

Marketing Unions to Young People: Recruiting and ‘rusting on’

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In light of declining trade union density, specifically amongst young workers, this paper explores how trade unions are servicing and organising young people. Our specific focus is the way in which trade unions market their services to the young. We use, as a lens of analysis, the services marketing literature and the concept of an ‘experience good’ to explore trade union strategies. Based on interviews with a number of Queensland union officials, it is clear unions see the issue of recruitment of young people as significant, and that resources are being targeted on the development of innovative strategies at least in some unions.

Introduction

Is the issue of young people and union strategy an important one? If so, how should unions pursue the recruitment and retention of young workers? This paper is intended to contribute to the current literature on young people and unions using a different perspective to past research, which has mostly focused on quantitative studies of young people’s propensity to unionise, and underlying factors endogenous to young people themselves, such as attitudes to unions. The paper is tentative and exploratory in nature. We begin by defining ‘young workers’, then briefly examine the state of union density amongst young workers, and follow this with the description of a tentative framework for analysis derived from the services marketing literature. After outlining our methodology, we use the union interview data to explore some of the issues associated with marketing an intangible service – an ‘experience good’ – to young people. We argue that there are a range of ways in which the marketing literature can be used to offer insights into current union strategy regarding young people in much the same way as the sociology literature has offered insights into unions’ transition to an ‘organising model’. At the same time, we acknowledge two important facts: (1) the more theoretical point that there are a range of caveats regarding the use of the marketing literature and its applicability to the topic; and (2) the practical reality that young people have very limited awareness of the union movement and therefore that mechanisms outside the control of unions themselves also need to be employed to increase young people’s awareness of the role of trade unions in society.

Definition of Young Worker

‘Young worker’ can be defined in various ways. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) uses the age group 0-14 years for children and 15-24 years for youth (ABS 2007). The *Workplace Relations Act 1996 (C’th)* does not define ‘youth’ but permits people under 21 years to be paid ‘youth rates’. Our overall research is focused on *very* young workers, who are still at school, but working; in Queensland, young people leave school at age 17. However, as few unions currently have sizeable youth memberships under that age, with the exception of the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association, our focus includes unions with members under 25.

The young worker group is very heterogeneous, ranging from those in trade, clerical, professional and semi-professional jobs full-time, to very young school students (some under 14) engaged in part-time casual jobs. Three quarters of students will have performed paid work in the formal sector for some period before finishing high school (Smith and Wilson 2002, 122). OECD figures show that Australia has the second highest proportion of 15-19 year olds both working and studying – 36.5% – as compared to an OECD average of 16.5% (OECD 2006). There are two important points here that are relevant for our study. Firstly, ‘young worker’ is not a homogeneous category and should not be treated as such. Secondly,

more young Australians experience the labour market than in the past, at an increasingly younger age than previous post-war generations, and as compared with other countries. Both these facts have significant implications for unions.

Youth/Adult Union Density Differentials

There is a significant difference between adult and youth union density worldwide. In the Anglophone countries, youth are half as likely as adults to be union members in the UK and Australia, and one third as likely in the US and Canada (Bryson, 2005; ABS 6310.0; see Table 1).

Table 1: Union Density in Canada, US, UK and Australia by Age, 2000*

	Canada	US	UK	Australia
All employees	30.4	13.5	33.0	24.7
Adults (25+)	35.5	15.9	37.0	27.3
Youth (16-24)	12.6	5.0	19.0	14.7
Adult-Youth Gap	22.9	10.9	18.0	12.6

(Source: Bryson et al 2002, ABS 6310.0 [Australia]) *Canadian, US and Australian figures 2000, UK 1998

Union density for youth has been falling more rapidly than for adults in Australia. Union density for adults halved in the 15 year period from 1992-2007, but that for youth fell even more steeply, from 28.3 per cent in 1992 to 10.0 per cent in 2007 (ABS 6310.0).

There has been extensive debate in the academic literature around whether these differences are endogenous or exogenous to young people themselves. Bryson, Gomez, Gunderson and Meltz (2005) found that in Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom, *potential* levels of union density are very similar, that is about 50%, for both young people and adults. Supply-side constraints, such as lack of information and union organising and anti-union employers, account for 100% of the differential in Canada, 94% in the UK and 55% in the US (Bryson et al 2005, 164). In Australia, there appear to be similar potential unionisation levels – around 50% – for all age groups (Bearfield 2003). Indeed, significantly *lower* numbers of 18-24 year olds than older workers agree with statements that ‘Australia would be better off without unions’ and ‘unions in Australia don’t look after their members’ (Bearfield 2003, 6). New Zealand research provides further support for these points (Haynes et al., 2005). It seems, then, that workers ‘have broadly similar preferences for unionisation across age groups and borders’ (Bryson et al. 2005, 166) and that there is no markedly anti-union sentiment amongst young Australians that provides a barrier to unionisation; in fact, quite the reverse.

There are a range of competing and overlapping explanations for young people’s lower propensity to unionise. These explanations include: generational factors (Gen X, Gen Y etc) (Huntley 2006); social custom theory (Visser 2002); Klanderman’s (1985) interactionist approach; institutional factors, such as anti-union legislation; and structural factors, such as the nature of jobs available and employer strategies. The aim of the paper, however, is not to explain lower levels of trade union density amongst the young, but rather, to use the services marketing literature as a theoretical lens to explore why young people may not be ‘union consumers’ to the extent that their propensity to unionise suggests.

The Services Marketing Literature

Gomez, Gunderson and Meltz (2004) suggest that one explanation for the youth/adult union density differential is that union membership is an 'experience good'. An 'experience good' is a concept taken from consumer theory (Nelson 1970) and adopted by the services marketing literature. This literature tells us that services need to be marketed differently from marketing consumer goods. Services are *physically* intangible; hence it is difficult to inspect them and compare for value before they are purchased (Palmer 1994); some form of 'sampling' is the main way of obtaining information. They are often *mentally* intangible as well, meaning that potential consumers perceive high levels of risk associated with purchase, and consequently place significant importance on personal contacts for service product information – termed 'social custom theory'. Services are relatively 'durable' goods, often with substantial switching costs after they have been purchased (Klemperer 1995, cited in Gomez et al 2004, 240), in contrast to more ephemeral goods such as a cheap consumer product. The production and consumption of a service are inseparable and the consumer often consumes the service as it is produced. The quality of service delivery can also be highly variable and resistant to standardisation, as it depends on the quality of the interaction between the person delivering the service, and the level of comprehension and cooperation of the customer receiving it.

These concepts can be applied to the 'union service'. Unions offer a mix of both tangible and intangible services. Some benefits such as a professional union offering indemnity insurance, or the retail discounts available through the 'Union Shopper', are obvious and tangible. Significant wage premia for union members reduces the intangibility – and the risk – associated with membership. It is difficult to ascertain whether there is a wage premium for union membership in Australia at present, as the Australian Bureau of Statistics does not differentiate between union and non-union collective agreements (Peetz 2007). With the growth of collective bargaining and the relative decline of awards, it is intuitively obvious, however, that actively bargaining unions increase wages and that in unionised workplaces, at least, the benefits of unionism are demonstrated every three years (although not in non-unionised workplaces). Many significant benefits of union membership are however intangible and hard to identify. Being assisted to receive procedural justice is one such benefit (Fernie and Gray 2002), but only experience in the workforce will teach the worker that they are not 'bullet proof' and invincible. Significantly, Bearfield's young workers, despite their sympathetic stance regarding unions, were much less likely than older workers to say that management had more power than unions (Bearfield 2003, 6). Further, many issues won by union action have been institutionalised in legislation and minimum conditions standards – health and safety legislation, reduced hours, increasing duration and kinds of leave – that the struggles of unions and their members have largely been erased from communal memory. By reason of their youth, young workers often have not had the time or exposure to the workplace to develop a sense of the risks involved and thus appreciate the intangible benefits of unionism, and are less aware than older workers of specific instances of union 'wins' being institutionalised.

Another key aspect of experience goods is that 'sampling' assists in winning over customers, as it allows the intangible to become tangible. One method of 'sampling' is for young workers to become members of trade unions in student jobs, on the basis that they will later be more likely to join a union in their career job. However, it is clear from density figures that few young people do join unions at the moment. Another method of 'sampling' is for unions to offer some kind of service for a small fee. Unions are, however, reluctant to allow workers to sample what they have to offer before 'purchasing' – becoming members – or to allow members to join and receive service for a pre-existing issue (Fry 2007).

Union services are 'durable' in that they have a long shelf life (as opposed to a product like bottled water) (Gomez 2004, 240). They have higher than average 'brand loyalty' and 'post-

purchase' levels of satisfaction; not quite 'once a union member, always a union member', but a unionised person is much more likely to become a union member in a new workplace compared to a previously non-unionised person (Gomez et al. 2004, 241). This has implications for unions in terms of following up members who change jobs and industries.

Due to the absence of easily observable product attributes, the benefits of union goods are more likely to be disseminated by family, peer and other informal networks and by personal recommendations as opposed to advertising. This is the 'social custom' effect. Union membership of one's parents has been found to have a positive effect in some studies, although results are mixed (Visser 2002; Schnabel and Wagner 2003; Blanden and Machin, 2003; Gomez, Gunderson and Meltz, 2002).

The issue of production and consumption being inseparable for many service goods is also applicable to unions. Unions can experience service delivery problems as services cannot be stored for delivery on a quieter day, or when the official is in the office. However, brochures, the internet and union call centres may play an important role in reducing the perishability of information. Union activity is not of course solely (or even mainly) about service delivery narrowly defined but rather as a complex, dynamic relationship in which members, officers and officials collaborate, share information, socialise, integrate and link activities (Johnson and Selnes 2004, 2).

Unions are encountering a widening number of substitute service providers. While union coverage clauses and demarcations reduce the immediate substitutability of one union for another, a range of no- or low-cost 'work advice' substitutes have been established and funded by the state. In Queensland, these substitutes include the Young Workers' Advisory Service, the Queensland Working Women's Service, the Queensland government's Wageline service, the Health and Safety Infoline and the Workplace Rights Ombudsman role. This last organisation was set up as part of the Queensland ALP government's political strategy to attempt to raise awareness of the effects of WorkChoices. Federally, there is the Workplace Ombudsman. The proposed Fair Work Australia (FWA), with its broad remit of advice and support for workers and its location in shopping centres, may act as a substitute for union membership. All these services are free, and in the case of FWA, will be more highly visible and accessible than state services have been in the past. With an increasing number of such substitutes for at least some of the services provided by unions, there will be further reasons for the consumer to evaluate the benefits versus the costs of the various alternatives (Johnson and Selnes 2004, 2).

The limitations of the services marketing literature for this topic need to be acknowledged. A 'marketing focus' artificially narrows union agendas, as any assessment of unions indicates that their members should be much more than mere armchair consumers of their services. Much marketing literature is highly prescriptive (Scammell 1999, 736). The particular role of unions in creating vibrant, democratic societies is not reducible to seeing their services as 'products'. There is also the problem of defining the 'union product'; what is being marketed encompasses interlinked 'services', both tangible and intangible, as well as the development of highly complex relationships. Finally, there is limited research on how unions themselves engage with marketing theory. It may be that union (like political) campaigning knowledge is based on 'experience, observation and the elite actors' preferred explanations of results' (Scammell 1998). However, provided that adoption of a marketing lens does not prescribe a 'consumer trade unionism' model of democracy (see Morris and Fosh 2000), it can be one of a range of theoretical tools used to explore the problems of declining union density and power and the ways in which unions can exert agency to arrest this decline. All of these factors lead

to our research question: How can unions better target their recruitment strategies to appeal to young workers?

Methodology

This research is nested within a larger study exploring secondary school students and their workplace citizenship, which uses surveys and focus groups of Years 9 and 11 students in schools across urban and regional Queensland. We found a high proportion of young people did not know what a union was – so much so, that we ended up explaining what a union was so that students could answer a survey question about whether they belonged to one, or not. Another aspect of the research was investigating trade union strategies regarding young workers. To date, we have conducted semi-structured interviews with 13 trade union officers and officials in seven unions with young members. The unions are listed in the next section. Interviews will take place in another six unions, plus peak councils. These interviews, most of which are an hour or more in duration, are conducted in the offices of the respective unions, digitally recorded and transcribed. Where possible, we interview union officials who were themselves ‘young’; that is early thirties and younger; one assistant secretary who is older was interviewed. In some cases, two or three individuals from the same union have been interviewed, in order to capture a range of perspectives and experiences.

Findings and Analysis

The interviewees were generally constructively critical of the approach taken by their employing union towards recruiting young people as members and educating them about the role of unions more generally. None denied that it was an important issue. Resources devoted to the issue varied widely, however. Various themes that emerged from the interview transcripts will be now tied back to the issues raised by the services marketing literature. The themes that have emerged during a preliminary pass at the data are the issues of price (fees), promotion (firstly union media and technology, and secondly the issue of special strategies, structures and campaigns for young people), and product (particularly the issue of provision of ancillary services).

Of the unions interviewed to date, only the SDA has a significant number of young workers (around 50% of its membership are under 25). The Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union (LHMU) and the Builders Labourers Federation (BLF) reported some young membership. The unions covering professional, white collar employees (for the most part, university graduates) all report smallish, but not negligible, numbers of under-25 members; these are the Queensland Independent Education Union (QIEU), the Association of Professional Engineers, Scientists and Managers of Australia (APESMA), the Queensland Nurses Union (QNU) and the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA).

Price: Membership fees

Differential pricing is a strategy used to market variations of a product to various target markets within the range of potential consumers. Unions have long operated differential pricing strategies for workers performing different level jobs and on different wages. Some union strategies are specifically-youth focussed. APESMA offers an option whereby undergraduates can contribute \$5 a month, and get access to resume and contract reviews (Interviewee 1). Students not currently working in the industry are unlikely to need a full range of union services and by offering the relevant services only, the ‘value’ associated with the union service product is enhanced and the union captures contact details of a potential life-long recruit. The QIEU and Queensland Teachers Union (QTU) also offer free associate membership, targeting recruitment at universities during students’ final year of study. This then provides the unions with a database of potential recruits. The LHMU have a similar

strategy for childcare workers, with TAFE certificate students being recruited while studying, but the union does not yet systematically follow up associate members to ask them to join the union (Interviewee 3a). The MEAA provide free membership to students, recruiting mainly via university theatre courses and providing a Graduates Day and inviting young members to its 'Equity Foundation' seminars on job-related issues (Interviewee 4a), as do the QNU (Interviewee 5b). The QNU extensively follow up non-financial once-members with a dedicated casual position focused on telephoning such people, and this retains (or recaptures) many former student members. All interviewees reported good relationships with university staff regarding access to near-graduates.

Pricing strategies are thus being used, particularly by white collar unions with a captive audience in universities, to enable potential members to 'sample' the benefits of union membership, and thus partly overcome the problem of the 'experience good' nature of union membership. Unions which offer low student membership rates ration their services, but also clearly target those services that young near-graduates find most attractive: information about the profession and about 'first job' issues.

Promotion: Technology and media

The use of various forms of technology, especially the internet, enables unions to reduce the intangibility of the union service, both physically by delivering a physical, albeit virtual, presence, and mentally by educating and informing the potential customer about the nature of the service to be delivered. At the same time, the provision of information on a website allows for the 'sampling' of the union's service, and reduces problems of service delivery due to the inseparability of union information from a physical person at the union, either face-to-face, or over the phone.

The failure by unions to adapt to the technological expectations of the young was noted by numerous interviewees. An official from APESMA noted:

I still don't think [unions] have got it. I still don't think that the union movement is running in the same circles as Generation Y. I don't think that they take advantage of the technology as much as they should (Interviewee 1).

APESMA's interactive online Contract Builder is an impressive service to young graduates and near-graduates. The service is integrated with the union's organising philosophy; the interviewee would advise student (and other) members:

We've got this part of our website. You should go in, do your research first, then we can have a conversation with you'. It's about empowering somebody to help themselves, and then giving the follow-up assistance. When someone can actually start researching [for] themselves, they're more likely to be satisfied (Interviewee 1).

In the case of the MEAA, a chat room as part of the website is being used to organise film crew members (not all of whom are necessarily young, but some are), many of whom are dispersed and had developed a lack of trust in the union (Interviewee 4a). The BLF regularly text-messages its members on campaigning issues; for instance, to get members to a CBD rally regarding enterprise bargaining (Interviewee 8). We found considerable evidence of organisers, particularly young organisers, engaging with technology and lobbying internally for better use of technology. For two young officers asked about their union's website, the question provoked laughter and exchange of glances between the two interviewees, as well as this comment:

The website has been the bane of my existence for a number of years now, and we're in the process of re-building it. We haven't been dedicating the resources [to it].....

Younger members are going to turn to the internet before they're going to make a phone call (Interviewee 6a).

Another young officer said:

At the moment it's just log in for the information. There's nothing that's visually attractive about it. I log into it every day and I have to consciously read through it. Nothing ever jumps out at me because it always looks the same (Interviewee 4a).

Another concurred that their union's website was 'good informationally but 'presentation-wise it is pretty bad; most of it's been built upon over the years, so it really needs to be completely unwound and put back together again' (Interviewee 5a). Our interviewees felt there was a need for 'write capable' websites where members can engage with each other and with union officials:

You can read information, and you respond. Being an activist union and the kind of stuff we do, that's what we want. We want people responding and participating. We need to know what people think, not just be able to tell them what we think. And there's a lot of ways to do that. I know we've been using the email more. We've been using the internet more. [...] For a lot of people these days, and it's surprising me the number of old people to whom this applies, if it's not on Google, it doesn't exist (Interviewee 3b).

Part of the problem of unions engaging with young people is the lack of technological skills amongst union employees and basic resource constraints, such as limited access to computers:

In our office, we have one computer between four people. So, just as ourselves, we don't have the resources, or the importance isn't placed on those types of resources to get communication out there (Interviewee 3b).

The visual design of websites came under criticism. One older official spoke about having a photo taken for a scrolling banner on the website for a 'funky' child care campaign; she had created a draft of the design and sent it off to a graphic artist for development:

What he came back with was amazing. It was bright. The photos that he took, one was of a child care worker. [She] had purple hair and it was really like nothing I would choose, but I looked at it and went 'Wow!' (Interviewee 3a).

Even where there was material on the union's website, most interviewees felt that there was a need for:

[L]ots of really good visual things. Lots of updated information about what we're doing – where we're focusing on young people. I would like to see a specific section in the website for young people. We have a section on youth, but it's really terrible (Interviewee 6a).

There were no success stories on this union's website, nor attractive images of members.

Members-only sections of websites protect the union against free-riders, but do not allow young people – most likely of all age groups to use the web – to 'sample' or 'experience', albeit in a limited way, the union service before they buy, thereby reducing the risk associated with purchase. The website of the Union of Shop Distributive and Allied Workers Union (USDAW) in the UK has an 'ask Jan' link, which the union officials were initially sceptical about. The section provides 'short' and 'long' answers to a range of basic questions facing workers – the type of questions that members contact the union about daily. For young people, their lack of knowledge about trade unions and the intangibility of union membership benefits make trade union membership a risky purchase. But they are assiduous electronic networkers, using mobile phones, text messaging, DS devices, surfing the web and

extensively using social networking sites. Younger workers are particularly willing to access union websites or chat rooms (Dalling 2000, cited in Fiorito, Jarley & Delaney 2002, 630) and this was a suggestion made by a number of our interviewees (Interviewees 4a and 4b; Interviewees 3b and 3c). Cockfield's (2006) analysis of Australian union websites supports studies in other countries that have found that unions engage with the internet, but do not have clear ideas about what their goals and objectives are (Pizzigati et al 2002; Shostak 2002). However, union officials are enthusiastic about the future use of technology, particularly in organising (Fiorito & Royle 2005). Our interviewees also support these views, saying that unions needed to move with the times, and provide a limited number of innovative strategies. In all, however, young unionists are highly dissatisfied with their union's uses of technology.

Promotion: Targeting the youth market

Younger interviewees often mentioned that the way the union message was delivered had limited appeal to young people:

The media profile of unions – the kind of messages we put out there, the working families message that's come out of the Your Rights at Work campaign – I think that puts young people off. [...] And the only union people you see in the media are – I'll use the term 'older' – but a teenager would say, 'old white fat man'. It's not an image they would want to be associated with (Interviewee 3b).

Another young organiser expressed similar views:

Even just things like Labour Day. This is the workers' day. [But] what the unions seem to put out as a message about what a fun time is for unionists and for workers, is soooo *not* something that young people would find thrilling. Yeah, sure, I'll go and put on some daggy shirt with a daggy slogan and chant these really pathetic chants from the city to the RNA showgrounds and then listen to some really, really bad music. [...] It seems like the unions are the embarrassing, ageing hippy parents and the young people don't want to go and listen to some old man with a long beard strumming a guitar sounding like Bob Dylan (even though I do like Bob Dylan!) (Interviewee 7).

These are 'insider' views of unions, from those working for them, noting that the survey results cited earlier suggest that young people generally have a more positive attitude towards unions.

The issue of the age of organisers, and their capacity to relate to their target market was also raised in a number of interviews. A young LHMU organiser commented:

I feel like we need to have a youth team, or somehow people that are directly engaged with the youth and what's going on and talk to the other teams and give them tips and pointers on how we can actually talk to these people. Some people disagree with me on this issue black and blue [but I believe that] you cannot talk to an 18-year-old in the same way as someone who's been in the workforce for 20 years. You just can't do it (Interviewee 3c).

A relevant UK study explores the national recruitment of young graduates at Telecom by the Science Technology and Engineering Union (STE) (Heery, Simms, Simpson, Delbridge & Salmon 1999). This study recommends, amongst a range of strategies, 'like with like' recruiting, by a single 'young' organiser, and formation of an informal graduate network outside the union's official structure. Some of these features are present, albeit in patchy form, in the unions studied: for example, both the QTU and QIEU have positions at least partly devoted to recruiting young graduates and performing a research function regarding their needs and a number of unions reported a 'like-with-like' strategy particularly when

talking en masse to graduates, although none have adopted a strategy of informal graduate networks. Few unions report honorary officials under 30 (or indeed 40) to get 'youth issues' on the union agenda, although more optimistically there are strong signs that unions are consciously opting for younger organisers and other staff (although admittedly there are no quantitative data yet to back up this claim). There were no stories of unions consciously mobilising around issues to do with young people, although the SDA cited instances of store bullying that had driven organising and recruiting in a few retail and fast food workplaces, and the LHMU 'Big Steps' campaign for child care inevitably targets a youngish workforce, so the potential is there.

The language of most of the interviewees resonated with phrases from the organising model: finding out about issues, finding out not telling people what they wanted, and avoiding arid 'information overloads' about awards, unions and history that did not resonate with the audience. More ethnographically based, issue-focussed research would be needed to pursue how organisers target the youth market. There was also talk, from the youngest union officers, of a 'looser, free-flowing collectivism' based on websites like Get-Up (Interviewee 3c) which is a matter as yet unexplored by unions. A number of interviewees spoke about the lack of sustainability and lack of evaluation of strategies: in the common ad hoc mode of union operation 'a particular group of organisers [...] might do it for a year, then it drops again and is not seen as a priority by the incoming group' (Interviewee 3c).

Product: Provision of ancillary benefits

Unions provide ancillary benefits in an attempt to increase the tangibility associated with their service product, and also to act as 'gimmicks' to attract members, although our research suggests that strategies differ between unions. Emphasis on the importance of these benefits varied.

For the SDA, the provision of ancillary benefits is an important part of attracting young members: 'it assists them with their living standards as much as anything else' (Interviewee 6a). The Queensland SDA provides 1,200 secondary scholarships of \$80, and 1,500 tertiary scholarships of \$150. There is also free accident insurance. As an officer explained:

The benefits and services get them over the line, and then once they've been a member for while and they start using our information officers or they have a problem at work and they need us to support them, that's when it actually dawns on them: 'Oh, now I know what the benefit of union membership is' (Interviewee 6a).

These ancillary benefits provided by the SDA in their view attract young people to become members, and time provides the tangible experience of membership that encourages renewal via recognition of the value of the service product. Most interviewees, however, de-emphasised the role of ancillary benefits.

Conclusion

These are preliminary data from a part-completed set of interviews of a small number of union officers and officials. The themes explored here are rich, but are only a selection of many raised during the interviews, and need to be expanded in a fuller analysis, ideally using other sets of data as well as analysis of actual campaigns. Tentatively, however, we conclude that the 'experience good' model appears to be robust in giving a framework with which to analyse successful union strategies, and that the marketing literature offers insights into understanding how unions interact with young people. While there are many challenges confronting unions, union effectiveness is determined at least in part by the strategic choices of union leadership (Boxall & Haynes 1997). Based on our data, unions need to adopt the

communication technologies used by young people, provide ancillary services where that is appropriate for the particular youth populations (bearing in mind the heterogeneity of both unions and youth), differentiate by price and service product to meet youth-specific needs, and communicate using language, visuals and messages that resonate with young people.

Visser's research shows that union joining rates decrease with the passage of time for an individual: 'people join the union within the first few years following their entry into the labour market, or they do not' (Visser 2002, 416). There is therefore a very strong imperative for unions to market their services to young workers in their first job, and devise ways of 'tracking' members as they move jobs and industries in a post-industrial environment. The need to both recruit and 'rust on' young workers, in the words of one interviewee, is urgent.

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