

## Trade Union Management

Trade union management directly relates to the core functions of rendering service, providing representation, advocacy, regulatory, administration and a governance function. Collectively, these are directed at safeguarding the welfare of the membership, strengthening the union, conducting union activities, and contributing to society.

The main objective of trade union management is to develop a harmonious relationship between the union as the representative of the workers and the employer at the workplace. Beyond this, trade union management is also about minimizing industrial conflicts. By and large, trade unions are to be exemplary in the conduct of business if they are to make a difference when it comes to image building. If effective trade union management is to take place, then members of its leadership must be prepared to follow rules, regulations, procedures and undertake to communicate clearly and respectfully. Adversarial relations must be outrightly rejected, as there is nothing positive to be gained from such.

It is known that the membership entrusts the responsibility for the management of the union affairs into the hands of the elected leadership. The point is to be underscored that while the leadership assumes the authority to act, the ultimate power resides in the hands of the membership, who can determine what is to be done, how and when it is to be done. This means that the leadership is subject to the will of the membership, and should not perceive that it can act unilaterally and without being accountable to the membership.

There is the popular cliché which says, 'Power corrupts.' This is likely to manifest itself where there is the absence of structure, rules, regulations and systems for monitoring and ensuring that there is accountability. Without controls, there is the ever-present possibility that chaos will prevail, and the likelihood that dictatorial and individual dominant personalities will attempt to railroad and control the organization. This is a bad omen which should never be tolerated. Such behaviour tends to emerge where individuals do not respect the roles of others, and moreover, even attempt to usurp the role of another functionary. Such behaviour borders on being power hungry, but politely put, being over enthusiastic. Such behaviour also tends to be undermining. It brings into the question the leadership qualities of any party who engages in such unbecoming behaviour.

Trade unions are in the vanguard of promoting teamwork. It would be expected that the leadership would be exemplary in this regard, by practicing what it preaches. The game of tug –o – war has no place in trade union management. Long-term antagonism within the walls of the management can only contribute to unwanted tensions and fractured relationships. Instead of infighting, trade union leaders are expected to place the interest and welfare of workers at the forefront, and work assiduously towards addressing and satisfying them. They should occupy

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themselves with attaining union mandates, which at all times ought to be placed on the priority list.

Where maturity reflects itself within the personalities of trade union leaders, it is expected that the focus would be directed to addressing critical aspects of trade union administration, such as governance, financial planning and management, accountability to members, research and development, organizational and negotiating skills. It is advisable that trade union leaders avoid having to superintend over a divided leadership team, but instead, resort to inspiring and motivating their colleagues in an effort to get the best out of them in having the job done.