

Would You Swim Laps after a 12-Hour Shift?

By AMANDA EARING, News Editor



You may be able to simultaneously surf the web while you make a phone call, but now your iPhone might also be dubbed a killer.

The very people that make the iPhone for our convenience are reportedly committing suicide because the working conditions at Foxconn — the contract manufacturer that makes Apple's popular device — are so poor.

Any complaints I have about my job seem trivial when Foxconn workers are reportedly working 12, 14, 16-hour shifts; doing the same task over and over; and have little time for anything more than eating, sleeping and working.

Foxconn says employees have access to a pool and other perks, but when do they have time to play? I know from experience that working a 12-hour shift in a factory can be very draining. I certainly wasn't about to swim laps after working long hours. Instead, sleep and food were all I had on my mind.

Regardless of the reason for Foxconn's mass suicide attempts, workers in China now have the upper advantage. Foxconn, hoping to raise morale, recently gave workers a hefty 30 percent pay raise, which could set a standard for the rest of China's workforce. I expect that we haven't heard the last bit of news in this ongoing story. China's labor market will be soon be fighting for even better wages and working conditions. And that's a good thing.

But what amazes me is Apple's lack of reaction to the plight of Foxconn's workers. For most companies, this sort of news would be a deal-breaker. Instead, Apple, Dell and Nokia — all Foxconn customers — said they'll 'investigate' working conditions. But it's likely they won't find anything wrong. In this economy — even in China — workers will do and say what they need to in order to keep their jobs. Whistleblowers need not apply.

If China's workers were looking for leverage to fight back, they now have it. The media has drawn more attention to the working conditions many face in Chinese factories. But if U.S. manufacturers with operations in China are willing to turn the

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other cheek, then the labor battle has already been lost.

So, would you swim laps after a 12-hour shift? Let me know by e-mail at amanda.earing@advantagemedia.com [1].

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