

# Management and union relationships in an organization

[Business](#), [Management](#)



In today's business environment, the relationship between management and union can play a vital role in the success of an organization. My research of the roles of unions and management will enable me to present concrete information of how these two entities perform in an organization. The Role of Management in an Organization " Management is the process of working with people and resources to accomplish organizational goals" (Bateman & Snell, 2007). In an organization, management has the responsibility of performing four major functions.

These functions consist of planning, organizing, leading, and controlling. According to (Carter McNamara, n. d. ), " As planners, management identifies goals, objectives, methods, resources needed to carry out methods, as well as, responsibilities and dates for completion of tasks. As organizers, management organizes resources needed to achieve the goals in an optimum fashion. Examples are organizing new departments, human resources, office and file systems, re-organizing businesses, etc.

As leaders? management set direction for the organization, groups and individuals and influence people to follow that direction. Examples are establishing strategic direction (vision, values, mission and / or goals) and championing methods of organizational performance management to pursue that direction, and as controllers, management coordinates the organization's systems, processes and structures to reach effectively and efficiently reach goals and objectives.

This includes ongoing collection of feedback, and monitoring and adjustment of systems, processes and structures accordingly. Examples include use of

financial controls, policies and procedures, performance management processes, measures to avoid risks etc" (Free Management Library, n. d. ).

**The Role of Unions in an Organization** Unions are associations that represent the collective interests of their employee-members in bargaining and negotiating with organizations. Trade unions generally seek to obtain higher wages, reduced working hours, and improved working conditions for employees.

They also seek to improve workplace safety and obtain increased benefits, such as health insurance, pensions, and disability insurance, for employees. Unions work to protect the employment security of their members by negotiating the implementation of seniority rules and to eliminate "at-will" employment contracts which has subjected non-union employees to dismissal without cause. Although trade unions did not obtain legal recognition until the 1930s, laborers began organizing to bargain collectively with employers long before obtaining such recognition (Encyclopedia. com, 2011). Unions also help the organization by supporting the productivity of the workers. According to (OrganizationLabor. com, 2008), " They help in organizing training workshops so as to enhance their workers' skills at the workplace. Also, they hold forums to sensitize workers on changes going on in the market as well as educate them on pertinent matters that would benefit them in general.

Further support, which may differ, may be given at personal levels. A member might get legal representation in case of litigation where an employer is involved. Unions when conflict arises between employees and

employers conduct meetings and hold talks with relevant policy and decision makers. This ensures quality talks from both sides and decisions of resolve that benefit the employer as well as employee. The Management and Union Relationship In today's business environment, labor and management relations have been put on hold while organizational changes and transformations take place. There are some who believe that labor-management relations are a relic of an era when rising standards of living and stable markets seemed to be predictable.

According to the text (Creative union-management relations, 1995), "Discounting the importance of labor-management relations is an extraordinary misunderstanding of the power and possibility of labor and management to catalyze organizational and human change. A union-management relation is not about playing out a Noh dance of ritualized motions or technical legalisms--it is an intensely human connection that affects the lives of managers and unionists alike. And as a very human connection, it carries with it the seeds of creativity and innovation" (Cohen-Rosenthal & Alfandre, 1995). During the 1950's labor contracts renewed every three years. Each contract term was seen as progress to a better way of life. Unions and management who still believe in this idea are losing benefits accumulated over time. The predictable foundations of those benefits and collective bargaining seem to not work in this day and time. Collective bargaining has produced innovations and progress within organizations.

According to (Cohen-Rosenthal ; Alfandre, 1995), " Numerous advances, such as new forms of employee participation in the workplace were first introduced at the bargaining table: New benefit packages, new types of working hours, new investment funds, new learning arrangements, and familyfriendly policies, etc. " When developing a labor-management partnership, one must understand and honor the significant differences between the traditional union and management workplace cultures. Both sides will have their own assumptions, values, and way of doing business.

If the differences are not properly managed, they could get in the way of the partnership. According to (M. Scott Mulinski, 1998), " What looks easy for management to accomplish maybe difficult for the union. When a labor-management team comes up with a solution to a problem, management's normal reaction is to immediately implement it because it makes sense and affects the operation's bottom line. However, the union may be wary of implementing the proposal before it has been thoroughly discussed at the union meeting(s) and the membership supports the concept.

Management's insistence to act immediately may cause the union to back off or implement without support from its membership. Failure to recognize the union's " way of doing business" places unnecessary strain on the relationship and can result in a breakdown of the trust level between the parties, and possibly create political problems for the union leadership(which could spell an end to the entire partnership). " A labor-management partnership is built upon the philosophy of teamwork, cultural change, trust,

free flow of information, removal of organizational barriers, and development of a high-performance workplace.

There should be no venture into a work area that does not accept the partnership philosophy or whose agenda is different from those set by the labor-management partnership. This partnership can run into problems if demands exceed resources. A level of trust must be gained within the partnership. If trust issues are addressed, effective, honest communication will develop alleviating fears of retaliation for speaking out. This also produces a higher level of respect and less conflict. An effective labor-management relationship will increase the availability of appropriate training and skill development programs. According to (M.

Scott Milinski, 1998), " in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. a labor-management committee was established to address staffing and overtime problems in the city's 911 Telecommunications Center. The committee decided that it needed to better understand how the city's pay system operated before it could address staffing issues. At that point the committee received training on the city's budget and classification plan. Now the committee was prepared to design a new classification, conduct a professional pay study, recommend the appropriate pay range for the new classification, and estimate cost savings through reduced overtime" (Milinski, 1998).

Although conflicts will remain, there must continue to be acknowledgements of changing roles and control issues. Management within unionized organizations have always been told to enforce contractual rules and their rights to make decisions, however in a labor-management partnership

management roles must change from controller to team member. The key to a successful labor-management partnership lies in the fact that, “ although everyone's role changes, the supervisor and middle manager must adjust more than anyone else. The supervisor's primary role is changed from controller to coach.

Middle managers need to understand that their responsibility to the new partnership is to support the effort by helping remove organizational barriers to performance. Middle managers, like many others, must see the employees and supervisors as primary customers” (Milinski, 1998).

Organization and Union Strategies for a Conducive, Working Relationship  
Organization Strategies/Actions: 1. Behave in ways that demonstrate their respect for the institution of organized labor and their respect for the legitimate role union leaders play within both the union and management organizations. 2. Show concern for the issues that are important to the union.

For example, the source of power and income for unions is its membership.  
3. Stop seeing the contract as the union's contract. 4. Maintain communication about all business issues  
Union Strategies/Actions: 1. Publicly acknowledge the importance of effective management. 2. Accept and help their members understand that companies employ people in order to get specific work done in order for the company to succeed and that employment is not an entitlement and that businesses are not social welfare organizations. 3. Convince the union membership of the need for change and the need for cooperation.

The commitment of management and unions to implementing the above strategies will enable the development of an effective partnership. Conclusion My review of the roles of management and unions has assisted me in concluding that management and unions can form an effective partnership. In a unionized organization, management's role is to secure resources needed to ensure that the organization reaches its goal. This includes the hiring of a qualified labor force. The role of a union is to ensure that the organization provide its labor force with appropriate wages, benefits, safe work environment, accessible training, and skills development. If management and unions would be more respectful of their roles and positions in helping an organization to maintain success, a lasting relationship can be developed which will benefit all involved.

## References

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