



International
Labour
Organization

The Effective Employers' Organization

A series of "hands-on" guides for building and managing effective employers' organizations



Services by Employers' Organizations

An overview of services in the field of industrial relations and human resources management

Understanding challenges and opportunities





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First published 2012

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Services by Employers' Organizations. An overview of services in the field of industrial relations and human resources management / International Labour Office, Geneva

ISBN 978-92-2-126391-3 (print)
978-92-2-126392-0 (web pdf)

Also available in Spanish: *Servicios prestados por las organizaciones de empleadores. Panorama de los servicios en los ámbitos de las relaciones laborales y la gestión de recursos humanos*, (ISBN 978-92-2-326391-1 (print), 978-92-2-326392-8 (web pdf)), Geneva, 2012; in Russian, *Услуги организаций работодателей: Обзор услуг в области трудовых отношений и управления человеческими ресурсами* (ISBN 978-92-2-426389-7 (print) 978-92-2-426390-3 (web pdf)), Geneva, 2012.

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Printed in Italy

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Foreword

Delivering quality services to members is one of the key value-added of the employer and business organizations. By providing services they help members-companies to cut transaction costs, optimize regulatory compliance and overall improve their performance, thus contributing to sustainability and growth of business. From the institutional perspective, it is an essential strategy to retain existing members and attract new ones leading to greater representativeness and influence.

The global economic changes affected the organizations representing and serving business just as much as they affected businesses themselves. Employer and business associations are redefining their service strategies for a number of reasons. With the transformation of markets, the needs of member-companies have significantly changed reflecting the shifts in virtually all aspects of doing business - production processes, workplace relations, management and administration etc. As a result of these transformations, businesses demand new services that will help them respond to market challenges. On the other hand, growing market competition from private service-providers - consultancy firms, other associations and even highly-skilled individuals - forces organizations to make strategic choices, rethink old paradigms and innovate. The challenge of servicing a diverse membership - from large MNE's (that are less reliant on services) to SME's and micro-enterprises that place huge value on this offer - is also one of the factors influencing the re-thinking of the service role.

In this context, ILO's Bureau for Employers' Activities is expanding the Effective Employers' Organization toolkit with a new 'Service Series'. The Service Series consists of a cover-guide and a number of thematic guides on industrial relations and human resource services, labour law, which will be supplemented by other guides in the future. The cover-guide provides generic business strategies to design, deliver and monitor any services offered by employer and business organizations, whereas the thematic guides provide up-to-date information on current trends, innovative approaches, best practice and practical advice on specific service areas drawing on the experience of organizations around the world.

The launch of the Effective Employers' Organization: Service Series was made possible with the support of the Norwegian Government in the framework of the ILO/Norway Partnership Agreement 2010-11. The Series is a result of collaboration between the Bureau for Employers' Activities in Geneva and the Programme for Employers' Activities in the International Training Centre in Turin. I would like to thank Mr. Arnout De Koster and Ms. Tugschimeg Sanchir for conceptualizing the series and providing substantive inputs into the drafts, Ms. Anne-Brit Nippierd for coordinating the project, Mr. Christian Hess for conceptualizing and providing substantive inputs into the Labour Law Guide and Ms. Jeanne Schmitt, Mr. Paolo Salvai and Ms. Aude Guimont for doing the research and drafting several versions of the cover-guide and the Industrial Relations and Human Resource Services guide. Appreciation also is extended to Ms. Maria Cronin who did the research and drafted the Labour Law Services guide.

Deborah France-Massin
Director
Bureau for Employers' Activities
Geneva, 2012

Section One

Objective and methodology

“Industrial relations and human resources services by employers’ organizations” is a part of the Service Series published under **“The Effective Employers’ Organization”** package focuses exclusively on methodology and technical specificities of developing and delivering services in the area of industrial relations and human resource services. Its practical value could be maximized by using in conjunction with the cover-guide **“A strategic approach to service development”**.

Objective

The objective of the present guide is to provide employers’ organizations with information about current trends in service development in industrial relations and human resources. Drawing on the experience of employers’ organizations from all over the world, it provides the reader with a series of examples which may inspire employers’ organizations in reviewing or developing services.

There are similarities among the different approaches and organizations. However, the development of industrial relations and human resources services is strongly conditioned by historical factors, the national context and the system of industrial relations. Bear these considerations in mind when reading this guide.

Industrial relations are still important for most employers’ organizations and are a pillar of their service portfolio. The major change in emphasis in the labour relations services of employers’ organizations in the last decade has been in assisting members to improve and strengthen workplace relations – human resource management.

Methodology

All findings in this guide are based on information from employers’ organizations around the world. Case studies were collected from national, sectoral and regional organizations in Europe, Latin America, Africa, and Asia and the Pacific (See table 1 below).

The main objectives of the survey were to:

- map and overview services offered concerning industrial relations and human resources;
- detect new trends;
- gather information on the development of business models and strategies.

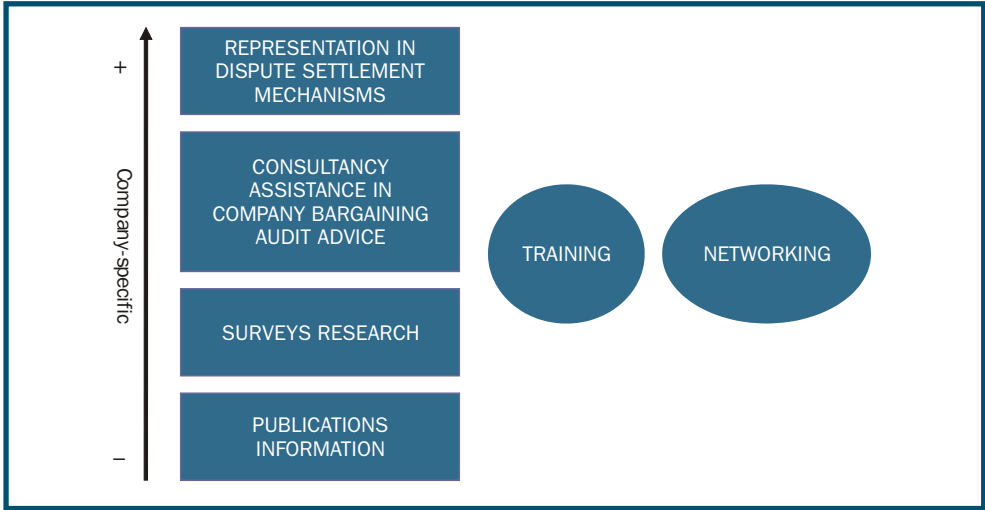
After collecting case studies, a validation workshop was held at the International Training Centre of the ILO to discuss the relevance of services in industrial relations and new trends. Experts from employers’ organizations and ACT/EMP specialists took part and contributed to the findings in this publication.

How is this guide structured?

This overview of services distinguishes six broad categories of services, namely: 1) information and publications; 2) research and surveys; 3) advice, auditing and consultancy; 4) legal representation; 5) training; 6) networking.

The idea is to move from less company-specific services to more company-specific services, both to member companies and, in some cases, to non-members. Training activities and networking activities, for their part, are both broad and company-specific at the same time.

Figure 1. Typology of services in industrial relations and human resources



Further distinctions are made in each category, with a brief description of every 'sub-service'. For each service presented information on:

- the content,
- the mode of delivery,
- the issue of invoicing and
- the issue of staff

will be provided, as will be considerations on:

- added value, competitive strengths and
- challenges

At the end of every section, basic elements related to the service will be summarized. You may identify those summaries through the following icon:

Summary



In this typology of services, the policy formulation, lobbying and representation role of the employers' organizations – in other words all activities targeting external parties (government, international agencies, trade unions, media) – is left out. They are fundamental activities, but they are not service provision.

The link with the other guides on services

This guide covers industrial relations and human resource management services. Another guide “ Services by employers organizations in the field of labour law” covers, on the basis of the same objective and a similar methodology, the subject of labour law services. A third guide in this series “ A strategic approach to service development” looks at common problems of developing and delivering sustainably ,. For both main types types of services. This third guide should hence be read in conjunction with this guide , if the reader wants to have, next to a description of industrial relations and HR services, also a deeper insight in the “ How to develop and deliver”.

Table 1. List of employers’ organizations interviewed

Country	Organization	Type of organization / sector	Interviewee / respondent	Website
Africa				
Ghana	Ghana Employers Association (GEA)	National / Cross-industry	CEO	www.ghanaemployers.com
Kenya	Federation of Kenya Employers (FKE)	National / Cross-industry	CEO and Legal and IR Senior Executive Officer	www.fke-kenya.org
South Africa	Steel and Engineering Industries Federation of South Africa (SEIFSA)	Sectoral/ Engineering and steel industry	CEO	www.seifsa.co.za
Zambia	Zambia Federation of Employers (ZFE)	National / Cross-industry	CEO	www.zfe.co.zm
Senegal	Conseil National du Patronat (CNP)	National / Cross-industry	CEO	www.cnp.sn
Cameroon	Groupement Inter-Patronal du Cameroun (GICAM)	National / Cross-industry	CEO	www.legicam.org
Americas				
Trinidad and Tobago	Employers’ Consultative Association (ECATT)	National / Cross-industry	Former Chairman	www.ecatt.org www.employerssolutiontt.com
Jamaica	Jamaica Employers’ Federation (JEF)	National / Cross-industry	CEO	www.jamaicaemployers.com
Colombia	Asociación Nacional de Empresarios (ANDI)	National / Cross-industry	CEO	www.andi.com.co
Asia and the Pacific				
Australia	Northern Territory Chamber	Subnational / Inter-professional	Manager, Workplace Relations	www.chambernt.com.au
Australia	Chamber of Commerce and Industry Western Australia (CCIWA)	Subnational / Inter-professional	Manager, Industrial Relations Policy	www.cciwa.com
Korea	Korea Employers’ Federation (KEF)	National / Cross-industry	Chief of International Affairs Team	http://eng.kef.or.kr

Services by Employers' Organizations

Country	Organization	Type of organization / sector	Interviewee / respondent	Website
Malaysia	Malaysia Employers' Federation (MEF)	National / Cross-industry	Senior Officer, Membership and PR	www.mef.org.my
New Zealand	Employers and Manufacturers Association (EMA) Central NZ	Subnational / Inter-professional	CEO	www.emacentral.org.nz
Sri Lanka	Employers' Federation of Ceylon (EFC)	National / Cross-industry	CEO	www.employers.lk
Thailand	The Employers Confederation of Thailand (ECOT)	National / Cross-industry	CEO	www.ecot.or.th
Europe				
Sweden	Almega AB	Sectoral / Services	Negotiator Manager	www.almega.se
Netherlands	AWVN	Sectoral /Services, harbours, transportation and logistics	Director Consultancies	www.awvn.nl
Belgium	Essencia	Sectoral/ Chemical industry	Secretary General	www.essencia.be
Belgium	Agoria	Sectoral/ Technological industry	Director of Social Affairs	www.agoria.be
Germany	Gesamtmetall	Sectoral / Metalworking	Director (sub-regional office)	www.gesamtmetall.de www.metallnrw.de
France	Fédération Nationale des Travaux Publics	Sectoral/ Public works	Director	www.fntp.fr
Italy	Confederazione Nazionale dell'Artigianato e della Piccola e Media Impresa (CNA – APT)	National (regional office) / Craft and SMEs	Manager of Development Department	www.cna.to.it
UK	EEF	Sectoral / Metalworking	HR and Legal Leader (regional office)	www.eef.org.uk

Section Two

The changing role of employers' organizations' in service provision

The changing focus of services by employers' organizations

Traditionally, most employers' organizations around the world offered services in labour relations¹, whether labour relations policy formulation, research and dissemination of information on labour issues, labour advisory services, representation of members in negotiations and in disputes, with varying degrees. This can be explained by the fact that originally employers' organisations were established to represent interests of business in industrial relations².

However, changes in the global business environment over the last two decades that affected technological and production systems, work organization, sectoral and operational structure of the economy, macroeconomic policies, internationalization, globalization of markets and capital – have challenged employers' organisations, pushing them to broaden their areas of operation and to venture into new fields. As Franz Traxler says, "in an environment where individual and autonomous actions of companies are now paying off more than collective actions, employers' organizations have had to adapt their service offer"³.

Indeed, the increasing attention to labour relations at the company level for example, but also the greater need for enterprises to be competitive not only at the national level but at the regional and international level, have changed members' expectations towards employers' organizations and conducted the latter to develop services in areas which enhance the performance and competitiveness of their member companies.

With regard to labour relations, one development observed among employers' organizations is the shift towards services in the field of human resource management. Hence, the present guide focuses on industrial relations and human resources (HR) services.

¹ The terms "labour relations", "employment relations" or "workplace relations" can be used to describe individual and collective relations between employers and workers. In this publication, we refer to "industrial relations" to encompass all situations and contexts.

² For a definition of "industrial relations", refer to G. Casale and G. Arrigo, *Glossary of Labour Law and Industrial Relations*, ILO, 2005, p. 164: "individual and collective relations between workers and employers at work and arising from the work situation, as well as the relations between representatives of workers and employers at the industry and national levels, and their interaction with the State."

³ Franz Traxler, *Economic change and its impact on employer associations: a cross-national comparison*, University of Vienna, 2003

The growing need for a sustainable service offer

The evolution of the global business environment and the consequent evolution of industrial relations – partly due to the decline of trade unionization (see tables 2 and 3 below) –, has also affected employers' organizations' structure, with a trend to membership decline. Increasingly, employers' organizations need to sustain themselves through sources beyond membership subscriptions. One way to generate new sources of income – and retain and attract new members – is through paying services' delivery. In addition to professionalism, this requires the application of modern business principles to the organizations' operations, to make it competitive⁴.

Box 1. The decline of trade unionization and the trend towards decentralization of collective bargaining

There has been a considerable decline in unionization over the past two decades. Table 2, below, summarizes the change since 1990 or so⁵. Between 1989 and 2005, union density declined in the 51 countries or territories for which data could be collected, with the exception of seven countries in which it was stable. The decline was dramatic in Central and Eastern Europe, where levels had initially been very high. Table 3 presents more recent trade union density rates in OECD countries.

Although the basic level of collective bargaining has not changed, collective bargaining has become more decentralized and less coordinated, with the centre of gravity now tending to be the enterprise. National industrial relations structures and institutions have had to adapt, and workers' and employers' organizations, whose primary role is to represent their members in national, regional or sectoral collective bargaining processes, have seen their power and influence slightly decline in given countries

Table 2. Change in union density rates, 2005-1989

Country	Union density change	Last/ initial year	Country	Union density change	Last/ initial year
Singapore	0.08	2005/1989	Turkey	-0.01	1999/1989
Paraguay	0.06	2004/1994	Taiwan (China)	-0.02	2005/1989
China	0.04	2005/1989	Netherlands	-0.02	2005/1989
Hong Kong	0.04	1999/1989	France	-0.02	2005/1989
Spain	0.04	2005/1989	Norway	-0.03	2005/1989
India	0.03	2002/1991	Philippines	-0.03	1998/1989
Brazil	0.01	2005/1991	Canada	-0.03	2005/1989
Finland	0.00	2005/1989	Denmark	-0.04	2005/1989
Belgium	0.00	2005/1989	United States	-0.04	2005/1989
Pakistan	0.00	2005/1989	Argentina	-0.04	2005/1989
Chile	-0.01	2005/1989	Dominican Republic	-0.04	2005/1990
Jamaica	-0.01	2005/1991	El Salvador	-0.04	2005/1990

⁴ For more information on how to build a service offer in a sustainable way, please refer to the ILO - ITCILO ACTEMP Guide *Services by Employers' Organizations, A strategic approach to service development ... developing, agreeing and delivering a sustainable service strategy*, 2012.

⁵ Trade union density is the percentage of workers affiliated to trade unions in a given country in a given year.

Country	Union density change	Last/ initial year
Switzerland	-0.05	2005/1989
Italy	-0.05	2005/1989
Mexico	-0.05	2002/1989
Sweden	-0.07	2005/1989
Japan	-0.07	2005/1989
Costa Rica	-0.08	2003/1993
Republic of Korea	-0.08	2003/1989
Uruguay	-0.08	2005/1990
Germany	-0.11	2005/1989
United Kingdom	-0.12	2005/1989
Honduras	-0.13	2001/1990
Greece	-0.14	2005/1989
Austria	-0.15	2005/1989
Australia	-0.17	2005/1989
Venezuela	-0.19	2005/1989

Country	Union density change	Last/ initial year
Portugal	-0.20	2005/1989
Ireland	-0.22	2005/1989
Peru	-0.31	2005/1989
New Zealand	-0.32	2005/1989
Slovenia	-0.32	2005/1989
Poland	-0.42	2005/1990
Slovakia	-0.53	2005/1990
Hungary	-0.54	2005/1989
Latvia	-0.61	2005/1991
Czech Republic	-0.62	2005/1990
Lithuania	-0.82	2005/1989
Estonia	-0.83	2005/1989

Source: International Labour Organization, *World of Work Report 2008, Chapter 3, collection of various sources.*

Table 3. Trade union density in OECD countries, 2008

Country	Trade union density in 2008 (%)
Australia	18.6
Austria	28.9
Belgium	51.9
Canada	27.1
Chile	13.6
Czech Republic	20.2
Denmark	67.6
Finland	67.5
France	7.7
Germany	19.1
Greece	24
Hungary	16.8
Iceland	86.4 (2007)
Ireland	32.3
Italy	33.4
Japan	18.2

Country	Trade union density in 2008 (%)
Republic of Korea	37.4
Luxembourg	37.4
Mexico	17.4 (2005)
Netherlands	18.9
New Zealand	20.8
Norway	53.3
Poland	15.6
Portugal	20.4
Slovakia	16.8
Spain	14.3
Sweden	68.3
Switzerland	18.3
Turkey	5.8
United Kingdom	27.1
United States	11.9

Source: OECD

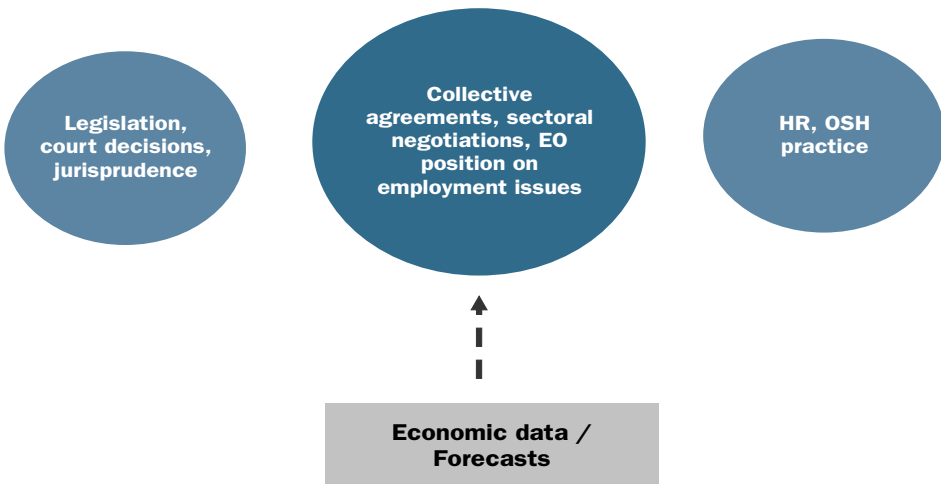
Section Three

Information and publications

Providing accurate and relevant information to members is a key service rendered by almost all employers' organizations. Information is one of the reasons for a company to join. It will expect the organization to know more than it about issues such as collective agreements, wage negotiations, employment legislation, HR management, and safety and health regulations. The employers' organization will provide collective, i.e. not client-specific, information. In this section, we look at:

- regular information (A), and
- publications (B)

Figure 2. Information on industrial relations and human resources: content



A. INFORMATION PROVISION

By 'information', we mean non-client-specific information offered on a large scale. Companies very often ask for client-specific information, and we will deal with that in a later section.

The exceptional development of communications, the Internet in particular, in the past ten years has led to major changes. The amount of information has soared dramatically in all areas, including industrial relations; moreover, this information is much easier for anyone to access. For an employers' organization, this means that the information it used to deliver might now be accessible elsewhere, thereby shrinking its role as an information provider. Consequently, members now expect an employers' organization not only to relay information, but to sift and interpret it, thus saving companies both time and money.

What information to be delivered?

1. Content

Employment, industrial and workplace relations issues make up a significant part of the information provided to members by employers' organizations. Most of the information processed and relayed has to do with:

- new legislation, and changes to legislation;
- collective agreements, be they national, sectoral or individual, that apply to member companies;
- important legal cases;
- important industrial tribunal and court decisions;
- wage negotiations;
- employment issues;
- the position of the organization on labour law issues and employment issues;
- equal opportunities;
- human resources practice (wage management, recruitment, etc.);
- other practical matters (deadlines, etc.).

Industrial relations often involve legal issues. Because the objective for members is to comply with the legislation, even if they are not trained lawyers, the information must be made understandable to them. This may well be done in conjunction with a labour law service⁶, if such exists.

⁶ For more information on Labour Law Services please refer to the Guide on Labour law services which is a part of the Effective Employers' Organization: Service Series

2. Format

A Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) space on a website is a way to treat the most common questions in a user-friendly way. A number of European sectoral organizations do this (see, for instance, “12 questions and answers on trade union action” on Agoria’s website).

Other organizations emphasize the analysis of information and texts. The South African Steel and Engineering Industries’ Federation (SEIFSA) provides interpretation and advice on collective agreements and labour law when displaying the information. In addition to its news service, which provides snippets on the progress, context and content of recent collective agreements, AWWN (Netherlands) also reports on trends in collective bargaining.

Some organizations have set up resource centres that provide collections of texts and materials on industrial relations and human resources issues. The Malaysia Employers’ Federation (MEF) has recently computerized its library, which contains material on collective agreements, industrial court awards, books, journals and reports. A compilation of articles, newspapers cuttings and industrial court awards is also accessible through on-line databases.

The AWWN keeps an electronic database of company collective agreements, which provides information beyond what is applicable to the company itself. You can scan these collective agreements by topic, for comparative information on settlements elsewhere.

Since timely, regular information is crucial for members – in some cases making it possible to prevent labour disputes or settle them in the early stages – employers’ organizations often combine news-alert systems with weekly information systems, for better coverage. The Korea Employers Federation (KEF) regularly updates its website with the latest information as well as KEF positions on major labour issues, and offers members daily and weekly labour trends through its portal.

How is the information delivered to members?

There are two main ways of delivering information: orally, mainly through meetings, or in writing, through letters, short publications or electronic means (websites, blogs, etc.).

3. Written information

Information can be spread through letters, bulletins, magazines, and similar. Today, the vast majority of employers’ organizations use the Internet to give their members news and information. The Internet is a cost-effective way of providing a rapid flow of information.

The use of paper is becoming limited to specific information, notably in ‘glossy’ format, for marketing, or where Internet use is not yet widespread. In Cameroon, for instance, only 15% of GICAM’s members consult the organization’s website, and the paper quarterly bulletin and texts of collective agreements are still sent to member companies by courier. In Thailand, the national employers’ federation (ECOT) still uses post and fax to spread information, in order ‘to stay in touch with all generations’.

E-communication uses several tools: first of all, e-mail, which is replacing postal mailing; second, websites: most employers’ organizations now have their own website. Some organizations also have a specific site on which to communicate information only to their members (known as an “intranet” or “portal”). Some of these are extremely sophisticated, for example that of Almega. Finally, the use of “blogs” or “social networks” to share short items of information is becoming widespread, too.

4. Meetings

The most direct way to provide information to members is through meetings, be they 'collective' or 'individual'. Many organizations hold regular meetings on their premises to share information with their members. The Chamber of Commerce of Northern Territory (NT Chamber - Australia), for example, organizes 'informal breakfasts' for its members, during which the latter are given information on rates of pay, conditions of employment, etc., and on coming events. This may require meetings in different regions. The Malaysia Employers' Federation (MEF) holds monthly regional meetings, in six different locations. These gatherings 'provide a forum for human resources practitioners to exchange information and widen their knowledge on topical issues affecting human resource management, labour law and industrial relations'. At these meetings, government officials and guest speakers from the private sector are invited to speak on topics of interest to employers.

Table 4. E-communication tools

Means	Description	Example
E-mail	The vast majority of employers' organizations send information to their members through e-mail. The information circulated in this way is more specific and focuses on members. It requires a good, up-to-date database of contacts within member companies.	The EFC (Sri Lanka) sends regular 'circulars' explaining changes in labour laws and regulations, proposals for change, and general advice to members IBEC (Ireland) sends specific information of interest to its members (tailored to the company)
Website	A source of information for member companies, it is also an interface with broader audiences and the public in general. In many cases, members have to enter a special area to get more specific information. Usually, the more specific the information is, the more restricted the access. Websites are becoming the most important means for general information provision.	EEF (UK, manufacturers): almost all information requires at least registration AWVN (Netherlands, metalworking): much information available to the public; member access only required for specific information Almega (Sweden, services): information tailored to sector
Members' portal	In some organizations, the area reserved for members takes the form of an intranet (or portal). In some organizations, this is interactive.	KEF (Korea): portal offers its members access to a full range of content on industrial relations and HRM MEF (Malaysia): portal includes a discussion forum
Blogs / social networks	Some organizations have started using blogs or social networks, such as Facebook or Twitter, to get in touch with their members, and share opinions and information. These tools can reach bigger audiences, since they are public, open to all and shareable on the Web.	The EEF (UK) recently created several blogs, among them the HR and Employment Law Blog, in which EEF lawyers and HR experts "keep you up to date with the hot topics in HR and employment law, let you know what we talk to government about and give our opinion on legislative changes". The EFC (Sri Lanka) has created a page on Facebook, where it sends news on EFC training, publications, recruitment offers, etc.

Pricing and staff

For members, information on costing is, in all cases, covered by the normal subscription fee and not charged for separately. Some employers' organizations, however, apply the teaser principle, namely giving access to limited information to all via the website, and limiting access to members only for more valuable information.

Staffing mostly depends on the size of the organization and the level of information. Some employer's organizations have a separate unit for information and communication, with people devoted to industrial relations news. This is the case with the Irish Business and Employers' Confederation (IBEC), whose information unit employs 12 people, and with some employers' organizations in Latin America. The EO staff themselves provide information.

Competitive strengths and added value

An employers' organization today will boost its information service if it processes the right information for its members fast and in a user-friendly way. In this, an employers' organization has several advantages over other information providers.

1. Tradition and seniority in industrial relations

First of all, a long tradition and seniority in industrial relations, combined with high skilled staff, result in quality information whose content and interpretation has more authority in than that of other information brokers, such as specialist magazines. Maintaining that feature is therefore very important.

2. Ability to contextualize information

Good-quality information requires not only facts, but also correct contextualisation of events (especially in industrial relations). This means going beyond the quick, less subtle, more sensation-oriented approaches of newspapers and magazines, and the too-legalistic approach of law firms. To contextualize, some federations go beyond the facts and figures of industrial relations to give economic background data.

3. User-friendliness

An ability to write for both the legal and the IR/HR people in member companies is another advantage for an employers' organization.

4. Speed and regularity

Rapidity is important for legal information, less so for information on industrial relations. Industrial relations processes require time, and more preparation. Members have to be sure that the information flow is continuous and that they can count on the organization not to miss anything important.

5. Customization

The capacity to tailor information to specific members is a key advantage. Personal knowledge of member companies allows staff to provide information relevant to individual companies, or groups of companies.

Challenges

One challenge is to provide timely information on all employment-relations issues of interest to member companies. One way is to tailor the information to sectors or groups of companies.

B. PUBLICATIONS

Publications are a means of conveying information. We treat them separately from general information because of their slightly different approach. Publications cover topics in more depth than regular information, or concern data that are more exclusive.

Not all employers' organizations publish information. However, all organizations with a long tradition of publications agree that they can be a good way to start collecting extra fees not only from members, but also from researchers, students, consultants and other interested parties. The type and the number of publications produced may then be a good indicator of the level of sophistication of an employers' organization. Often, if there is a research system inside the organization, publications are the direct output of that research system.

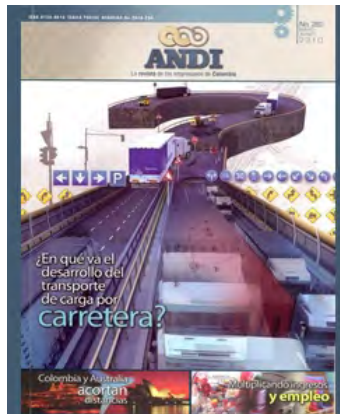
Types of publications on industrial relations and HR

It is common for employers' organizations, especially sectoral ones, to produce publications on industrial relations and collective bargaining. Some have a factual orientation, like those summarizing legislation or collective agreements. Others have a more "political" orientation, focusing on company strategies for industrial relations and collective bargaining. Finally, some have a more educational approach, like those on human resources management.

In monthly or bi-monthly publications for members, feature articles or teasers often cover industrial relations, all the more so if the mandate of the EO focuses on industrial relations.

1. Newsletters and magazines

In addition to providing technical information on websites and via e-mail, most federations publish a monthly or bi-monthly newsletter. Whereas some design these like magazines, and use them mainly for marketing (and bringing in money from advertising), many add to information available on the Internet. In such cases, industrial relations and HR issues might take the form of reflective articles, interviews, analysis and technical information on industrial relations and labour law. Newsletters are usually delivered in electronic format.



2. Collections of collective agreements

It is common for employers' organizations to publish a compendium of all relevant collective agreements, with detailed comments on each of the provisions. This is reference material, not only for the members, but also for outsiders like lawyers who have to apply collective agreements to individual cases. This is the landmark form of publication in industrial relations, especially for those federations whose key role is to bargain collectively at branch level and conclude comprehensive binding branch-level collective agreements, such as the French construction sector federation, the German and Belgian metalworking federations, and the steel and engineering industries federations of South Africa.

Some national organizations also produce such a publication: the Malaysian Employers' Federation (MEF) issued an *Analysis of Collective Agreements and Awards on Terms and Conditions of Employment* in 2008, which analysed the salaries and the terms of employment in 268 collective agreements covering 40 sectors, as well as the decisions on terms and conditions of employment handed down by the industrial courts in 2008. It is a reliable reference for collective agreement negotiations and for designing or revising terms and conditions of employment for both unionized and non-unionized companies.

The Employers' Federation of Ceylon (EFC) in Sri Lanka also produces a *Handbook on Labour Law and Industrial Relations*, which includes judicial decisions on employment issues. This publication has come out for around fifty years. It is revised regularly, and is very much in demand among company managers.

3. Economic performance data and forecasts

This kind of publication highlights the economic context in which industrial relations are conducted. It usually comprises data on inflation, productivity, growth forecasts, added value, exports, imports, etc. Data might come from other research bodies (or even official government reports), often with original research by the organization's economic department, with specific forecasts for a branch or a region. The Federation of Kenya Employers (FKE) constructs cost-of-living indices for collective-agreement negotiations.

4. Strategies for industrial relations and collective bargaining

- These are publications giving advice and guidance on company policy. They usually have a double objective:
- to ensure coordination in decentralized bargaining;
- to inform companies about new trends in industrial relations, collective bargaining, adversarial strategies by trade unions, and new employer approaches.

Titles include the following: 'Evaluation of the bargaining round', 'Social plans for restructuring: an overview', 'Guide to implementing new working hours to boost productivity' and 'Guidelines on collective bargaining'.

5. In-depth material on industrial relations and human resources

Some federations have also moved into publishing in-depth material on industrial relations and human resources, not directly linked to particular events of negotiations, but with an educational or training purpose. A lot of such publications deal with HR management. The followings are titles from EEF, AWWN and SEIFSA publications:

- 'Negotiations in industrial relations' (AWVN)
- 'The labour aspects of re-organization' (AWVN)
- 'Labour relations and terms of employment in NL' (AWVN), especially geared towards foreign companies
- 'A practical guide to managing a changing workforce' (EEF)
- 'Managing sickness absence: a toolkit for changing work culture and improving business' (EEF)
- 'Dealing with email and internet abuse at the workplace' (SEIFSA)
- 'Reduce and manage absenteeism in your workplace' (SEIFSA)
- 'Dealing with sick leave and sick leave abuse at the workplace' (SEIFSA)

The IBEC also issues a *Guide on HR management*, which is designed to help employers in the current demanding and highly regulated environment. The guide also provides comprehensive information on employment law and good HR practice.

How are these publications delivered?

Unlike general information, publications are essentially written information, traditionally books and magazines, but now also in electronic format (downloadable from the organization's website). Despite the growing use of electronic formats – some organizations, such as Almega in Sweden, have abandoned print – most publications by employers' organizations are still on paper.

The e-communications revolution, however, has made it possible to multiply the types of publication. Some organizations, such as IBEC, SEIFSA or AWWN, now offer interactive publications for direct consultation online. A good example is SEIFSA's specific website regarding the *Main Agreement* for the metal industry⁷.

Innovations have been made in packaging: publications are offered on CD-ROM; 'wall charts' summarize the main provisions of collective agreements (see IBEC's). For the price of an online subscription, the SEIFSA website gives access to an on-line leave-enhancement pay calculator, live industrial relations updates, direct access to IR consultants and guides to case studies.

⁷ Refers to the Main Agreement for metal industry in South Africa

Pricing and staff

Both members and non-members generally have to pay for publications, except magazines, which are usually free. Members, however, usually get a discount. This also applies to electronic versions, when payment is required to download a copy.

The decision on whether to charge for publications is a matter of strategic policy. Some organizations, like Sweden's Almega, have chosen not to charge their members, since their publications are now only electronic. Others, such as IBEC, generate significant income from the sales of their main publication, on employment law, which costs €400. The Employers' and Manufacturers' Association (Central) in New Zealand allows members to download guides free of charge or purchase hard copies for a fee. Others, such as SEIFSA, have launched real 'packages' to justify the price⁸. Those who target audiences beyond their members, as Latin American employers' organizations do with universities and schools, charge them for their publications.

Even if publications are offered free, they have a production cost: to offset this cost, the employers' organization will hope to increase its membership.

If not prepared by a specific research department, publications on industrial relations and human resources are generally produced by in-house IR and HR staff, all of whom are asked to contribute. Staff constitute a 'bank of knowledge', which can be drawn upon when necessary.

Publications can be a good means of generating income (in addition to membership fees). The cost and the time required to produce the first document – the texts of all collective agreements, for instance – is compensated for in the medium-to-long term, since this kind of publication only needs to be updated once a year or less.

Competitive strengths and added value

Publications are usually written by industrial relations or HR experts, which gives them a certain authority. In some cases, employers' organizations have original data, which adds value. Employers' organizations can also "brand" their material.

6. In-depth knowledge

Guides and manuals on sector-level agreements, especially, may be written by the negotiators themselves. They will therefore reflect the most in-depth knowledge possible, including contextualisation of unclear provisions, correct interpretation from the employers' point of view, a deep understanding of nuances in the provisions, and an inside view of application problems. Such publications combine both the service role of an employers' organization and its "political bargaining" role. This strength is linked to the level of the collective bargaining system. Where sectoral collective bargaining is important, the role of the EO is a major one, and therefore the writers are the negotiators themselves. Where, instead, this role is smaller, the importance of this service will be less.

⁸ In addition to the printed handbook of the Main Agreement for the metal industry, the online subscription includes the following benefits: 1. A quick word search facility; downloads of pro forma letters and notifications for company use; 3. On-line leave enhancement pay calculator; 4. Live updates on industrial relations developments; 5. A forum were to pose questions; 6. Direct access to SEIFSA IR consultants and job grading experts; 7. Updated guidelines linked to relevant case studies; 8. A link to the Bargaining Council and CDR website.

This criterion also applies to publications that provide political guidance on industrial relations strategies and practice. Federations which play a direct role in collective bargaining consider they add real value by combining range with practical knowledge, in a very specific area (bilateral contacts and agreements) where they are the market leader, and often even enjoy a “market monopoly”, be it as bargaining agent or as long time adviser on company-level bargaining. Law firms, consultants, press and other information services have neither the same insight nor the same practical knowledge.

7. Original data

Where the input for publications consists of proper studies by an in-house research department, supported by original data from surveys or labour market research, the competitive strength might double. It would bear witness to compiling data professionally, and to strong analytic skills that produce well written reports. Again, the authoritative, trustworthy character of information disseminated by the employers' organization plays a major role.

8. Branding

An employers' organization's name is already a “brand” that will boost sales to both members and non-members. This, in turn, will reinforce the brand. Its own publications therefore form part of a “virtuous circle”.

Challenges

Innovation is essential with regard to publications. Employers' organizations should be aware of new formats and existing innovations in packaging, and adapt their publications accordingly.



Summary on information services

	INFORMATION	PUBLICATIONS
SCOPE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not client-specific <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Large scale	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not client-specific <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Members and interested parties – notably students
TOPICS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Labour law <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Industrial relations <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HR	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Factual <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strategic (political) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational
DELIVERY MODE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Meetings <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Paper (mail) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> E-communication (e-mail, website, blogs)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Paper <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Electronic <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Innovative
PRICE POLICY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Free service * * general trend – some exceptions	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Paying * * general trend – some exceptions
ACCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 'Teaser' principle	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Members and non-members
STAFF RESOURCES NEEDED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Communication staff <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IT staff (for website)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IR/HR and labour law specialists (in-house) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Support from research department (if any)
KEY STRENGTHS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Seniority in IR area <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ability to contextualize <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> User-friendliness <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Customization <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rapidity and regularity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In-depth knowledge <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original data <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Branding
KEY CHALLENGES	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Combination of all interests / customization	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Innovation (in packaging)

Section Four

Research and surveys

Providing labour market information to members also means providing in-depth information and consistent data. Quality data are essential for an employers' organization to perform its role efficiently.

Firstly, an EO cannot participate in minimum-wage determination without having a sound knowledge of wage systems, levels and trends at the sectoral, regional, national or even global level. It cannot represent a company either in a labour court or in grievance proceedings without being familiar with labour law, awards and decisions, and industrial relations practice. Quality data are therefore crucial.

Secondly, the more information, data and practices the EO is aware of, the better an adviser it will be to its company members.

Companies are ever more interested in getting quality data and analyses to support their bargaining. Most of the time, they are interested in data on wages (for example, performance-based pay), employment legislation and collective agreements, but also economic performance and productivity data.

Quality data means original, representative and, most importantly, reliable and comprehensive data. An EO might reach this quality standard, provided it has a well organized research and information system. This means having the technical capacity, in terms of hardware (for example, IT systems) "soft" capacity (access to sources) and staff (research and analysis skills). The more sophisticated the research system, the more precise and reliable the data.

There are several ways for an EO to collect information and data from companies. In the field of industrial relations, the practice of survey-making is widespread. Survey-making consists of systematic, direct collection of original data from a given group of business entities with a view to analysing a particular issue. It includes data analysis.

Surveys are very useful to employers' organizations when they want to prepare for negotiations and even to lobby. They enable them to benchmark practices by companies, sectors, etc. They are useful to companies, too, especially when collective bargaining takes place at the enterprise level. In some cases, even trade unions are interested in employer-organization surveys, whose results can be used for their own negotiation purposes (for example, minimum-wage surveys).

In response to the growing need for such information, employers' organizations increasingly offer surveys to their members. The direct access to companies which EOs may enjoy gives them an advantage: they can collect original, detailed and even exclusive data⁹, both quantitative and qualitative.

⁹ In Colombia, for instance, ANDI surveys are very much in demand. Even the Government waits for ANDI surveys before publishing its own data.

Industrial relations surveys

In the field of industrial relations, the most frequently used surveys relate to wages (minimum wages, compensation, etc.). Employers' organizations also produce surveys of HR practice, industrial relations and other issues, on demand.

1. Wages and compensation surveys

It is common practice, especially within sectoral employers' organizations, to produce regular salary surveys. This is the case in Europe and in other places where sectoral collective bargaining is predominant. Some national cross-industry organizations also offer such surveys to their members. This is the case with the Employers' Federation of Ceylon (EFC), which has broadened its research service to produce an annual survey of 'Wage and Fringe Benefits' by sector and level of employees. The Malaysia Employers' Federation (MEF) now also produces an Annual Salary and Compensation Survey¹⁰.

Wage surveys usually investigate:

- salaries, according to the sector, function or level;
- salaries of management and executives – those who are not covered by collective agreements;
- compensation, including benefits, bonuses and company participation schemes.¹¹

Wage surveys go beyond data provided by wage provisions in collective agreements to encompass full data on wage levels. When the surveys include data on compensation, benefits, participation or profit-sharing schemes, they often provide further analysis. For example, the MEF 2009 *Annual Salary Survey for Executives and Non Executives* provides an analysis of the impact of the global economic downturn on salaries and bonuses. Some organizations also offer classification surveys and methods, in addition to the survey itself, for example the AWWN in the Netherlands.

2. Surveys of HR practice

Extending the field of investigation beyond salary surveys, employers' organizations have started looking into HR practices among companies and sectors. They dig into questions such as working hours, holidays, sick leave, absenteeism, labour turnover, vocational training and skills development. This kind of survey is very much in demand by companies, since it not only provides useful information for bargaining purposes, but is also an accurate barometer of productivity in given sectors or specific companies. HR-practice surveys are not as frequent as wage surveys. They tend to be produced in response to specific situations or even on demand.

The Korean Employers Federation (KEF) produces a series of surveys on HR-practice issues – for example the Survey on *Chuseok Leave and Bonuses*, released in 2010. The EEF

¹⁰ See MEF Salary Survey for Executives 2010, MEF Salary Survey for Non Executives 2010, MEF Survey on Fringe Benefits 2010, <http://www.mef.org.my/Online%20Forms/Publications2010.pdf>

¹¹ See, for example, the MEF Survey on Allowances and Reimbursements, which analyses benefit packages provided by private companies to executives and non-executives, like transport allowances and reimbursements, business trip allowances, shift allowances, and meal and business entertainment allowances and reimbursements.

(manufacturers – UK) issues surveys such as the 2010 *Sickness Absence and Rehabilitation survey* or the 2010 *Labour Turnover Survey*¹².

3. Industrial relations surveys

Industrial relations surveys provide data on collective agreements, but also on trends in trade union membership, etc. Where industrial relations combine multiple levels of collective bargaining – national protocols, sectoral agreements and company agreements – companies are likely to use surveys. The sectoral EEF (manufacturers - UK) and Agoria (technology - Belgium) offer regular surveys of company collective agreements and of specific arrangements in redundancy agreements (level of redundancy payments and clauses for re-skilling, etc). In Asia, every two years, the Employers' Confederation of the Philippines (ECOP) issues a *Collective Bargaining Agreements Survey Report*, which analyses current trends in collective bargaining by industry, with sub-analysis of the trends by union affiliation, size of bargaining unit and location.

Few European sectoral organizations have set up databases of collective agreements which allow them to produce surveys and analyses of collective agreements at company level. The AWWN has done so. Thanks to its database, member companies get information on average wage increase, trends in skills and training, employment clauses and other working conditions. This enables pre-bargaining benchmarking.

4. Other survey topics and ad hoc surveys (MEF)

Whereas surveys of wages, HR practice and industrial relations directly serve collective bargaining and negotiation by social partners and companies, surveys of labour market issues (employment, skills, etc.) and economic data can also be used in negotiations.

For example, the Federation of Kenya Employers (FKE) produces a survey of productivity in the tea industry, which includes national and sub-regional data. These data help in preparing for collective bargaining. The sectoral association Almega (services – Sweden) conducts a macro-economic survey (of inflation, etc.) in conjunction with trade unions to prepare for collective negotiations. Even surveys dealing with companies' expectations for the future, or training needs analyses, can be used to this end.

Surveys can also cover the expectations of employer-organization members.

How are surveys delivered to members?

Since surveys generate “high-level” information, in most cases they are published on paper or on a website.

The specific and exclusive nature of the information in survey reports means that they are usually non-public. Most are only made available to members of the employers' organization; sometimes, access is even restricted to member companies that took part in the survey¹³, while non-participating companies only get access to short extracts. If the survey has been commissioned by a specific company or a group of companies, the output goes exclusively to them.

¹²To see all EEF surveys, please visit: <http://www.eef.org.uk/publications/surveys/default.htm>

¹³This is the case with IBEC, where all companies who participate in pay research get a copy of the findings.

Some organizations consider the service part of the membership package (this is the case with the Federation of Kenya Employers and the Korea Federation of Employers). Others ask for additional payment. This is the case with the Malaysia Employers Federation (MEF), which charges everyone for its *Annual Wage Survey*¹⁴. Some organizations combine both approaches: the Irish Business Employers' Confederation (IBEC) charges its members for its annual *Management Pays and Benefits Survey*, but delivers other surveys free.

When surveys are made available to non-members, they usually have to pay.

Although companies recognize the usefulness of surveys for collective bargaining and negotiation, survey-making does not appear to be profitable. At least in the short run, it requires effort by the organization that is not rapidly offset. However, the trend may reverse in the longer run, as with the Malaysia Employers Federation, which now makes a profit out of its annual *Compensation Survey*.

Skills and staff needed to offer quality surveys

Conducting surveys and analysing data require research skills. Employers' organizations that do them usually have research departments with specific staff skilled in survey-making. Other departments may participate in specific research – as at Almega, where surveys of wages are partly conducted with the help of the HR department. However, most surveys of industrial relations are produced by researchers specially taken on for that purpose¹⁵.

¹⁴With a discount applied according to the type of client.

¹⁵See for example the Labour market Analysis Department of the Employers Federation of Ceylon (EFC).

Figure 3. Wages in the apparel industry in Sri Lanka
WAGES

Listed below (tables 3.1 to 3.13) are details of wages, work days, overtime hours/value and allowances paid to the following categories of employees – sewing machine operators, cutters, cutting helpers, final checkers, helpers, iron operators, learners and apprentices, machine minders, packers, quality checkers, stores, store labourers and unskilled workers. The figure in the middle row indicates the number of companies which responded. The third row gives the average.

SEWING MACHINE OPERATORS
Table 3.1

Average minimum wage (Rs.)	Average maximum wage (Rs.)	Average of average monthly salary (Rs.)	Average number of work days per week	Average number of work hours per day	Average overtime hours per month	Average value of overtime per month (Rs.)	Average of average value of other allowances per month (Rs.)
21	21	18	20	20	28	18	13
7,042.82	10,479	8,889.17	5.56	8.5	36	1,973.28	1,472.44

CUTTERS
Table 3.2

Average minimum wage (Rs.)	Average maximum wage (Rs.)	Average of average monthly salary (Rs.)	Average number of work days per week	Average number of work hours per day	Average overtime hours per month	Average value of overtime per month (Rs.)	Average of average value of other allowances per month (Rs.)
16	16	15	15	15	15	15	15
8,767.63	13,223	11,588	5.73	8.46	36.56	2,832.59	1,370.98

CUTTING HELPERS
Table 3.3

Average minimum wage (Rs.)	Average maximum wage (Rs.)	Average of average monthly salary (Rs.)	Average number of work days per week	Average number of work hours per day	Average overtime hours per month	Average value of overtime per month (Rs.)	Average of average value of other allowances per month (Rs.)
16	16	14	15	15	15	14	09
6,491.60	9,206.56	8,005.90	5.60	8.60	39.37	1,994.70	1,001.66

Competitive strengths and added value of a survey service

Employers' organizations have a number of competitive strengths in producing surveys. The main ones are:

1. Representativeness

When member companies participate in surveys, the degree of representativeness of the employers' organization facilitates quality data collection.

2. Network and trust

The natural network of employers' organizations, as well as the privileged relationship that it should have with its members, makes data collection easier. If member companies want to keep certain salary data confidential, this will limit the scope of surveys, probably to lower-paid staff and lower management levels. At which point, the organization might decide not to bother.

3. Specialist staff

Some employers' organizations have, over the years, developed teams able to survey and even assess salaries. Others never made the investment, and consider the market already too well filled by consultancy firms to enter it without specialist staff or a means of adding value.

Challenges

The production of surveys entails particular challenges.

1. Participation

Not only do employers' organizations have to be trusted enough to be able to collect high-quality, comprehensive data; they also have to collect enough data for their analysis to be well-based and representative. A good participation rate for a wage survey is 30% or more. But there are several obstacles to this. In many countries, red tape is one: overwhelmed by administrative forms and formalities, companies are unable – or unwilling – to answer surveys. Moreover, the emergence of on-line survey services may generate “survey fatigue” among companies.

2. Confidentiality

Confidentiality issues might stop companies from participating in surveys. Some companies are not willing to share information they deem confidential, which may skew the results.



Summary on survey service

	SURVEYS
SCOPE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sector-specific <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sometimes company-specific (upon request)
TOPICS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Collective agreement contents <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wages, compensation and benefits <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HR issues (working hours, leave, absenteeism, labour turnover, skills, training, etc.)
DELIVERY MODE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Electronic <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Print
PRICE POLICY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Generally for sale to non-members – free or discounted for members <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Possible distinction between participating and non-participating members
ACCESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Varies according to the exclusivity of data / topic <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Varies according to involvement in the survey
STAFF RESOURCES NEEDED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IT programmers (if electronic) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Research people – for analysis
KEY STRENGTHS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Specialist staff <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Network / relations (for collection of data) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Representativeness
KEY CHALLENGES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Participation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Confidentiality

Section Five

Advice, Assistance and Consultancy

Traditionally, the role played by employers' organizations in collective bargaining gives them authority in industrial relations-related matters. This authority is reflected in the information they can access and release to their members and broader audiences, and in the advisory function they can assume.

A basic function of employers' organizations is to act as advisers to their member companies. This advisory function can take different forms, with different degrees of complexity. A company may simply ask the employers' organization industrial relations focal point about the provisions of a new regulation on occupational health and safety which applies to it. It can become more complex and time-consuming when the company asks the employers' organization to undertake a full health and safety compliance audit. In micro-level collective bargaining, assistance can take the form of simply providing information required by the company; but an employers' organization may also be asked to conduct the whole negotiation for the company¹⁶.

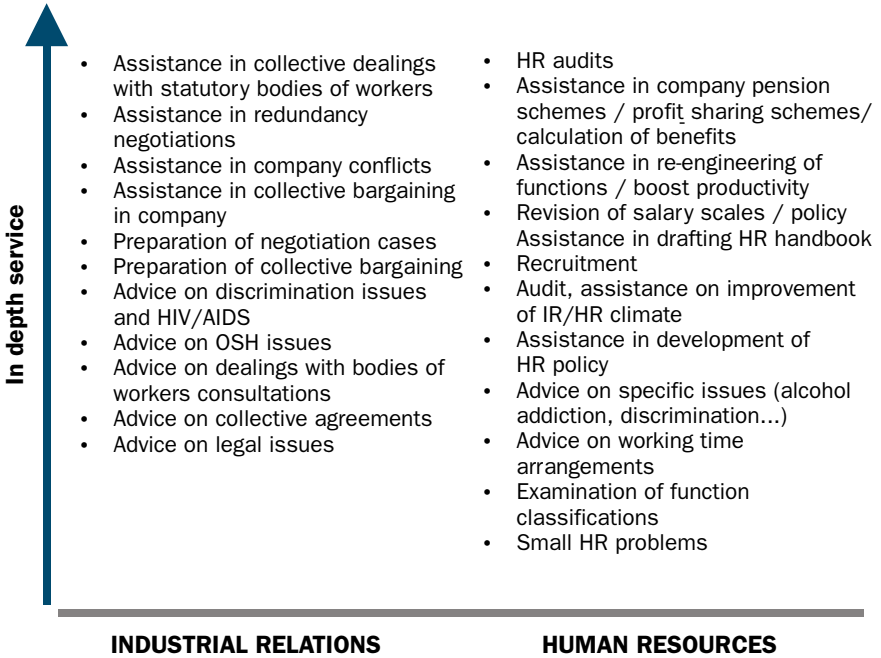
The service might be performed at the EO offices, or at the company itself. Usually, the more complex (or in-depth) the service is, the more likely it will be performed at the company. This is why here we distinguish between services offered at desk level and "on-site" assistance.

In every case, what distinguishes this function from an information service is that it specifically targets a single member company – in other words it is "client-oriented".

The major change in advisory and assistance services relating to labour relations in recent years has been in assisting members to improve and strengthen workplace relations. Human resources are an area with growing potential for advice and consulting activities by employers' organizations. The diagram below lists examples of advisory and assistance services from our initial sample of employers' organizations, concerning labour relations and human resources.

¹⁶ Representation of members in dispute settlement will be dealt with separately.

Figure 4. Advice and consultancy service content



A. ADVICE AND DESK ASSISTANCE

This advisory service covers all requests by a member company for an answer to a problem. The problem may be small or big, and the employers' organization may or may not have the capacity to meet all the requests. This service goes beyond the provision of mere information, since the information sought is interpreted and given in the light of the company's specific situation (i.e. it is "client-oriented"). It is usually provided from the employers' organization's premises, and does not require the direct hiring of any EO staff member by the company.

Types of advisory service

1. Quick advice - personalized information

For most employers' organizations, the advisory function is closely linked to the provision of information: in addition to batch-type information, the organization offers personalized, company-oriented advice. Quick advice often means answering a simple question about the organization's services or pointing a member in the right direction regarding:

- legal issues (labour legislation, jurisprudence, case law)¹⁷
- collective agreement provisions
- small HR problems, very common in companies (rates of pay, etc.)
- good HR practice – to prevent case referrals
- change management, restructuring
- occupational health and safety, non-discrimination (gender, disability, age, HIV/AIDS, etc.)

Most organizations have in-house graduate staff in charge of replying to members' queries, either by phone or in writing (e-mail or letters). The volume can be very high, as the table below shows.

¹⁷ Where it touches legal issues, the service is often provided by the legal department or by the labour law department, if any (see, for example, the Employers' Federation of Ceylon).

Table 5. Frequency of advice and desk assistance

Employers' organization	Pieces of registered IR and HR advice per year (telephone/written), including labour law issues	Total number of members	Proportion of members benefiting from the service (approx.)
Agoria (Belgium)	22,000	1,600	—
Essenscia (Belgium)	4,000	800	—
Almega (Sweden)	35,000 – 40,000	10,000	100%
SEIFSA (South Africa)	10,000 – 12,000	2,440	—
CNA (Italy)	5,000	13,500	—
ANDI (Colombia)	1,000	1,100	55%
MEF (Malaysia)	Telephone: 12,150 (est.) Written: 7,290 (est.)	4,500	80%
EFC (Sri Lanka)	Telephone: 70,500 (est. based on daily average) Written (e-mail only): 22,500	520	75%
FKE (Kenya)	Telephone: 35,000 Written: 1,500	2,500	30%

Source: interviews

2. In-depth advice / consultancy

Some organizations have developed an advisory role which goes beyond the “personalization” of information to cover extra topics upon demand.

Companies might seek advice on the following:

- preparing a collective bargaining case;
- dealings with workers' consultation bodies (works councils, trade union delegations, etc.);
- policies and negotiations about restructuring;
- occupational safety and health (OSH).

Preparation of collective bargaining includes providing company-oriented information on comparable cases (information on specific deals made in companies of the same branch and region), and providing advice on company policy on collective bargaining. The Malaysia Employers Federation (MEF) offers such a service and studies proposals submitted to member companies by the unions before collective bargaining. Advice is then given on how to deal with them and the most effective way of preparing counter-proposals.

Advice on dealings with workers' consultation bodies depends on the legal prescriptions specific to each country. In Belgium, where EU regulations on social dialogue are in force, Agoria and Essenscia offer such a service. It includes advice and even support for the organization of works council elections (legally prescribed for companies with more than 50 workers, every four years).

More and more companies have sought advice on staffing policy. Some employers' organizations – notably the Irish Business Employers Confederation – have developed strong advisory roles, which have become more prominent in recent years.

The field of human resources is very broad. Here are examples of requests for advice and consultancy:

- advice on job classification and salaries;
- advice on working-time arrangements;
- advice on disciplinary issues;
- advice on performance management;
- advice on diversity management and discrimination issues (gender, age, HIV/AIDS, disability), including sexual harassment;
- health and safety – including alcohol addiction.

Not all employers' organizations offer to meet such specific requests. In some countries, new legislation may make working schedules a “sub-market”. For example, in France, local arrangements on working time were a major issue because the *Ley Aubry* boosted company bargaining on working time. In other countries, the need for industrial companies to become more competitive through working time schedules and arrangements which allow greater flexibility and better use of fixed equipment through shift work, night work, weekend work, sliding working time arrangements, etc., has led employers' organizations to be more proactive on this issue.

Regarding discrimination, health and safety-related issues, Gesamtmetall (Germany) and the CCCIWA (Australia) assist companies in dealing with alcohol addiction. The CCIWA also offers advice on discrimination and sexual harassment.

For the Employers Federation of Ceylon (EFC), most of the requests by member companies concern disciplinary issues. This is mainly because the law relating to misconduct is not contained in any statute but is governed by the principles enunciated by the courts of law over time (this shows the need for an adviser with a sound legal background). The Steel and Engineering Federation of South Africa also offers advice on this, since, by law, it is involved in disciplinary enquiries.

These specific services may not cover strategic issues for HR policy, but fill a certain niche where there is a demand. The employers' organization may be an attractive partner because the niche is too small for specific company knowledge.

How is advice delivered?

The advice function is in most cases a desk function, i.e. one carried out from the offices of the employers' organization. Advice is given by phone, fax, company meetings, briefings to members, or by letter.

Most employers' organizations make the service available during 'normal' office hours. Some have a dedicated hotline from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., but none has 24-hour service, or night availability (not even for companies with night shifts). That kind of scheme might be a good promotion tool, without meeting the real needs of client companies.

A new trend is to provide "self-advisory" services – direct individual use - for reasonably simple issues. The Irish Business Confederation of Employers (IBEC) has an Employment Law Audit Service that offers an online tool and a series of checklists that allow members to self-audit their compliance with employment law. An additional review by an EO expert is also possible.

Pricing and staff

As long as advice does not involve a lot of time (especially on the phone) and complexity, most organizations see it as covered by the normal subscription fee and do not charge any more for it.

However, when advice becomes very specific, many charge for it as a special service. Many organizations consider services as the *quid pro quo* for members' subscription fees. They apply low charges, since the main objective is to serve members as clients, and not to squeeze them financially.

The number of staff employed to provide advice to members reflects the structure of the organization, in particular the importance of industrial relations and of the role played by the organization in collective bargaining. Even the composition of staff may vary. Where assistance mostly deals with labour law, lawyers constitute a big part of the professional staff. In every case, a body of professional and trained staff with specific expertise is necessary to cover all requests from members for advice. The following example is taken from the Employers' Federation of Ceylon, and describes the procedure to be followed for staff involved in disciplinary issues.

Figure 5. Employers' Federation of Ceylon checklist for staff giving advice on disciplinary issues

1. What are the facts? Are all the relevant facts available? If a preliminary investigation was done, examine statements.
2. Is there further investigation that you would recommend?
3. Are you immediately biased? If so, identify why and explain to client what the reaction of a third a party is likely to be.
4. What are the offences that could be identified?
5. Is there a clear evidence of the culprit? If not, is the evidence circumstantial?

Source: EFC

Main strengths and added value

The role played by employers' organizations in collective bargaining gives them authority in industrial relations-related matters. This authority is the basis of the trust between a member company and an employers' organization. And this trust is the main strength of an employers' organization in the area of advice and assistance. It has several foundations:

1. Quality of staff

The in-depth knowledge of the sector and the wide experience of staff are essential competitive advantages for an employers' organization. They complement the staff's technical knowledge on the issues. Advisers are very often highly skilled and experienced people. This is all the more important if the issue to deal with is complex.

2. Network, proximity and interpersonal relations – individual relationship

Being close to a wide range of companies is important. Most employers' organizations have regional or local branches in major cities within their jurisdiction, so that they can provide advice directly. Physical proximity often means individual proximity. In fact, the relationship built up between the adviser or consultant and the company is often crucial to the service, and companies sometimes refuse to be advised by someone they not have chosen.

3. Rapidity

Some organizations, such as the Employers' Organization of Ceylon, have built a reputation for giving speedy advice. Having a well-organized team which manages to answer queries rapidly gives it an advantage over competitors, such as lawyers.

4. Low cost

Finally, the low cost, or even the free nature of a service, is what most employers' organizations consider a competitive advantage. Not only does it encourage members to use the service, but it also attracts non-member companies, which might then join the organization.

Challenges

One major challenge, due to the high number of requests, the need for fast answers and even the demand for a specific adviser, is to have staff available. For organizations whose workforce is small, meeting this demand may be difficult.

B. ON-SITE ASSISTANCE

This concerns all requests by a member company for direct on-site assistance by the employers' organization to solve a pressing issue, which the company does not have the capacity to solve by itself. By direct assistance, we mean that the staff of the employers' organization or the consultant actually goes and assists the company 'on site'. This is closely linked to what we called desk advice and consultancies, above, but goes further and is far more intensive.

On-site assistance with industrial and labour relations

In industrial relations, this mostly involves the following.

1. Assistance with collective bargaining for company agreements or with company disputes

The most common services rendered are: assistance with preparing the bargaining strategy and tactics of the company; presence during negotiations as external adviser to the company negotiators; in limited cases, auditing the industrial relations situation of the company. The Malaysia Employers Federation (MEF) offers its members a "package deal" on collective bargaining.

The role of the EO staff here is to strengthen the capacity of company management, not to replace it. It is also to harmonize the company's approach with global approaches in the sector.

Table 6. Frequency of assistance with collective bargaining

Organization	Number of annual cases of direct assistance with company bargaining on collective agreements (estimates)
Essenscia (Belgium)	150
AWVN (Netherlands)	500 to 700
MEF (Malaysia)	18 in 2009
EFC (Sri Lanka)	38 (2009/2010)
FKE (Kenya)	350

Source: interviews

2. Redundancy negotiations

This has become very common. We class it as a separate category because knowledge and expertise in it are crucial to employers' organizations. This is true regarding both the legal aspects and the industrial relations context (which may require political agreement or TU agreement at branch level).

3. Assistance in collective dealings with statutory worker-representation bodies (works councils)

Here, too, employers' organizations have more knowledge and expertise than potential competitors such as law firms and consultancy companies (or cost less).

Figure 6. Services by Malaysia Employers Federation - Package deal for collective bargaining

MEF collective bargaining package deal consists in:

- Studying the union's proposal
- Studying the market rate on salary and terms of employment within the industry
- Advice on all aspects of the agreement, including legal issues and negotiation strategy.
- Preparing company's counter-proposal(s)
- Collective bargaining negotiation with the union
- If the matter is not resolved and referred to the Industrial Relations Department under section 18 of the Industrial Relations Act 1967, MEF will represent company in conciliation proceedings.

Source: MEF website, http://www.mef.org.my/public/services_hr_ir.aspx

On-site assistance with human resources

Employers' organizations have started to help members develop their knowledge and capacity concerning human resources. On-site assistance services include the following.

1. Human resources 'audits'

HR audits aim at assessing the current HR situation and any changes needed within a company. This is the specific focus of some services offered by the EEF, the Northern Territory Chamber of Commerce of Australia. At the beginning of 2010, the Employers Federation of Ceylon (EFC) has set up an 'HR Solution Division', which offers member companies HR audits (once a year).

2. Assistance with strategic HR policy

This is more exceptional: many employers' organizations feel they do not have sufficient competitive edge here. Confidentiality is one obstacle. Nonetheless, the EEF (UK), EMA (New Zealand) and AWWN (Netherlands) are working on it.

The organizations that have entered this market have made a special investment in staff to do so. The tasks they perform with managements are manifold: brainstorming on strategic HR development, auditing, benchmarking and implementation.

3. Assistance with job functions and grading

Gesammetall (Germany) started with classification issues arising out of collective agreements. It has gone on to set up a small department which assists companies with timing the components of each task the worker performs, devising schemes to increase productivity and redefining functions.

The South African Steel and Engineering Industries Federation offers member companies a 'job grading' service: a SEIFSA representative visits the manufacturing plant of the company concerned and views and grades all the tasks and jobs performed. This is important because the industry's wages and wage-related employment conditions are generally based on a comprehensive schedule of industry job and task descriptions contained in the collective agreements. Every year, between 50 and 70 visits are made by a SEIFSA specialist, who is a senior expert on the bargaining council.

4. Revision of salary scales and salary policy

This service draws on salary surveys and comparative salary information. After receiving this information, certain companies appeal to the employers' organization to help them resolve particular salary issues, through classification, assessment and weighing of functions, and devising salary policies for specific categories, but within a general framework of a global remuneration policy.

Other HR assistance services include:

- recruitment
- outplacement
- assistance with drawing up pension schemes
- profit-sharing schemes
- assistance with drafting HR handbooks, procedures and codes of conduct
- calculation of benefits
- calculation of salaries (for SMEs).

With regard to recruitment, the Employers and Manufacturers Association of New Zealand (EMA) has devised a recruitment tool (called "Q-Jumpers") which provides a range of innovative online services that offer businesses an alternative to recruitment agencies and traditional recruitment methods. Businesses can process applicants quickly, get them from multiple sources, examine them easily and save administration time¹⁸.

The AWWN (Netherlands) gives pension advice from the employers' perspective and by viewing pensions as an employment condition which fits into the general remuneration policy. The service offers clients advice and intermediary assistance between the company and the actuarial consultancy. It safeguards the company's interests on pension fund management boards and helps companies set up and run profit-sharing systems.

Some organizations offer HR services specifically to meet SMEs' needs. This is the case with the National Confederation of Artisans (Italy), which offers its members a salary-calculation service. The Federation of Kenya Employers assists its members in calculating benefits.

¹⁸ See: <http://www.qjumpers.co.nz/>

How is on-site assistance given?

These advisory services are all performed in the company, directly.

Employers' organizations usually provide them only to their members. They do not enter the market for non-members, unless the structure offering the consultancies is separate from the main body of the organization, as with the Employers Consultative Association of Trinidad and Tobago, whose *Employers Solution Centre* provides on-site assistance even to non-member companies.

Pricing and staff

In general, all employers' organizations charge for this type of consultancy (see table below).

In terms of staff, there are different models. Some organizations have gone beyond the traditional mode of working only with direct staff to include outsourcing and flexibility. This is the case with the Steel and Engineering Industries Federation of South Africa (SEIFSA), which outsources its advisory service to a network of *alliance partners*, in order to overcome limited staff resources.

Other organizations work in partnerships. This is the case with the manufacturers' association, EEF (UK), which has an agreement with independent consultants. On behalf of the EEF, the latter deals with "niches" such as payment and reward systems. The AWWN has developed an alliance with a law firm. It transmits the compliance or litigation part of dossiers to this law firm, as a complementary service.

This arrangement allows flexibility in staffing, delivery and cost control (limited investment in specialist niches).

The CNP (Senegal), in addition to its own four staff involved in offering advice and consultancies, draws on its own member companies' staff to provide assistance to other members.

In all cases, the staff or consultants recruited are experts on industrial relations or human resources.

Table 7. Overview of rates for advice and consultancy (for members only)

Organization	Hourly rate	Daily rate	Saving on market rate of outside market players (est.)
Gesamtmetall (Germany)	Free	Free	Not applicable
Essenscia (Belgium)	—	□500	50% or more
AWVN (Netherlands)	€212	—	10%
EEF (UK)	—	£650	20%
EMA (NZ)	€50	—	50%
Almega AB (Sweden)	Free	Free	Not applicable
SEIFSA (South Africa)	€55 (members) €81 (non-members)	—	30-40%
ANDI (Colombia)	Free	Free	Not applicable

Organization	Hourly rate	Daily rate	Saving on market rate of outside market players (est.)
MEF (Malaysia)	USD 193 for consultation on members' premises (price per session – ½ day)	USD 1,618 (package deal for collective bargaining) Negotiated package deal for consultancy services	Legal firms' market rate 10 times higher
EFC (Sri Lanka)	Case by case		70-80%
FKE (Kenya)	Free	Free	Not applicable

Source: Interviews

Main strengths and added value

There is significant competition in consultancy and in assisting companies with managing their labour relations and human resources. In the field of industrial relations, which is particularly competitive, employers' organizations have assets that can give them a valuable advantage. The experience and the quality of staff is one, since consultants and staff taken on to resolve company issues are usually experts or former stakeholders (ex-government officials or negotiators, labour law professionals, etc.). But there are other strengths that may add value to the service in the eyes of member companies.

1. Credibility with trade unions and other stakeholders

Both a deep knowledge of trade unions (in terms of policies, constraints, culture, and even personal relations) and the skills and practice acquired in dealing with social partners are a significant asset for employers' organization staff conducting negotiations with workers' representatives and unions at the company level. The credibility of EOs built over time with trade unions and other stakeholders (government officials, local authorities) as organizations that understand the concept, the practice and the value of good industrial relations is key added value. This explains the attractiveness of employers' organizations in this area of activity. Outside consultants and lawyers may have a different culture and attitudes, which, in certain situations, may be detrimental to the negotiation process.

Too many expectations can turn out to be a weakness, and client companies sometimes consider the familiarity that employers' organizations have with trade union representatives to be dangerous for collective bargaining - especially if it is about redundancies. Companies may fear less commitment to their specific case, thinking that the broader and longer-term aims of the employers' organization, e.g. maintaining relations with trade unions, may be sought at their expense. However, the objective approach of EOs is helpful to the membership in general.

Foreign companies might mistrust local handling of cases, fearing that it entails some disconnection from the company's objectives. Accordingly, a company may call upon both a law firm and the employers' organization for outside expertise.

2. Providing a full service

In a number of employers' organizations, assistance with industrial relations and HR is a full service, ranging from auditing to assistance in devising strategies and to assistance with implementation (bargaining itself, writing agreements and handling litigation). The ability to offer a full service may make the EO more attractive. This is one of the reasons why the AWWN (Netherlands) entrusts a law firm with handling legal issues, including litigation in court. Other organizations are considering this option.

3. Support of high-level members

In some contexts, the composition of the Board attracts member companies. This is the case with the Employers Association of Trinidad and Tobago (ECATT), given the significant prerogatives of their representatives.

4. Professionalism

Finally, staff professionalism in handling company cases is an essential element that adds value to consultancy and in-depth services. This includes respect for confidentiality, which is essential to relationships of trust.

Challenges

1. Staff availability

This is all the more important since on-site assistance usually requires more time and attention from the consultants. Some organizations, like IBEC, have developed interesting systems with which to tackle this issue (see the example below).

2. Risk of a “double agenda”

Some employers' organizations, especially those representing different sectors, might risk having a “double agenda”. What if an EO that lobbies local authorities to get support for the declining textile sector is assisting a textile company with redundancy planning?

3. Competition with an EO's own members

More than ever in the field of consultancy, employers' organizations risk competing with their own members, when the latter offer payroll services, HR services, etc. It happens that the Board turns out to be an obstacle to the provision of consultancy to members of the employers' organization.



Summary on advice and consultancy services

	ADVICE/ DESK ASSISTANCE	ON-SITE ASSISTANCE
SCOPE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Company-specific	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Company-specific
TOPICS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Collective bargaining <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Labour law <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HR issues <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OSH <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Change management	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Collective bargaining <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Negotiation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Disputes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HR issues
DELIVERY MODE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Desk function (telephone, fax, letters)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> On-site function
PRICE POLICY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> According to complexity (free if not too developed)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Paying service <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Varying price policy (market rate or below)
ACCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Members only	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Members only
RESOURCES	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IR experts <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HR experts	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IR experts <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HR experts
KEY STRENGTHS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Trust and history of the organization <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Quality of staff <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Proximity <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rapidity <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No/low cost <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Interpersonal relations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Trust and history of the organization <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relations with trade unions, government and local authorities <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Full service provision <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Professionalism (including confidentiality)
KEY CHALLENGES	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Availability	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Availability <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> "Double agenda"

Section Six

Dispute settlement

Many employers' organizations offer to assist their members with handling labour disputes, be they collective or individual and concern conflicts of interest or conflicts of law. Dispute settlement can take place at the enterprise level, at the sectoral level or at a broader level.

According to the ILO, when labour and the management of a company disagree and are unable to resolve their differences, they are in an industrial dispute. The settlement of disputes should be sought through negotiation between the parties, or through independent and impartial means. Indeed, the subject of a particular dispute may determine whether the dispute is within the scope of industrial legislation and the jurisdiction of a third party (e.g. a tribunal) empowered to assist the parties in resolving the issue by conciliation, mediation or arbitration¹⁹.

The development of a labour dispute representation service within an EO is closely related to labour law regulations in the country where it operates. Some systems give employers' organizations the monopoly of representation on dispute settlement bodies or panels. If so, employers' organizations have a "privileged" role, which assures them a potential market from the outset (i.e. their members). If not, they may face numerous competitors, especially lawyers.

Representation in dispute settlement is here dealt with separately from other consultation services (section 3), since employers' organizations tend to consider it a specific service. The objective of this section is not to discuss ways to resolve a labour dispute, but to see what employers' organizations offer in that specific field, and what their strengths are.

What type of service?

Labour or industrial disputes are settled through legal procedures, such as arbitration, conciliation and mediation.

Employers' organizations are becoming proactive in promoting grievance-handling procedures, including mediation at the workplace.

1. Representation in court

Depending on the legal system in a country, labour disputes are settled through ordinary procedures (civil procedures) or through specific procedures, often including a specific court for labour or industrial issues. The role of the respective bodies is often determined by the subject (conflict of interest or conflict of law) and the scope of the dispute (collective or individual). In Sri Lanka, for example, many labour disputes are settled by labour tribunals.

Many employers' organizations offer to represent their members before legal bodies in a labour or industrial dispute. At the Employers' Federation of Ceylon, two thirds of the staff are actively engaged in representing employers before labour tribunals or the Industrial Court. This is a major part of the industrial relations services of the organization, and its volume of

¹⁹ G. Casale, *Glossary of labour law and industrial relations*, ILO, 2005, p. 164

cases is growing. The service includes advice, preparation, drawing up the requisite documents, conducting the case on behalf of the member, and drafting written submissions.

2. Representation on alternative dispute-settlement bodies

In many countries, the law provides for alternative dispute-resolution mechanisms, whether at the company, sectoral or cross-industry level. Alternative dispute settlement mechanisms (ADSM) refer in particular to arbitration, conciliation and mediation.

In arbitration, a third party (usually a panel) considers the arguments of both sides and then takes a decision that is binding on them²⁰, whereas in conciliation and mediation, the third party, acting as an intermediary, has no power of enforcement. In the case of conciliation, it acts as a broker only.

Mediation refers to the assistance provided to disputing parties by an independent third party (the mediator). In mediation, the third party is more actively involved than in conciliation, and suggests ideas and methods for reaching a solution acceptable to both parties²¹.

In some countries, arbitration is compulsory for labour-dispute settlement, or is obligatory under a collective agreement. Parties can also ask that an issue on which they do not agree be subjected to one of those mechanisms.

National labour systems often combine alternative dispute-resolution systems with formal means such as labour courts or industrial tribunals. In Ireland, disputes are brought to the Labour Court, the Employment Appeals Tribunal, the Equality Tribunal or the Labour Relations Commission. This last is a conciliation service whose industrial relations officers act as independent mediators between the parties. The Irish Business Employers Confederation (IBEC) offers to represent its members at the local level, including before the Rights Commissioner and conciliation services of the Labour Relations Commission (in addition to representing them on other formal bodies).

In South Africa, employment-related disputes (misconduct dismissals, retrenchments, capacity terminations, etc.) are settled at the Bargaining Council's Dispute Resolution Centre, as well as on the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA), the national dispute resolution authority²². The Steel and Engineering Industries' Federation (SEIFSA) offers to represent its members in arbitration consultations. This service includes evaluating and preparing the management's case prior to arbitration (in employment-related disputes), interviewing and preparing witnesses for the arbitration hearing, presenting the management's case, cross-examining witnesses and preparing the opening and closing statements for formal arbitration hearings.

The organization also represents and assists companies in conciliation proceedings at the bargaining council's dispute-resolution centres. This includes presenting the management's case in the dispute conciliation processes and negotiating dispute-settlement agreements.

Companies most often prefer arbitration and conciliation, and all "alternative dispute resolution" mechanisms, as the way to solve industrial disputes. Employers' organizations, too, increasingly encourage them.

²⁰ G. Casale, *Glossary of Labour law and industrial relations*, op.cit., p. 39

²¹ G. Casale, op.cit., p. 185

²² The Metal and Engineering Industries Bargaining Council is the body where collective agreements in the metal industry in South Africa are negotiated and concluded. It serves employer and employee interests in the industry by creating a permanent forum for negotiations between the sectoral employers' organization and trade unions.

3. Representation at the company level

A trend in some countries is company-level mediation by employers' organizations. One which does this is the Australian Northern Territory Chamber of Commerce. It assists employers on-site in resolving workplace disputes, in addition to representing them in areas such as unlawful dismissals, underpayment of wages, anti-discrimination complaints and industrial disputes before Fair Work Australia – the new federal industrial relations institution²³.

With individual labour disputes, the NT Chamber (Australia) also offers to represent the employer. This is an attractive service for companies, since the EO tends to be more objective than the employer itself. However, this service has its limits, and may lead companies to lose their sense of responsibility in dealing with individual cases at the workplace, which goes against any employers' organization's objectives and mandate.

The South African Steel and Engineering Industries Federation (SEIFSA) offers a similar service, whereby qualified and experienced persons assist member companies with preparing for and conducting employee misconduct hearings. An appointed consultant assists the management of the company in preparing for the disciplinary enquiry, chairs and manages the enquiry or hearing on behalf of it, provides a formal ruling or finding on the alleged employee misconduct, and recommends an appropriate disciplinary sanction for the company to apply.

Table 8. Frequency of representation in dispute resolution (per year)

Organization	Cases of representation in court / tribunal	Cases of representation in ADSM *	Total
Almega AB (Sweden)	120	2,450	2,570
SEIFSA (South Africa)	—	500 (est.)	500
MEF (Malaysia)	117 (2009)	80 (2009)	187
EFC (Sri Lanka)	2,155 (2009/10)	121	2,748 **
FKE (Kenya)	256	400	656

* *Alternative Dispute Settlement Mechanisms*

** *To be added: 402 cases of representation in Labour Department inquiries in 2009/10, and 70 cases of representation in inquiries before the Termination Unit, which brings the number of cases of representation to 2,748 for the year 2009/10*

Delivery, access and staff

Like other advisory and consultancy services, representation is performed, if not on the company premises - mediation at the workplace – at least on formal bodies of consultation, whether in court or at other institutions' headquarters. Thus we can consider it an “on-site” service.

In terms of access to the service, the approach is slightly different. Whereas it is common to charge members for on-site consultancy, most employers' organizations consider the representation of members in dispute settlement to be a core service, and would never ask

²³ The new Fair Work Act came into force in Australia in January 2010. It has caused a significant change in labour relations systems, with all disputes concerning unlawful dismissals, underpayment of wages, anti-discrimination complaints and industrial relations now brought before Fair Work Australia – the new federal industrial relations institution.

them to pay for it. The service is therefore available only to members, and free. This position makes sense if the legal framework gives employers' organizations a monopoly on representation or a privileged position in industrial dispute-settlement systems. This is the case in Sweden, where the employers' organization Almega (services sector) offers free representation services to its members.

Where employers' organizations do not enjoy such a monopoly, they enter a competitive market, in which they have to "share the pie" with consultants and lawyers. This raises quality expectations by companies; but it also makes it possible for employers' organizations to imitate competitors and ask for payment for the service. A competitive advantage will then be gained by offering the service at a lower price, which is what employers' organizations usually do. Another option is to set a flat rate, thereby having an advantage over competitors, who usually charge their clients on an hourly (or daily) basis. The South African Steel and Engineering Industries Federation (SEIFSA) does this.

The case of Kenya is special. The new labour code has a provision compelling employers' organizations to pay a certain amount when they go before the Industrial Court. With this reform, the Federation of Kenya Employers has started charging member companies for representing them at the Industrial Court.

Table 9. Overview of rates for representation services

Organization	Rate for representation in court	Rate for arbitration / conciliation / mediation
Almega AB (Sweden)	Covered by membership subscription	
IBEC (Ireland)	Covered by membership subscription	
SEIFSA (South Africa)	—	USD 1,000/arbitration case (flat rate)
MEF (Malaysia)	USD 130/session (industrial court) USD 52/session (labour court) + minimum charge	USD 195/session for conciliation
EFC (Sri Lanka)	USD 45/day (Colombo) + transport (outstations)	—
FKE (Kenya)	Min = USD 610 Max = USD 6,000	No charge

Source: interviews

Staff involved include lawyers and industrial relations experts. The choice among using its own staff, resorting to an external network of consultants, or even building a partnership with a law firm, is up to the management of the employers' organization. Trust is all the more important if it resorts to outsiders, due to the need for confidentiality. For example, the Employers' Federation of Ceylon (EFC) has attorneys handling cases of dispute and negotiation, employed by the organization. It also has attorneys on retainers in the regions ('EFC representatives') who work under EFC guidance for fees agreed to with the EFC. The Steel and Engineering Industries Federation of South Africa works with a network of consultants ("alliance partners") in different regions.

Main strengths and added value

Several factors make representation services in dispute settlement attractive to member companies.

1. Expertise and knowledge of staff

In various cases, the expertise of an employer's organization's staff constitutes the advantage over competitors. Knowledge of member companies and clients, and of the mechanisms and institutions of industrial disputes, makes the difference between an industrial relations legal expert employed by an employers' organization and an outside lawyer. Experience and expertise, coupled with positive results, will build up the reputation of the organization.

2. Cost

What may significantly attract companies to ask for the assistance of an employers' organization is the low cost. Except where the service is already included in the membership fee, employers' organizations generally offer the service for a subsidised fee (see table No. 9) which compares favourably with the price asked by lawyers. In some cases, flat rates are a further advantage for companies, which know from the start exactly how much the entire procedure will cost them.

3. Proximity (geographical and human)

The major part of big companies' management is usually located in big cities or the capital itself, thus concentrating the legal apparatus there. Employers' organizations which have sub-structures at regional or local level are more likely to respond to demand from smaller companies in the rest of the country. This allows them to have a diversified market. Moreover, an employers' organization that already knows its member companies adds quality to the preparation of cases, in addition to accelerating it.

The Malaysia Employers Federation, the Federation of Kenya Employers, Sweden's Almega and the Irish Business Employers Confederation have regional and local offices spread across the country so they can offer representation services there.

Challenges

Here we look at what employers' organizations deem the most challenging issues. They are mostly staff issues, but also the risk of conflict between members' demands and the organization's interests and mandate.

1. Staff retention and staff availability

Many employers' organizations are affected by their staff leaving because competing law firms offer them higher salaries. Quality management, good salary policies, and good reputation are all factors that can persuade staff to stay.

2. Managing conflicting interests

Representing - and defending - a member company whose behaviour does not comply with legal standards and principles may not always serve the interests of the employers' organization. Some organizations, such as Almega in Sweden, have adopted a set of principles upon which to decide whether to represent a member in court. This prevents the organization from acting against its own values and undermining its reputation. If the EO refuses to represent a member company, it will refer the company to a law firm.



Summary on representation in dispute settlement

	REPRESENTATION
SCOPE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Company-specific
TOPICS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Collective disputes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Individual disputes
DELIVERY MODE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> On-site (court, arbitration bodies, company in cases of mediation)
PRICE POLICY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Depends on the EO = paying service or subscription-based service
ACCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mostly members-only
STAFF RESOURCES NEEDED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Legal experts <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IR experts
KEY STRENGTHS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Legal framework <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Expertise and knowledge of staff <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Full service provision <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Proximity
KEY CHALLENGES	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Staff retention <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Availability <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Conflict of interest

Section Seven

Training

Training is a popular service that many employers' organizations provide. There are usually two formats: general or public training, and tailor-made company training.

Offering training to members (and non-members) is considered a "good service for starters", in particular for employers' organizations who wish to generate fresh money from a service to add to yearly membership fees. Quite simple to organize, and easy to run, it is an activity which offers high potential, if managed and monitored well.

A new trend within employers' organizations that already offer a training service is to offer accredited programmes. Another is for employers' organizations to seek partnerships – with other institutions, universities, etc. – to add value to their training programmes, improve their promotion and broaden audiences and profits.

What type of training?

One way to look at training is to distinguish between public and company-specific training. In terms of content, however, the distinction between "knowledge training" and "behavioural skills training" is smaller. Another factor is length. Many last just two or three days, whereas those offering some kind of certification usually need to be longer.

1. Knowledge training

Here we refer to training whereby knowledge is transferred to member or non-member companies. Generally short, this type of training is extremely widespread among all employers' organizations. The most frequent subjects concern core EO business.

■ Content of new agreements

Sectoral organizations often offer this type of training. This is the case with Almega – Sweden (service sector), or SEIFSA (South Africa, Metal sector), which offers a course on 'The 2010/2011 Main Agreement [of the metal industry]: Explaining the contents and amendments'.

■ Content of new legislation

The new Fair Work Act in Australia, which came into force in January 2009, has led employers' organizations such as the NT Chamber, CCIWA, to develop training courses on it. The NT Chamber has also offered "transitioning courses"²⁴. In Ecuador, the Federación Nacional Camaras de Industrias has also provided training in new labour legislation.

■ Employment fundamentals

These comprise applicable legislation in the workplace, updates to legislation, terms and conditions of employment, workplace agreements, policies in the workplace, dismissals,

²⁴The Fair Work Act is a dramatic change for industrial relations in Australia: from State-level regulation to federal-level regulation.

termination of employment, social affairs developments, occupational safety and health, and context-specific issues.

Context-specific training courses are offered to the public or to members. The Employers Federation of Ceylon, for example, has run courses on 'handling crisis situations' and on 'natural disaster reaction' (as in New Zealand), whereas the Employers Association of Trinidad and Tobago offers a course on HIV/AIDS at the workplace.

2. Behavioural skills training

This type of training is also widespread among employers' organizations. Mostly longer, it deals with industrial relations and HR skills. However, there can be strong differences in themes and approaches. Topics include:

- staff retention
- negotiation with trade unions
- change management
- mediation and conflict resolution
- managing absenteeism at the workplace
- managing restructuring.

These are all public training courses. Of course, when a member company asks for training, it will be tailored to the individual company's requirements.

3. Certified and accredited training programmes

Some organizations also offer longer courses on industrial relations, labour law and related issues, which lead to a diploma or a certificate. For example, the Irish Business Employers Confederation is currently setting up two Master's courses on human resources management.

A new trend is to develop accredited programmes in conjunction with other training institutes or universities. By accreditation, we mean "the instrument by which one institution, without its own degree awarding powers or which chooses not to use its awarding powers, gains wide authority to award, and/or gains recognition of its qualifications from another competent authority, and to exercise powers and responsibility for academic provision. This authority might be the State, a government agency, or another domestic or foreign higher education institution".²⁵

The Malaysia Employers Federation Academy courses on industrial relations and human resource management are accredited by the Malaysian Human Resources Development Fund.

The Bolivian employers' organization runs a postgraduate course, in conjunction with a university, on corporate social responsibility.

²⁵ Vlasceanu, L., Grunberg, L., Parlea, D., *Quality Assurance and Accreditation: a Glossary of Basic Terms and Definitions*, UNESCO, 2004, p. 19

How is training delivered?

Training can take different forms: courses, workshops, seminars or longer programmes for certification. Most courses respect time constraints, both in terms of length (from half a day for knowledge to 5 days for skills) and in terms of time of day (for example, ECATT's and Almega's breakfast meetings).

The Korea Employers' Federation (KEF) also runs big training events such as the 'Annual Top Management Forum'.

The number of training courses per year varies with the capacity of the organization. This can be expanded by using a subsidiary to provide services. The Employers Association of Trinidad and Tobago (ECATT) uses the Employers Solutions Centre, and the Malaysia Employers' Federation (MEF) uses the MEF Academy, a subsidiary company of the MEF devoted to training.

Table 10. Overview of training courses in industrial relations and human resource management - per year

Employers' organization	Number of IR/HR training courses (per year)	Number of participants (per year)	Accredited courses	Training income / EO total income (%)
SEIFSA (South Africa)	336	3,000 – 4,000	Currently awaiting accreditation	9%
ANDI (Colombia)	40 (at least)	700	Most courses accredited, with diploma or certificate	0.5%
MEF (Malaysia)	22 public courses, 55 in-house courses (2009)	6,000	100 (accredited by the HR Development Fund)	16.3%
KEF (Korea)	160 training courses + 10 forums	—	—	—
EFC (Sri Lanka)	52	835 (in-house courses) + special and company-based programmes	None yet	7%
ECATT (Trinidad and Tobago)	20 national 40 in-house 1 Academy of Industrial Relations		IR Academy – certified	48%* * Includes training and consultancy services
Almega (Sweden)	150	2,100	None	10%
FKE (Kenya)	34	680	None	15%

Source: Interviews

A course may target a wide audience or only specific member companies. Several employers' organizations not only train employers' representatives in social dialogue, but also trade union or worker representatives, underlining the spirit of social partnership and social dialogue (Almega – Sweden, for example).

Courses mostly take place on employer's organization premises, including local offices, or at other sites or hotels close to industrial zones concerned. Where training is held for specific companies – meaning that the 'client' has a sufficient number of participants – it usually takes place at the company itself. Some organizations are starting to offer online training.

Staff and pricing policy

The capacity of an employers' organization to offer training varies. Some have established training departments, whereas others hire trainers to run courses.

When trainers are staff members themselves (for reasons of expertise and availability), they have to be qualified trainers. The Northern Territory Chamber of Australia actively develops training skills among all members of its *Workplace Relations Unit*. Staff members have extensive, practical, hands-on experience and are required to undertake professional development each year to ensure they keep up to date with the latest teaching practices and subject content.

Sometimes, high-level officials recruited through the network of the organization are called in to run training sessions and thereby demonstrate the organization's influence and inside connections.

Other organizations outsource all training to training companies, raising the issue of trust in consultants.

Almost all employers' organizations charge participants a fee for training, yet most organizations still consider training one of the benefits of membership, and therefore offer it free or at a low price (to cover costs), thereby attracting members. The Confederation of Employers of Bolivia, for instance, runs free basic courses, but charges for higher-profile courses. Most courses are open to non-members, and organizations charge members between 10 and 20 per cent less.

Main strengths and added value

1. Tutors with relevant experience

The expertise and the knowledge of EO staff members are assets for training in industrial relations. Trainers, who are often industrial relations specialists, focus on practice more than theory. They share their experience and their networking skills. Furthermore, they are able to contextualize the information. Trainers involved in collective bargaining can also link their role of negotiator to their role of trainer, and can transmit inside information easily. As regards human resource management, expertise is not specific to staff members of an employers' organization, and major competition exists. For example, the NT Chamber does not offer training in specific HR issues, mainly because there are specialized training institutes (such as the Australian Institute of HR) with which the organization does not want to compete.

2. Protected market

Launching a training service is often a good way to start offering services for payment. Any employers' organization has a 'protected market', i.e. its membership, which gives it a

certain advantage over training institutes and facilitates the identification of training needs and the design of content and programmes.

3. Brand and trust

Employers' organizations have earned trust from their clients, thanks to effort and quality.

4. Flexibility

Provided employers' organizations keep their training service in-house, they can adapt the training content. This flexibility can be applied to prices, too, if necessary.

Challenges

1. Political role v. compliance

What should an employers' organization do if new labour legislation it has fought against for months is finally passed: train its own members to comply with the law or not train them, to make its point better? While continuing to raise the issue, employers need to understand the law, so training is required. Once legislation is in place, it becomes an issue of compliance. Unless the EO advocates breaking the law, it can provide training while lobbying for its revision.

2. Contact with members

Another challenge is to avoid losing contact with members if a training service becomes highly developed or institutionalized. The broader the audience, the more difficult it is to stay in line with member companies' demand for training. A balance must therefore be struck between generic courses and company-focused ones. This underscores the importance of regular needs analysis.



Summary on Training services

	TRAINING
SCOPE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Broad audience <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Company-specific
TOPICS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Knowledge training = collective agreements, new legislation, etc. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Skills training = negotiation techniques, restructuring, etc.
DELIVERY MODE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public training courses (EO premises or other) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In-house training (in companies)
PRICE POLICY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mostly paying services <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In some cases, teaser principle
ACCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Member companies <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Non-member companies <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Students
STAFF RESOURCES NEEDED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Trainers – in-house and/or external <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Premises
KEY STRENGTHS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Access to faculty <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Protected market <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Certification
KEY CHALLENGES	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Profit v. political role <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Member-responsiveness

Section Eight

Networking

Another type of service offered by employers' organizations, one which remains underused, is networking.

Networking is the process by which an individual meets and interacts with other individuals who have similar interests, to build relationships that can produce benefits. This happens through personal and, most often, informal contact; hence the use of social events for networking. They create an environment that encourages informal interaction, contacts and discussion.

Employers' organizations can facilitate interaction among members or with non-members. Their members, indeed, are themselves a network. The vast expertise of EO members makes networking on employment-related subjects a potential high-quality service.

Member-to-member contact usually takes place at the meetings organized by the employers' organization, and through the advertising space it affords. Networking activities can be organized by sector of activity, but they can also be regional or cross-sectoral. They are sometimes open to non-members, with a view to attracting newcomers to the employers' organization.

What type of activities?

Most employers' organizations offer their members the chance to meet each other at regular or specific events – forums, informal breakfasts, award ceremonies, etc. – to address common employment issues and discuss emerging issues relevant to them. These events differ both from meetings, which are collective, and from training, because the sharing of experience and good practice does not necessarily reach all participants. At such events, the employers' organization does not intervene, but only facilitates the process of exchange and contact.

Networking can assume a more concrete aspect: simply putting two or more companies, especially small or medium-sized ones, in touch. Another service we classify as networking relates to recruitment systems.

1. HR forums

Most of the forums and networking activities are for HR managers and executives. The Korea Employers Federation organizes an HR forum twice a year; it brings together all HR managers from different sectors. The Malaysia Employers Federation plans a weekly sectoral gathering for HR managers.

The topics at such events are usually:

■ Industrial relations

During its HR executive gatherings, the Swedish sectoral organization Almega always provides participants with a short introduction to collective agreements, tailored to the sector. Emerging industrial relations issues might also be discussed, as happens at the Retail Council Forum of the Irish Business Employers' Confederation, whose last meeting dealt with the *Towards 2016 Transitional Agreement* in the retail sector.

The Malaysia Employers Federation organizes industrial relations forums, which allow non-member companies to be briefed on industrial relations.

■ Labour law

Forums are also an opportunity to learn about and discuss emerging issues in employment legislation. The national meeting organized by the Colombian employers' organization, ANDI, is an opportunity for labour lawyers to meet and exchange ideas. The CONFIEP in Peru brings HRD managers and labour law lawyers and other specialists together twice a year to talk about regional law.

■ Human resource management issues

Forums make it possible to look at employment-relations practice in a given sector. At these gatherings, topics such as codes of practice to prevent bullying and harassment, or staff training and development, or policies on the use of a company's electronic systems are discussed, and good (and bad) practices are shared.

2. Job placement / internship systems

In some cases, the employers' organization can facilitate the recruitment of trainees by companies. For example, at the request of its members, the Chamber of Commerce and Industries of Ecuador has set up a system that allows students to register online for internships in member companies.

How is the service provided?

HR forums or meetings can take various forms. They can be short, such as the breakfast meetings held by the Malaysia Employers' Organization, or by Almega – Sweden, or they can last 2 or 3 days, especially when the event is national, such as in Bolivia or in Korea.

Their regularity may also vary. At the Irish Business Employers' Confederation, the Retail Council Forum meets quarterly, whereas the Petroleum Industry HR Forum only meets twice a year. This does not prevent the organization from organizing extraordinary events.

Networking forums are usually open to non-members, as a way to attract new members.

Staff and pricing policy

The extent to which networks' activities can be coordinated will depend on their complexity and size. The Irish Business Employers' Confederation has a specific coordinator for each of its fifteen HR networks.

Networking events usually have an exclusive character – and have to keep this exclusive character to be attractive. Some EOs make their members pay to participate, while other do not.

Competitive strengths and added value

1. Quality of organization and participation

What makes such events well attended? Quality of speakers, but also quality of organization, which affects confidence and information-sharing among those taking part.

2. Exclusiveness

Networking has an air of exclusiveness. One thing that attracts people – and potentially new members – is the feeling of being part of a club. Because they have a naturally strong network, employers' organizations can get top-quality people to participate and thus reinforce the exclusive feeling of the events they hold.

Challenges

1. Proximity

Network facilitation is all the more important for companies which are smaller and far from centres of activity; hence the importance of holding local events, too.

2. Use of online forums

Some employers' organizations already participate in social networks. These may provide online forums, where people can discuss issues and make contacts. However, venturing into online forums raises issues of confidentiality, quality and control of access.



Summary on networking services

	NETWORKING
SCOPE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> All businesses
TOPICS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Labour law <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Industrial relations <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HR issues
MODE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Forums <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Meetings
PRICE POLICY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Usually paying
ACCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Access to members <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Open to other practitioners
STAFF AND RESOURCES NEEDED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Trainers: in-house or external <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Premises
KEY STRENGTHS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Quality <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Exclusiveness
KEY CHALLENGES	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Online forums <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Proximity

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Section Ten

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