

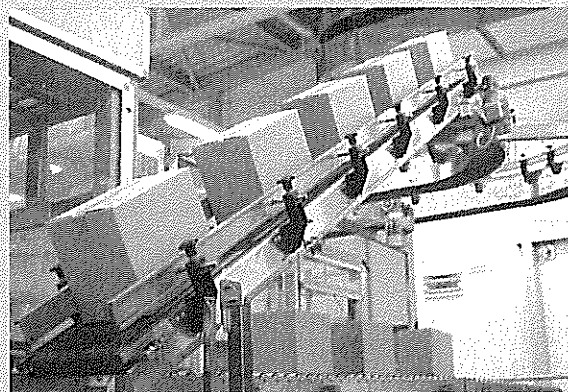
Unit 2 – Trade unions

Trade unions are organisations that work to represent the interests of workers. Employers usually dominate employment relationships because they have more 'power' and usually have more experience and resources with which to protect their interests than workers do. Unions exist to re-balance the power relationship by giving more power to employees.

Trade unions work with employers and employees to advocate fair working conditions, fair wages, and to negotiate collective contracts.

Example: Union intervention

When a manufacturing plant becomes a fully automated production line, the relevant trade union usually expresses its concern because automation of the production process often results in **redundancies** (job losses) and **restructuring** of the production staff, as the new technology takes the place of individuals on the production line. The business must adjust its methods of production to utilise the new technology – workers now operate machinery rather than complete the job themselves. However, if current employees are not qualified to operate the new machinery, or cannot re-train, then they cannot be redeployed in the factory and will lose their jobs. There might also be changes to working conditions, such as increased noise or longer work hours that employees find unacceptable. Unions will be concerned and intervene when their members are unhappy about the loss of jobs and deteriorating working conditions.



Automated production

Union membership is voluntary in New Zealand. Members (workers) pay a yearly fee to the union, which entitles them to benefits that may include:

- legal support
- collective bargaining
- advocacy and mediation
- advice on resolving employment issues.

Collective bargaining

Collective employment agreements are contracts shared by a group of people belonging to a registered union. Non-union members have individual employment agreements. The negotiation of collective agreements happens through a process of collective bargaining in which unions, acting on the instructions of their members, negotiate directly with employer(s) as to what the employment conditions will be.

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Other union activity

Unions use many tactics to support their members. Some are behind the scenes, while other tactics, such as **strikes**, in which a large number of employees refuse to work, can be disruptive to the places of employment. Three non-disruptive examples are:

- **political lobbying**, in which union representatives discuss important issues with politicians, trying to persuade them to support members' interests when voting on legislation
- **public relations activities**, in which union representatives release statements and liaise with media to highlight the problems of workers and swing public opinion in support of workers
- providing **legal representation** (the help of a lawyer) free of charge to workers who have been disadvantaged by their employers.

Key unions

Important New Zealand unions include the following.

- **Engineering, Printing and Manufacturing Union (EPMU)**: The largest private-sector trade union in New Zealand; EPMU represents 40 000 workers from the engineering, printing, and manufacturing industries.
- **New Zealand Public Service Association (PSA)**: The largest state-sector union and largest union in New Zealand, the PSA represents workers employed by government organisations (excluding teaching and law enforcement).
- **Post Primary Teachers' Association (PPTA)**: The union to which teachers in secondary schools and intermediate schools can belong.
- **New Zealand Educational Institute (NZEI)**: This union represents most teachers in New Zealand – primary and early childhood education (ECE) teachers.
- **Service & Food Workers Union (SFWU)**: Represents workers in hospitality, health and care services, administration, catering, cleaning, and food and beverage industries.
- **Unite Union**: This group is very active in the media and politics. It represents any worker and is not restricted to a particular industry. It targets groups that are poorly represented and tries to improve working conditions.

The **New Zealand Council of Trade Unions (NZCTU)** is the organisation that represents unions in New Zealand, bringing together 40 different unions and collectively representing 360 000 New Zealand workers.

Activity: Trade unions

1. Complete the following paragraph by inserting words from the word list.

agreements bargain goals lobby union working

A trade a. _____ is an organisation of workers who have come together to achieve common b. _____ such as higher pay and better c. _____ conditions. The trade union leaders d. _____ with the employer on behalf of union members. Collective bargaining with employers leads to collective employment e. _____. Union representatives also f. _____ parliamentarians and liaise with media.

2. Write the name beside each acronym.

EPMU	
NZCTU	
NZEI	
PPTA	
PSA	
SFWU	

3. Explain why employees might choose to join a trade union.

4. Explain the methods by which trade unions address workers' issues and concerns. In your answer, refer to *collective bargaining, legal representation and strikes*.

5. When an organisation needs to restructure, it may call on the union to assist in the restructuring process. Discuss how a trade union and an organisation could work together to help ensure benefits for the employees *and* the employer. In your answer:

- explain how a union could be involved in the restructuring process
- explain how an organisation could use the union to best communicate the changes in the workplace
- justify the maintenance of a positive working relationship between workers and employer, in terms of the benefits for each party.

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5. Carry out online research to find out about one of the trade unions mentioned in this unit. Design a poster brochure encouraging workers to join the union. You should include:
- the goal, purpose, and values of the union
 - who should join
 - advantages of membership
 - costs of membership
 - what the union can do for its members.

Name of union: _____

Unit 3 – Employer associations

An employer association is an organisation whose members are businesses.

Employer associations offer representation, help, and support to businesses and act to improve business **productivity** (output of products and services). They exist to balance the power of unions, to provide specialist advice and guidance, to represent organisational interests to government and other outside stakeholders, and support the local economy.

Specialty associations

A range of specialty associations offers advice, support, and representation for businesses in specific industries. Examples are:

- New Zealand Food & Grocery Council
- New Zealand Retailers Association
- Communication Agencies Association of New Zealand
- Federated Farmers of New Zealand
- Hospitality New Zealand
- Tourism Industry Association New Zealand.

Local employer associations

Many areas have a local 'Chamber of Commerce' or 'Business Association' that meets regularly to discuss local business events and issues. Together these groups offer networking and support for local businesses. They usually charge a fee to belong, and offer benefits relevant to the needs of members.

Business associations (usually centred around a local retail district) often organise events to encourage shoppers into a retail district; e.g. themed events, such as for Christmas, and street markets. They also coordinate collective advertising and marketing for the area.

Chambers of Commerce offer local support, networking, training, information and advice with the intention of encouraging and inspiring business throughout New Zealand. There are 29 such chambers in New Zealand, with a total of 22 000 members.



Conferences and networking

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Employers & Manufacturers Association

The Employers & Manufacturers Association (EMA) is a major business organisation that assists businesses from the upper North Island. It offers a wide range of services including the following.

Advisory services: Employment-relations and other business-related advice from a network of consultants and lawyers.

Advocacy: To government and other public bodies concerning the needs and views of members with regard to business issues and regulations.

Education and training: In practical skills, knowledge (e.g. Health and Safety; Management; Computer coaching) and cultural understanding, with courses (on more than 100 topics), conferences and workshops.

Exporting services: In conjunction with Export New Zealand.

Membership rewards: Exclusive products and services.

Networking opportunities: At conferences, courses, breakfasts and special events.

Social media: So members can stay connected through tweets, blogs, discussion groups, photos and videos.

Venues and facilities' hire: In Auckland and Hamilton, for seminars and functions.

Activity: Employer associations

1. Use a dictionary to define the following terms.

- a. Representation: _____
- b. Lobbying: _____
- c. Retailers: _____
- d. Hospitality: _____
- e. Networking: _____

2. Explain the business term 'employer association'.

3. a. Identify three benefits for a business of belonging to an employer association.

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b. Suggest three benefits of employer associations to the local community.

4. Explain the role of a Chamber of Commerce in the local economy.

5. Explain why an employer association would encourage its members to improve health and safety standards in their businesses. In your answer, you should refer to *productivity* and *industry reputation*.

6. Discuss why the operator of a large farming business would belong to Federated Farmers of New Zealand. In your answer, you should:

- explain how membership could assist with daily operations of the farm
- explain how membership could lead to survival and future growth of the farm
- justify continued membership of Federated Farmers, with reference to the reputation of the farm and its management.

7. In a small group, research a recent newsworthy event involving an employer association. Answer the following questions, and present your research to the class.

- Name the employer association.
- What was the issue?
- Who are the stakeholders (e.g. employers, government, union, other community group)?
- What are the viewpoints of each stakeholder?
- What would your recommended solution be, to try to ensure all stakeholders are satisfied with the outcome?

Name of employer association: _____