Apple Cares About Your Employees

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It was recently reported that Apple found more than a dozen serious labor law violations [1] that needed quick fixing — keep in mind that this includes Apple's own labor policies to which its suppliers need adhere.

Similar to Wal-Mart's [2] green supplier push after a history of eco-PR terrorism, Apple took the initiative when an employee from a Chinese iPhone factory leapt off of the 12th floor of his apartment building [3] after a prototype went missing.

Apple responded by saying that all of its suppliers must treat their workers with "dignity and respect," and yesterday, the company backed up that policy by releasing its findings from a 2009 audit of 102 supplier facilities — and Apple was not shy with the findings.

Social responsibility from a major corporation? Odd, I know.

As a public, we've grown into monstrous cynics, rightfully so in some cases (Monsanto, Shell, any car company since the Model T, Lehmann Brothers, Goldman Sachs, I'll quit now before I overrun our servers with a list of loathsome representatives), regarding anything with Corp., LLC or Inc. following the name.

Even though the iPad has everyone but the rare breed of gadget freak questioning Apple's recent vision, the company earned some respect by discussing the 17 serious "core violations" that it uncovered during the audit. According to Apple, "A core violation is the most serious class of violation. It refers to any practice or situation that [Apple] considers to be contrary to the core principles underlying Apple's Supplier Code of Conduct — and to require immediate corrective actions."

A rundown of serious violations discovered:

- Three cases of underage workers at facilities (11 workers who had been hired at 15 years of age, where 16 is the legal minimum age).
- Eight workers paid illegal recruitment fees. Nothing serious if you follow any NCAA sport.
- Three suppliers using non-certified vendors to dispose of hazardous waste. Soon to be found in a swimming pool near you.
- Three companies who deliberately falsified records during the audit. Lying to the tech giant is like fibbing while you pray, bad manners and a waste of time. You might as well tell your boss that you're late because you were pulled over — it's certainly not because you reek like tequila and have a margarita-stained shirt.

Apple is responding to pressure, but it's encouraging to see results. It's important to remember that Apple execs seemed just as angry as anyone when they found out that workers at Foxconn Technology, the late Sun Danyong's employer, were paying $50 a month to work 15-hour shifts.

I don't know how Foxconn skated mutiny — or at least a bossnapping [4] or two. I find it hard to comment when I have no understanding of the pressure, anxiety or working conditions in other parts of the world, but I like to think that if I was working 75-hour workweeks for $600 a year, I'd attempt to remedy the situation.

Violence is certainly not the answer, but after you read past the headlines and into the meat of the article where writers typically hide the infractions (see paragraph seven), you begin to understand how employees can be driven to violence. I'm not condoning it, and I rarely understand it; better ways certainly exist when it comes to mediating through a poor situation.

Thank you Apple for looking out for overlooked employees abroad. It's a rare and inspiring concept. The 2010 Supplier Responsibility Progress Report, which becomes interesting around page 13, can be found here [5].

So, is Apple doing good work or should the company hinder its nose from future business sticking? Let me know at david.mantey@advantagemedia.com *[6].*

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