

Microsoft to check Chinese supplier abuse allegations

Report tells of teenagers working long hours for low pay – but comments attached to article reveal the more likely scenario

Iain Thomson in San Francisco, V3.co.uk, 16 Apr 2010

Microsoft has sent a team of auditors to China, following claims by human rights group the National Labor Committee that young workers are being routinely abused.

The report claims that KYE, a manufacturer in Dongguan, China, routinely hires workers as young as 14 to assemble Microsoft peripherals.

Staff work 15-hour shifts, seven days a week, and must produce 2,000 peripherals per shift, while being paid 52c (34p) an hour, the report claims.

Staff live in 14-person dormitories and female staff are routinely sexually harassed, the report said. Staff can leave the plant only at regulated times, and cannot take bathroom breaks or listen to music while working.

In 2007 and 2008, before the worldwide recession, workers were at the factory 97 hours a week and

working for more than 80 hours. In 2009, workers reported being at the factory 83 hours a week, while working 68 hours.

Microsoft said that it is sending a team to investigate the report, but said that the factory had been subject to annual checks in line with Microsoft's policy on ethical suppliers.

"Over the past two years, we have required documentation and verification of worker age, and no incidence of child labour has been detected," said Brian Tobey, corporate vice president of manufacturing and operations for entertainment and devices at Microsoft, in a blog posting.

"Worker overtime has been significantly reduced, and worker compensation is in line with the Electronic Industry Citizenship Coalition standards for the Dongguan area."

Comments

Misguided from San Francisco

Iain .. I guess from your comments that you've never been to China or understand the supply of labour situation here let alone the rigours of China schooling. Are you hoping to change the work ethics of a nation or the entire third and developing world? I am British, my stepson is a Chinese 14 year old who attends middle school 6 days a week and often 7 days a week from 7am until 9:40pm with breaks for lunch and dinner, this is the norm in China.

Chinese factory workers are normally from rural villages surviving on subsistence farming and very very poor backgrounds. They seek out work away from this desperate poverty, living and working often for a year at a time in factories sometimes thousands of miles from home. Their life in a factory with free dormitory, fresh clean clothes, food provided, recreation and paid holiday trips home together with cash payments that are usually sent home or taken home at new year is bliss compared with scratching a living in a mud brick hovel sharing a bed with children and elderly relatives in the North of China

Don't take their livelihood away through ill-informed, unknowing and distorted thinking by applying the standards of San Francisco to these factories. I suspect the minimum age of these workers is more likely 16 but I could be wrong (or they may lie about their age to get a much desired paid job and accommodation)

There may well be abuse in China as there is in Europe and in the USA but I don't find your one sided, misguided all encompassing prejudice very useful. Is it a bash Microsoft day or have a go at China day!

Posted by: David, 16 Apr 2010

David Edis-Bates, a chartered engineer who first visited China in the 70's lived in Taiwan for 4 years and in China for the past 5 years. Currently CEO Edis Trading (HK) Limited

<http://www.edisav.com>

[More.... Tips and Articles from Edis Trading](#)