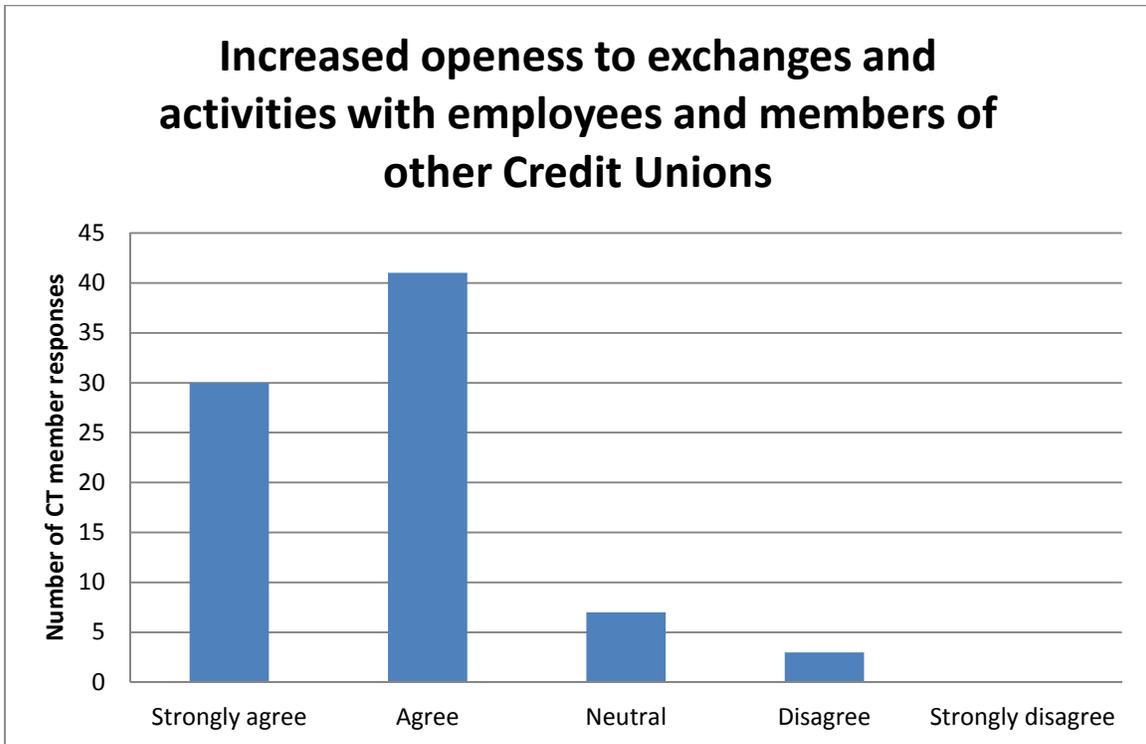
Change in Behavior

The survey continues with a focus on the central research question of “Have active members of the Cooperative Trust experienced an increase in engagement in the credit union movement since joining the Cooperative trust?”. The objective now is to identify how CT members believe that they have changed their actions since joining the CT. The following four questions sought to answer the sub question, “Have active members in the Cooperative Trust experienced changes in behaviors related to the credit union movement since joining the Cooperative Trust?” The indicators I used to measure a change in behavior are participation in

credit union groups outside of the office, exchanges/cooperation/activities with other credit unions, presentation of new ideas for credit union development to colleagues, and participation in the postings about credit unions online such as on Twitter/Facebook/LinkedIn/blogs.

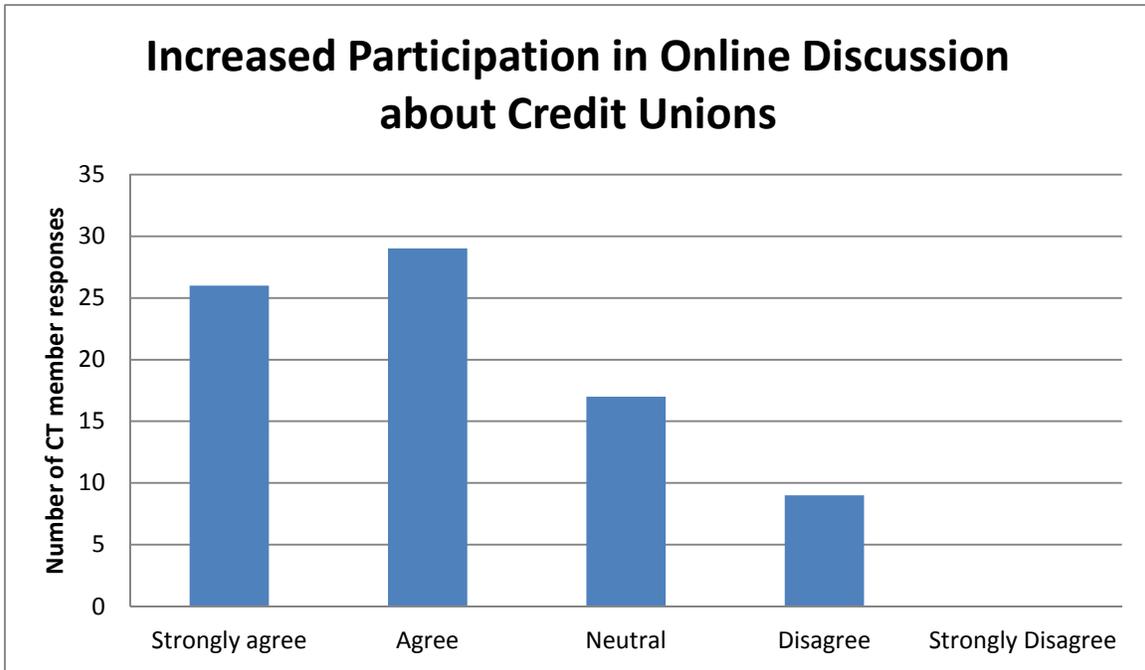


Respondents were asked how strongly they agreed with the statement “Since joining the Cooperative Trust, I have more frequently participated in credit union related groups/meetings outside of the office.” 71.6% responded positively that they have increased their participation in credit union related groups and/or meetings outside of their offices. 22.2% of respondents responded with neutral and 6.2% disagreed with this statement. One neutral respondent explains their answer with “I was pretty active [in credit union related groups and/or meetings] prior to the Cooperative Trust.” Another neutral respondent explains, “[I am] still struggling with finding these opportunities.”

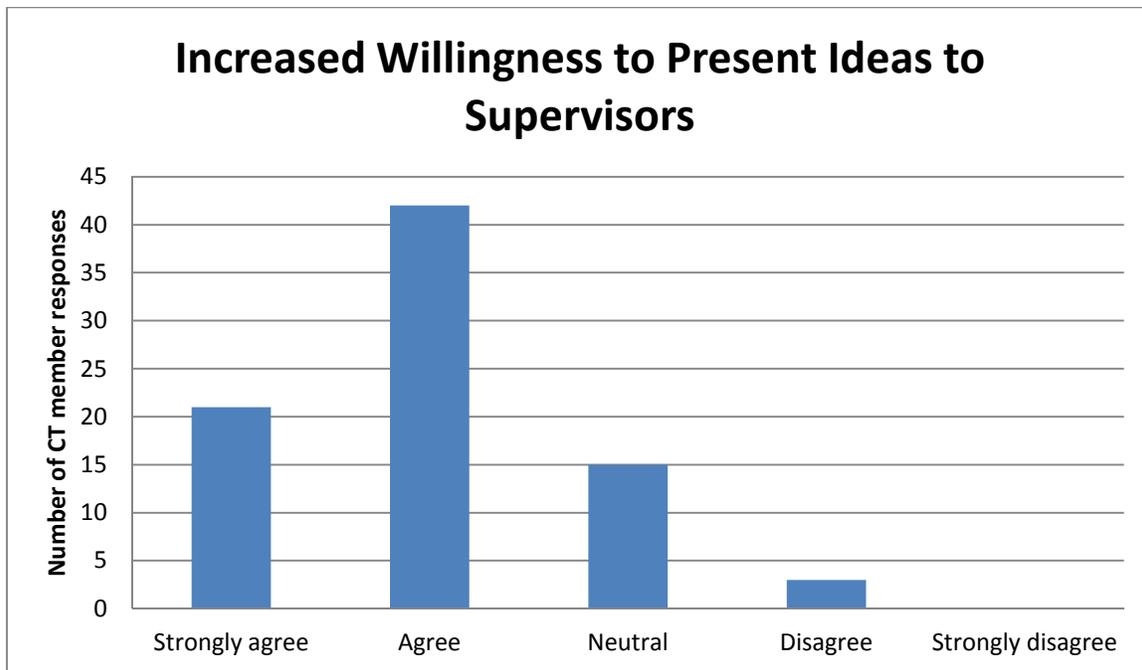


I asked how strongly respondents agreed with the following statement, “Since joining the Cooperative Trust, I have been more open to exchanges and activities with employees and members of other credit unions.” 87.6% responded positively to this statement. 8.6% responded to this statement with “neutral” and 3.7% responded that they disagreed. A respondent who strongly agrees with the statement explains, “I love that I can put out an idea and get responses from other credit union employees that have tried the idea or are supportive of the idea.” A respondent who agreed explains “This has definitely increased the opportunity for such interaction. It also inspired me to create an internal scholarship to send others from my organization to industry events and conferences.” Another respondent who agreed with this statement explains, “I see peers as "resources" rather than "competition". A respondent who disagrees explains, “I have issues with the web site and can’t ever seem to get it to work. I

believe it has to do with my firewalls here at the credit union.” Another respondent who disagree states, “I did this before joining.”



I asked respondents to report how strongly do they agreed with the following statement, “Since joining the Cooperative Trust, I have increased my participation in online credit union talk outside of the Cooperative Trust social network, for example; on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and in blogs.” 67.9 respondents responded they agreed that they have increased their participation in online credit union talk outside of the Cooperative Trust Social network. 21% of respondents responded neutral to this statement and 11.1% responded they disagreed with this statement. A respondent who answered that they agree with the statement elaborates, “I wrote my first blog as a result of the Trust.” A respondent who answered neutral explains, “I watch them more but do not necessarily join in.” A respondent who answered that they disagree with the statement explains, “I can’t get on the Twitter bandwagon. I participate in Facebook, but only on a personal level, although I do sometimes communicate Credit Union agenda there.”



The final question I used to measure a change in behavior was I asked respondents to report how strongly do they agreed with the following statement, “Since joining the Cooperative Trust, I have been more willing to present my ideas regarding credit unions to my supervisors.” 77.8% of respondents agreed with this statement. 18.5% of respondents answered this question with neutral and 3.7% of respondents responded that they disagreed with this statement. A respondent who responded “agree” explains, “I’m currently working on several projects involving CUs and co-ops that is above and beyond my day to day role simply because I want to be involved in what’s happening in the industry.” A respondent who answered “neutral” explains, “[I am] still working on that”. A respondent who disagreed with this statement elaborates, “I have never had a problem with this.”

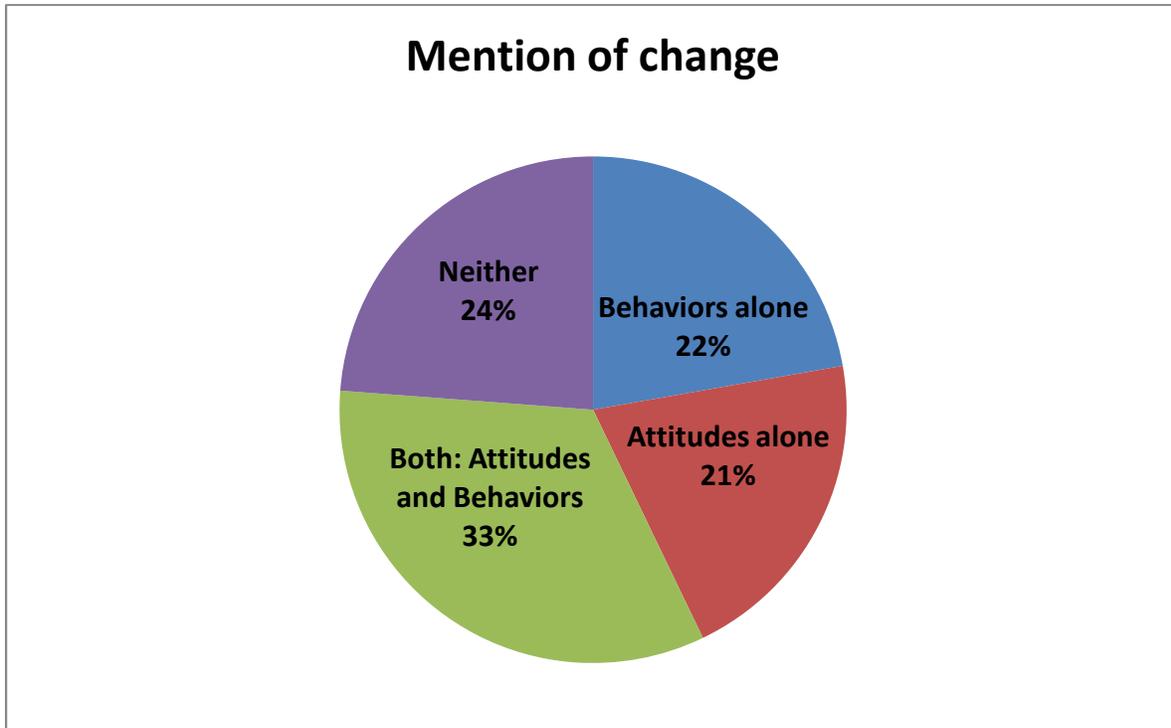
The final question I asked was “How has the Cooperative Trust most impacted you?” I received 63 responses to this open-ended question. There was a wide range of responses. Two responses indicated a lack of impact at this time such as this one “It’s lost most of its impact.

Initially, the Crash event was a great one; however, since then, the organization seems to be very disorganized which I find to be very distracting. I'm currently looking for a more organized group to join.” Other responses suggested that they were finding the site to be useful. One respondent stated “The CRASH event was very interesting. The Trust site itself has provided some nice information.” Eight of the responses indicated a deep impact on a motivational or emotional level such as this one, “The people I have met are good, caring, honest, smart, inspiring and genuine. They motivate me to keep working toward our common goals and make me see that by working together, we are getting there!”



To analyze the data I coded the responses for reoccurring themes and then created a word cloud to depict the frequency of theme occurrence in separate responses. The most common theme mentioned in the responses was that of ‘community’ meaning a group of people volitionally providing mutual support for one another. One of these responses states “The biggest [way in which the Cooperative Trust has impacted me is that it has] given me a network of people that support and encourage me. [The CT is] a group that I can bounce ideas off and get honest feedback. [The CT is] a group that believes in pushing and innovating and moving the industry forward. [The CT is] a group that isn't satisfied with what we have but works to make things happen, rather than just talk about it.” The idea of community was mentioned in 21

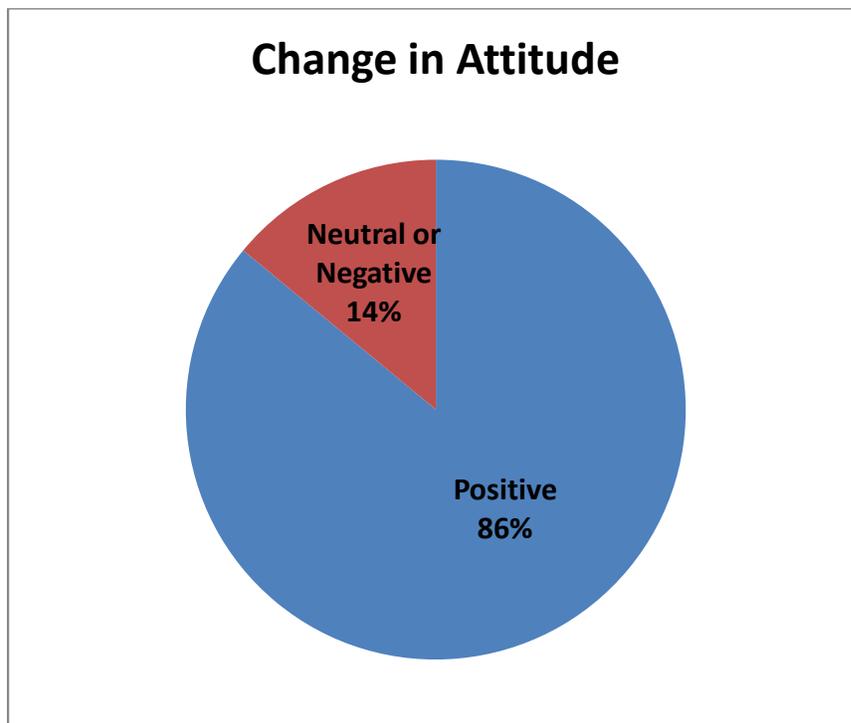
responses. The next most frequent theme found in the responses was that of increased access to 'resources' which was mentioned in 19 responses.

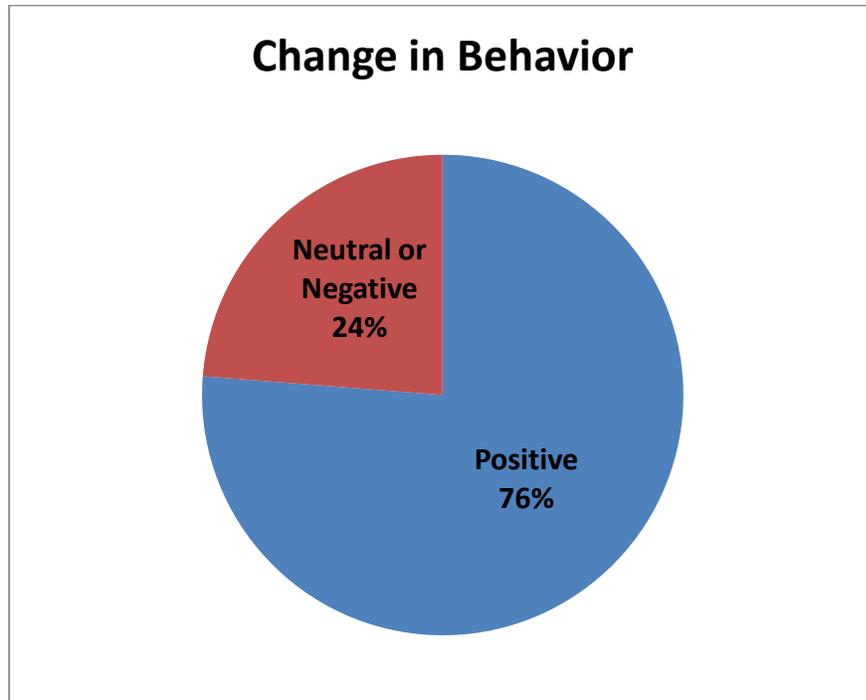


To check for engagement I coded the responses a second time looking for mentioned changes in attitudes and changes in behaviors. Out of the 63 responses 13 mentioned a change in attitude alone, 14 mentioned a change in behavior alone, and 21 mentioned a change in both attitude and behavior. 15 responses did not mention a change in either attitude or behavior. Some of these responses were too vague to indicate a whether a personal change in attitude or behavior had occurred such as “The CRASH event was very interesting. The Trust site itself has provided some nice information.” While the previous respondent indicates that they have found the Cooperative Trust useful the responded, does not indicate any changes in attitude or behaviors.

Analysis of data

I consolidated the data to gain a more clear answer to the central research question, “Have active members of the Cooperative Trust experienced an increase in engagement in the credit union movement since joining the Cooperative trust?” In order to do this, I separated the responses into ‘positive’ responses, meaning that the respondent answered by stating they ‘strongly agree’ or ‘agree’, and ‘neutral or negative’ responses, meaning the respondent answered with a ‘neutral’, ‘disagree’, or ‘strongly disagree’ response. I then combined the data from the questions in each category, changes in attitude and changes of behavior.





From the data collected, we can see that 86% of the respondents reported a positive attitudinal change since joining the Cooperative Trust while 76% reported a positive change in behavior. Comparing the above data, we can see that more active members of the Cooperative Trust have experienced a positive attitudinal change than a positive change in behaviors; however, most respondents reported having experienced a positive change in both attitude and behavior.

Since the survey targeted the active participants in the Cooperative Trust, the results cannot be generalized as representative of a typical CT membership which would include inactive members. While this study does not show the typical Cooperative Trust members experience, it does show the potential experience for Cooperative Trust members. My research shows that a strong majority of active Cooperative Trust members have experienced an increase in engagement since joining the group. Since the results of the survey were largely positive, I

conclude that the CT is a contributing factor to the increase in engagement in the active members.

Some of the qualitative data, collected in the comment boxes and open-ended questions, takes the research a step further and attributes the respondents' personal engagement to their participation in the Cooperative Trust. One respondent stated, "I was ready to leave my CU, right before I was picked to be a part of Crash the 1 (the original Crash). Since joining in 2010, I have gained a passionate understanding of the CU and cooperative movement. I hate to admit it, but before The Trust, I didn't understand why CUs called themselves cooperatives. I have been happily drinking the Kool-Aid since 2010 and feel it has made me a better leader and stronger CU advocate." Through triangulating the qualitative data, the quantitative data, and the individual stories from Crash Missouri that I described earlier, I have concluded that the Cooperative Trust has the ability to not only increase active members' commitment to Credit Unions but also their engagement in the larger credit union movement.

There is a growing gap in the Credit Union Industry between young talent and aging leaders. This gap is caused by young professionals leaving their positions for careers outside of the industry. To close this gap there must be an ongoing, conscious effort to retain educated young professionals currently working in the Credit Union Industry. In order to increase commitment, positive attitudes and behaviors should continuously be cultivated in young professionals. The industry must invest in interventions, like the Cooperative Trust, that increase young professional engagement in the broader Credit Union movement. In return, the industry will not only benefit from an increase in commitment from the young professionals, but also from an improvement in job performance.

Limitations and Area for Further Investigation

Limitations of research method and design

The goal of the study was to begin to explore the potential impact of the Cooperative Trust on engagement in active participants. The study sought to understand not the experience not the average Cooperative Trust member but that of the active Cooperative Trust member. At the time of the survey there were over 300 Cooperative Trust members. 81 Cooperative Trust members completed the survey. The survey had just under a 27% response rate and should not be used to generalize to all Cooperative Trust members.

Since the goal was to find the potential experience not the average experience, the positive outliers were targeted to participate in the survey. The most active members were sought for participation. It is unlikely that one would continue participating in a group voluntarily unless they were receiving positive feedback, response or impact from it. The study design has a positive skew and cannot be used to generalize to the average Cooperative Trust member experience.

An assumption made in this study is that those who responded to the survey are the most active members of the Cooperative Trust. This assumption is made because the participants in the study accessed the survey through the Cooperative Trust message boards. This means to participate in the survey participants would have had to encounter the link through reading the Cooperative Trust 'Crash' message board. This suggests but does not guarantee consistent participation, meaning reading and responding to comments, in the message boards. Since the

survey is anonymous this assumption cannot be validated by comparing the respondents to frequent message board participants.

The statements in the survey that members were asked to agree or disagree to in the survey were phrased positively. This positive slant may have skewed the results of the survey positively. For example “Since joining the Cooperative Trust, I am more committed to a career in the Credit Union industry.” In a future study questions could be asked twice in a randomize fashion with both a positive and negative slant. The answers to the positively slanted questions can then be contrasted to the negatively slanted questions to validate the results.

The single shot design is limited to that singular moment in time. The respondent’s answers represent personal reflection on experiences at the moment that they took the survey. If the same respondents were to retake the survey today they may answer differently. This issue could be solved through a longitudinal study. Cooperative Trust members could be asked to rate their attitudes and behaviors upon first joining the social network and then asked to follow up during several milestones during their participation. A longitudinal study would be an interesting way to measure the engagement of Cooperative Trust members over time.

The intention of using a 5 point Likert scale to collect responses was to allow for respondents to indicate when no change has occurred. With the middle point labeled ‘neutral’ this intention is not clearly identified. The neutral selection may instead indicate that no change has occurred or it may indicate a decrease in the activity or attitude.

Potential future investigation

An interesting area for future investigation would be to measure the actual frequency of the indicators that were used to measure attitudes and behaviors, instead of the perceived frequency. For example instead of the question, “How strongly do you agree/disagree with the following statement: Since joining the Cooperative Trust, I have increased my participation in online credit union talk outside of the Cooperative Trust social network, for example; on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and in blogs.” The frequency of participation in credit union talk prior to joining the Cooperative Trust and then the frequency of participation after joining could have been asked. To increase the validity of this method the survey could be administered in a pre-test post-test design. Upon admittance to the Cooperative Trust new members could be asked to fill out this survey. They could then be administered the same survey a second time at a later date. This could help to differentiate between the perception of increased participation when it might not actually be the case it could also decrease the tendency to respond to questions in a manner that would please the surveyor.

Possible continued study could include a randomized control trial. In this research study a random sample, large enough to be representative of the CT population, could be surveyed and contrasted against the responses of a random sample representative of young credit union professionals, who are not members of the Cooperative Trust. A randomized control trial that asks questions to evaluate engagement levels would be an interesting way to show if Cooperative Trust members are more likely to display increased engagement in the credit union movement than non-members.

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Appendix

A. Blog post- Credit Unions are Not Sexy- July 13 2012 <http://trust.coop/blog/>

Credit Unions are not sexy. Rarely do our office stories entertain past work happy hour and Mortgage lender has about the same ring to it as dental assistant. To the outside world our jobs sound boring. Never was this more apparent to me than last December, when my space in the annual Spachek family holiday letter was reduced (to 1 sentence) in order to make more room for my brother's adventures in the Peace Corps (4 sentences).

This being said, for such an unsexy industry we certainly hold more than our fair share of outspoken, passionate, and incredibly creative people. If you need an example just look to the long list of quirky bloggers and tweeters dedicated to promoting Credit Union's good name. Montana 1st Credit Union even markets with a tagline of "boring is sexy" stating "when it comes to your money, too much excitement is the last thing you need". They have even given their services names such as "common sense checking" and "plain old vanilla auto loans". What I find most interesting is how increasingly, many of these loud-mouthed voices are belonging to members of the Cooperative Trust.

Now, bear with me as I back track.

A year ago, I started my graduate practicum at a CDCU with intention to focus my capstone thesis on micro-business lending for immigrants living in the inner-city. I soon discovered that while fascinating, I found the task of writing 50 pages on the subject incredibly daunting. I was exhausted before my research even began. It was 2 am; I had been staring at my computer for hours, 3rd night in a row and yet very little had been typed. Inspiration was not coming and then (several glasses of wine later), epiphany! In my foggy, euphoric state I realized what I enjoyed most about my Sustainable Development studies was in fact the same thing I enjoyed about working in the Credit Union Movement, and this same topic is what I should explore in my thesis. My epiphany led me to explore-drum roll please- how leadership, community, and coalition building is occurring in the credit union movement through the Cooperative Trust Network. Is the Cooperative Trust inspiring young Credit Union employees to be more vocal and engaged in the credit union movement? Is the Cooperative Trust bringing sexy back?

Now I am asking folks from the community for help in achieving my MA dreams by filling out a short (10 question) survey, made available through the main group. In true cooperative spirit, by helping me you will also be helping yourself as a member of the Cooperative Trust, as I promise to share the survey results with the Cooperative Trust

world. Surveys responses are due by August 10th (so that I may begin analyzing the data) and provide an update to the rest of the world.

I now leave you with the lyrics of Justin Timberlake “*Get your sexy on, Go ahead, be gone with it*”. **(Thank you!)**

B. Survey

Response- Response count- Response Percent

1. How long have you been a member of the Cooperative Trust?

<3 months	12	14.0%
3-6 months	17	19.8%
6-12 months	25	29.1%
1-2 years	16	18.6%
>2 years	16	18.6%

2. In the Cooperative Trust, what activities have you participated in? Mark all that apply

Crash event	70	81.4%
The Network	57	66.3%
Social meet-ups	27	31.4%
Mentorships	8	9.3%
The Collider	6	7.0%

3. Since joining the Cooperative Trust, I have an increased awareness of the credit unions as financial cooperatives in a global movement of credit unions.

Strongly Agree	28	34.6%
Agree	43	53.1%
Neutral	9	11.1%
Disagree	1	1.2%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
Explain your answer (Optional)		5 responses

4. Since joining the Cooperative Trust, I am more committed to a career in the Credit Union industry.

Strongly agree	34	42.0%
Agree	33	40.7%
Neutral	14	17.3%
Disagree	0	0.0%
Strongly disagree	0	0.0%

Explain your answer (Optional) 9 responses

5. Since joining the Cooperative Trust, I have an increased dedication to the mission of credit unions to “serve people, not profit”.

Strongly agree	31	38.3%
Agree	40	49.4%
Neutral	9	11.1%
Disagree	1	1.2%
Strongly disagree	0	0.0%
Explain your answer (Optional)		1 response

6. Since joining the Cooperative Trust, I have more frequently participated in credit union related groups/meetings outside of the office.

Strongly agree	19	23.5%
Agree	39	48.1%
Neutral	18	22.2%
Disagree	5	6.2%
Strongly disagree	0	0.0%
Explain your answer (Optional)		6 responses

7. Since joining the Cooperative Trust, I have been more open to exchanges and activities with employees and members of other credit unions.

Strongly agree	30	37.0%
Agree	41	50.6%
Neutral	7	8.6%
Disagree	3	3.7%
Strongly disagree	0	0.0%
Explain your answer (Optional)		9 responses

8. Since joining the Cooperative Trust, I have increased my participation in online credit union talk outside of the Cooperative Trust social network, for example; on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and in blogs.

Strongly agree	26	32.1%
Agree	29	35.8%
Neutral	17	21.0%
Disagree	9	11.1%

Strongly disagree	0	0.0%
Explain your answer (Optional)		7 responses

9. Since joining the Cooperative Trust, I have been more willing to present my ideas regarding credit unions to my co-workers and supervisors.

Strongly agree	21	25.9%
Agree	42	51.9%
Neutral	15	18.5%
Disagree	3	3.7%
Strongly disagree-	0	0.0%
Explain your answer (Optional)		6 responses

10. How has joining the Cooperative Trust most impacted you?

63 responses

C. Coding for Question 10- “How has joining the Cooperative Trust most impacted you?”

“While joining the trust has impacted me, what I think has impacted me most was seeing the reaction of the CU industry to Crash/Trust. The comments of support for young professionals have given me the confidence to seek out professional development opportunities and to share my ideas. Joining the trust has given me a collective of other young professionals, many of them now friends that I can call on when I need help or a different perspective.”

Code: Attitudes, Behaviors, New opportunities/Job, New perspectives, Confidence, Professional development, Community

“[The CT is a] strong network of like-minded professionals.”

Code:

It's made me aware that there is an entire movement out there, outside the walls of my CU. Not everyone inside the CU "gets it" and hopefully I can help change that mindset.

Code: Attitude, Behavior, Change the industry, Movement

“[I have] increased engagement and resources professionally and [CT members are] just a great group of people to know!”

Code: Attitude, Behavior, Engagement, Resources, Community

“Seeing that I am not the only YP who cares for the credit union movement with such a passion and seeing others who share that passion has made me feel that we can make a difference.”

Code: Attitude, Behavior, Change the industry

“I have learned the tools necessary to drive the movement forward!”

Code: Change the industry, Movement, Resources

“It has broadened my network of friends and resources in credit unions.”

Code: Behavior, Resources, Community

“You always have someone to turn to for help. Generally, I receive much help from my CU co-workers, however when I need that extra hand, thought, idea, or approval - I go to the Cooperative Trust!”

Code: Behavior, Resources, Community

“[The CT is a] great way to network with fellow young credit union-ers.”

Code: Behavior, Network

“Through the networking aspect, I have been even more motivated to promote the movement by seeing others out there that are just as driven and passionate about what we do!”

Code: Attitude, Behavior, Emotional, Movement, Network

“The Trust has opened a whole new network of CU professionals that I can turn to as a resource in many different topics. I work for a small credit union and have a lot of job responsibilities. The Cooperative Trust is a One-Stop-Shop for information.”

Code: Behavior, Network, Resources

“I attended the 2012 MCUL AC&E as a Crasher and networked with some truly amazing young professionals who are a great sounding board for my career related questions.”

Code: Behavior, Crash, Resources, Community

“I learned so much more about the history of the credit union movement than I would have without being a part of the Trust. I like to share the history with new employees to let them know why we are all so proud of being a part of it”.

Code: Attitude, Behavior, Movement

“No impact.”

Code: No impact

“By Crashing the WI Credit Union Annual Meeting in 2011, I came to realize that this is not "just a job", but a career for me. I was unaware before the Crash of the "movement" and the impact credit unions have all over the world.”

Code: Attitude, Crash, Commitment, Movement

“It has made me realize what I wanted to do for my Credit Union, community and where I want to see myself in the future.”

Code: Attitude, Commitment

“It has given me a multitude of resources to use and people to visit with about credit union topics.”

Code: Behavior, Resources, Community

“The biggest: given me a network of people that support and encourage me. [The Cooperative Trust is] a group that I can bounce ideas off and get honest feedback. [The CT is] a group that believes in pushing and innovating and moving the industry forward. [The CT is] a group that isn't satisfied with what we have and actually works to make things happen rather than just talk about it.”

Code: Attitude, Behavior, Network, Resources, Community

“[The CT has increased] industry awareness and collaboration opportunities.”

Code: Attitude, Behavior, New opportunities/Job, Community

“It's given me the opportunity to network and bounce ideas off people in my age group.”

Code: Behavior, Network, Resources

“I think it has been educational and inspiring. I feel I do not get that from my supervisors. To them it just another business, they are not for the members.”

Code: Attitude, Emotional

“It has opened a door into the rest of the Credit Union world and that has been wonderful.”

Code: Attitude

“This experience has shown me that growth possibilities within our occupation are endless. I keep pushing forward working for not only our credit union, but our members, and those that will become members.”

Code: Attitude, Behavior, Professional development, Change the industry

“I have gained a greater knowledge of a cooperative, and the credit union movement. I have made wonderful contacts that will lead me to different opportunities in the credit union world.”

Code: Attitude, Behavior, New opportunities/Job, Network

“It has provided me with resources outside of my Credit Union to aid in my knowledge of the Movement, and allowed me to learn so much! The Cooperative Trust is a huge asset to the Credit Union Movement!”

Code: Attitude, Behavior, Professional Development, Movement, Resources

“[The Cooperative Trust] brings different perspectives and backgrounds from all across the U.S.”

Code: New perspectives

“I’ve met some really great people and enjoyed the experience!”

Code: Community

“[The Cooperative Trust] has allowed me to network and collaborate with CU peers from across the border. And that is just friggin' cool!”

Code: Behavior, Network

“The CRASH event was very interesting. The Trust site itself has provided some nice information.”

Code: Crash, Resources

“Being able to network and ask for advice through my peers who have the same passion for the Credit Union industry as I do has been great! Since this site covers many areas, I’m looking for a way to get more of my co-workers involved.”

Code: Behavior, Network

“The people I have met are good, caring, honest, smart, inspiring and genuine. They motivate me to keep working toward our common goals and make me see that by working together, we are getting there!”

Code: Attitude, Behavior, Emotional, Community

“I think it’s a great way for the younger generation of credit unions to voice their ideas.”

Code: Change the industry

“Networking, Confidence, Awareness”

Code: Attitude, Behavior, Confidence, Network

“It has re-energized my enthusiasm.”

Code: Attitude, Emotional

“Let me know I'm not alone. [The CT has] loads of great ideas too.”

Code: Attitude, Resources, Community

“It helped me to get my job at the credit union I am at now - because I met someone in the HR department at a crash event. It has helped me to network with and know really smart people across the country that I wouldn't have known otherwise.”

Code: Behavior, New opportunities/Job, Network, Community

“[The CT has] given me a great network outside of my credit union to bounce ideas off of and see what is happening in other CUs objectively.”

Code: Behavior, Network

“It's lost most of its impact. Initially, the Crash event was a great one; however, since then, the organization seems to be very disorganized which I find to be very distracting. I'm currently looking for a more organized group to join.”

Code: No impact

“[The Cooperative Trust has impacted me through] developing relationship with young CU professionals, gain knowledge and insight into the credit union movement and rewiring my brain to encourage innovation in my CU shop.”

Code: Attitude, Behavior, Professional development, Change the industry, Movement, Community

“It has opened my eyes to the credit union industry, and the opportunities that are available.”

Code: Attitude, New perspectives

“I now feel like a part of the bigger credit union movement picture. I have always participated on a local level and now I am able to engage on a larger scale. The Cooperative Trust is awesome!”

Code: Attitude, Behavior

“I mostly use the Trust to see what other credit unions are working on or struggling with. I have also posted questions myself to get feedback from other members”

Code: Resources

“Now I see a career in what was just a job.”

Code: Attitude, Commitment

“I have learned so much about credit unions and the credit union movement by being a part of the Young Professionals Commission. It has made me eager to get more engaged to get involved and just to learn about other credit unions, not only in NY but nationally as well. Being able to network through the Cooperative Trust made me able to achieve this.”

Code: Behavior, Engagement, Professional development, Movement, Network

“Connecting with like-minded CU folks my age has been great. The idea sharing is key and the face-to-face events allow for great learning and collaborative opportunities.”

Code: Behavior, Professional development, Resources, Community

“Just knowing there is a network of people who will help at the drop of a hat is very powerful.”

Code: Attitude, Community

“I feel connected to something bigger than my own community and credit union. I feel that I now have a group of peers to turn to for discussions, resources and support.”

Code: Attitude, Behavior, Resources, Community

“Great network of inspired people.”

Code: Community

“I realized there are many younger generation who is more active and motivated to make the change within the Credit Union industry and to continue the practice of Credit Union.”

Code: Attitude, Emotional, Change the industry, Community

“Really enjoyed the Crash event”

Code: Crash

“Great place to bounce ideas off other professionals.”

Code: Resources

“Joining the Cooperative Trust has opened my eyes to the impact and importance of the credit union movement. Before joining I was under a rock and had no idea that this was going on! I have been enlightened.”

Code: Attitude, New perspectives, Movement

“The biggest benefit has been the ability to discuss ideas with peers prior to presenting an idea to management. This has given me a greater confidence in presenting my idea, and the feedback I've received from peers has helped make my presentations more effective.”

Code: Attitude, Behavior, Confidence

“I was ready to leave my CU, right before I was picked to be a part of Crash the 1. Since joining in 2010 I have gained a passionate understanding the CU and cooperative movement. I hate to admit it, but before The Trust, I didn't understand why CUs called themselves cooperatives. I have been happily drinking the Kool-Aid since 2010 and feel it has made me a better leader and stronger CU advocate.”

Code: Attitude, Behavior, Commitment, Confidence, Emotional, Movement

“I have been working at a community development credit union for seven years, six year at the time that I joined. I was already very committed to our work and placed a lot of value and emphasis on the cooperative model of finance as different - and better - than a for-profit/shareholder model. So - I feel like I was already there; however, it's been nice to get to know people at other credit unions - especially those without a specific community development mission - and see what the cooperative movement means to them and think about ways to make that more salient and important when we think about credit unions and what makes them great. So - I enjoy the conversation, and I really enjoy that Cooperative Trust makes me feel connected to people across the country - it does help us to feel like more of a large movement that is making a difference all over the nation, and could do even greater and more impactful things in the future.”

Code: Behavior, Change the industry, Community

“It has put me in touch people that think the way I do that I never knew were out there. Too often you get "stuck" at your own credit union in day to day things and don't realize there are so many other things, and people, out there. The other thing it has done is to serve as an energizer. It's easy to get worn down by things, but talking with other Trust members or hanging out with them is always a refresher.”

Code: Attitude, Behavior, Emotional, Community

“It has introduced me to a lot of new credit union employees who are my age that I didn't know before. This gives me a wide range of people that I can bounce ideas off of or look to for help. Also, I have learned a lot more about credit union cooperative events, such as CU4Kids. I had never heard of CU4Kids prior to my Crash experience, but many of the other crashers from other states are heavily involved in this program that my credit union is now getting into.”

Code: Attitude, Behavior, Professional development, Resources, Community

“I am brand new to the Credit Union world as a recent college grad. The Cooperative Trust is so helpful for me to see the bigger picture of what I am doing and what I am a part of - and helps me put everyday activities into perspective. It also gives me a greater appreciation for the type of people who work for CU's and the impact that we can and do have on our communities.”

Code: Attitudes, New perspectives, Emotional

“It gives me moral and information support.”

Code: Attitudes, Resources

“The Trust provides an outlet and support for career development. It is also an incredible networking tool and information resource.”

Code: Professional development, Network, Resources

I feel more confident expressing my ideas about the movement and being part of the Cooperative Trust has opened up more opportunities to learn and evolve as a leader.

Code: Attitudes, Behavior, Confidence, Professional development

“The networking opportunities are very beneficial.”

Code: Network

“lots of ways!”

Code: