

Reasons for Joining Trade Unions

Human beings are rational creature. They usually act upon rationally in different spheres of their lives. Similarly, workers join a union with a rationale approach whether joining a union will be beneficial or not. This can simply be decided by making a cost-benefit analysis in this regard. The excess of benefits over costs, i.e., profit or reward, justifies workers' joining to a trade union.

The nature of work in the world is changing. Employers are trying to shed responsibility for providing health insurance, good pension coverage, reasonable work hours and job safety protections. Perhaps a logical starting point is to ask this basic question: why do workers join unions? The fact is that there are almost as many reasons for joining a union as there are union members.

1. Job Security:

Employees need to have a sense of job security and want to be sure that management will not make unfair and arbitrary decisions about their employment. They look unions to ensure that their jobs are duly protected against layoffs, recall, promotion, etc.

2. Wages and Benefits:

Employees work for livelihood, i.e., bread-and-butter. Obviously, bread-and-butter issues of employees are always important issues in their unionization. The employees may think that the union, with its united strength, will ensure fair wages at par with those of other workers in the community, benefits such as medical facility, pensions, paid sick leave, vacations and holidays for them.

3. Working Conditions:

Employees like to work in a healthy and safe environment. Although there are statutory provisions for providing employees a safe work environment. Employees still feel more secured knowing that trade union is directly involved in safety and health issues relating to them.

4. Fair and Just Supervision:

The days are long gone when managers / leaders could rule employees with an iron fist. Thanks to the trade unions that brought about a change or shift in leadership styles from autocratic to democratic, or say, people oriented to ensure that the managers treat their employees fairly, justly, and respectfully. Employees can only be disciplined for "just cause." In case of mistreatment from the employer, the employee may file a written grievance against the employer.

The complaint will be heard and resolved through a formal grievance procedure involving collective discussion by both union and management representatives.

5. Powerlessness:

Employees individually often feel voiceless or powerless to bring about changes that will benefit them'. But, it is union that provides them a powerful, collective voice to communicate to management their dissatisfaction and frustration. This is based on labour philosophy 'unity is the strength'.

6. Need to Belong:

Man is a social animal. Hence, need to belong is strong in both his personal and work lives. The union, from this point of view, provides a mechanism for bringing people together not only to promote common job-related interests but also to organise programmes, functions, and social events from time to time, to create a strong bond among the union members'.

7. Social Reasons:

Men and women are social beings. Therefore, workers have a strong need to be accepted by their peers, to belong, and to go along with others. Some unions offer attractive benefits, such as insurance. Peer pressure may also cause workers to join unions.

8. Recognition:

Some employees have found that the union structure offers them an opportunity to gain recognition not available to them in the business organization. For example, a worker with little education may serve on a shop committee or even be elected as a position of influence, such as steward or officer in the local.

9. Participation:

Many workers have explained their union membership in terms of their desire to obtain a voice in decisions that affect them in their working environment. To other workers who feel lost in our large, complex, industrial society, the union is viewed as a last hope that they will be able to influence their destiny.

10. Compulsion:

Aside from social pressure to join a union, some workers become union members simply because the employment contract requires them to do so. It would appear that unions serve a broad network of employee needs.

One of the big reasons workers join a union is to ensure fair treatment in the workplace. As a union member, you have a strong collective voice for negotiating with employers about pay & wages, work hours, benefits - including retirement plans, health insurance, vacation and sick leave, tuition reimbursement, etc., Union members earn more money, have better benefits, and help employers create a more stable, productive workforce in which workers have a say in improving their jobs.

To conclude, the management's failure in ensuring job security, fair remuneration, safe and healthy working conditions, fair supervision, and involvement in decision making, sense of belonging etc., motivates employees to join a union.