

# The changing landscape of unions essay samples

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## **Introduction**

Unions form an extremely important aspect of the industrial relations. One of the major benefits of unionization to present day organizations has been collective bargaining. Unions help workers obtain their rights and have a stronger stand and say on various managerial decisions relating to the human resources policies and compensation as well (Griffin & Moorhead, 2009).

## **How union membership has evolved over the past century**

Over the last few decades the trade union membership has declined. The number of inactive union members has increased. Net union density rates in the countries from 1961 to 2000 are as below.

(Lesch, 2004)

Increasing diversity of workforce, diverse employment arrangements, the change in industry structures, an increase of part-time and casual employment are the driving forces behind the changing trend of union membership (Trade Union membership, 2012).

## **How unions have modified their philosophy to accommodate this shifting landscape**

Unions have modified their philosophy from violent strikes to peaceful work slowdown in order to ensure that unions are not seen as a threat or obstacle by the management and that they do not give away the work to another outsourcing partner. The unions over the years have made some fundamental changes in their fundamental goals and strategies. The trade unions have shifted from the "servicing" model and adopted the "

organising” model. Previously in the service model, the unions played a passive role. On the contrary, by adopting the ” organising” model has taken a more active role and focus on empowering the members to identify and choice their interests (Griffin & Moorhead, 2009). This change of philosophy is more visible in US, UK and Australia.

Another complementary approach is ” social movement” unionism. This was observed among the unions in developing countries. The philosophy of this approach was to focus not only on the wages and working conditions of the employees, but also on the living conditions, housing, health and education of the workforce. This approach of unionism was successful in attracting community support. Of late a new philosophy termed as social movement unionism is increasing in the industrialised countries. These unions also campaign for access to better public services. The focus of this philosophy of unionism is to play a significant role in the community and the society and voice the concerns and needs of the working class population (Cradden & Jones, n. d.).

### **Two reforms unions should consider to broaden their appeal to a workplace environment**

Reforms that unions should take up to broaden their appeal to a workplace environment are firstly, to focus on establishing better levels of understanding of common objectives and establishing new employer-union relationship and secondly, international trade unionism (Cradden & Jones, n. d.). Instead of direct opposition with the management, the unions can opt for a partnership approach of critical co-operation in which solutions to issues can be identified on common grounds and stronger relationship can be

developed with the management. With globalisation and increasing number of multinationals, unions need to operate at a global level and this reform would appeal to a larger workforce in the present business environment (Cradden & Jones, n. d.).

## **Conclusion**

Trade unions should play an important role in managing employee relations within organizations. In summary, the paper discussed the evolution of trade unions over the past decade, changing philosophy of trade unions and reforms to increase appeal of the trade unions in the workplace.

## **References**

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