

Apple faces its 'Nike moment'

Level 1 • Elementary

1 Warmer

What do Apple and Nike make?
Where are these products made?

2 Key words

Write the key words from the article next to the definitions below. The paragraph numbers are given to help you.

cheap labour

working conditions

factory

publicity

suicide

suppliers

inspect

1. workers who receive very little money _____ (para 1)
2. to check that things are in the correct condition _____ (para 2)
3. a building or group of buildings where large amounts of goods are produced or put together
_____ (para 2)
4. attention in magazines, newspapers or television _____ (para 2)
5. killing yourself _____ (para 3)
6. the environment in which people must work _____ (para 6)
7. companies that provide or sell a product or a service _____ (para 12)

3 Similar words

Put the letters in the correct order to find two similar words meaning:

1. money you get for doing your job
AWEGS AYASLR
2. becomes bigger in amount or number
EAIRS NECRAIES
3. people who work at a company
FSATF OWRSERK

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Apple faces its 'Nike moment' over working conditions in Chinese factories

Charles Arthur and agencies
20 February, 2012

- 1 Apple is having a "Nike moment", a problem that Nike had in the 1990s when the world found out that they were using cheap labour in the Far East.
- 2 Ines Kaempfer from the US Fair Labor Association (FLA), which is inspecting the Foxconn factories used by Apple in China to make its products, said: "There was a moment for Nike in the '90s, when they got a lot of negative publicity. And they weren't the worst. It's probably like Apple. They might not be the worst; it's just that the publicity is starting to increase. We call it the 'Nike moment'."
- 3 Foxconn said on Monday it had raised wages by up to 25% after some workers committed suicide in 2011. There were also reports of long hours for the hundreds of thousands of staff.
- 4 It is the second salary increase in less than two years at Foxconn, where workers' conditions have been carefully inspected.
- 5 The reports of deaths and unhappiness at Foxconn have created a publicity problem for Apple. So Apple asked the FLA to do the inspection. So far Hewlett-Packard, Microsoft and Dell, which also use Foxconn, have not said anything about their use of its factories.
- 6 Tim Cook, Apple's Chief Executive, says that the company takes working conditions very seriously and that every worker has the right to a fair and safe workplace.
- 7 Foxconn employs about 1.2 million workers in factories in China. The factories have very strict rules. People there work for six or seven days a week and for up to 14 hours a day.
- 8 The workers make iPhones and iPads for Apple, Xbox 360 video game consoles for Microsoft, and computers for Dell and Hewlett-Packard. Foxconn is one of China's largest single private employers.
- 9 Since 1 February, Foxconn's staff receive 1,800-2,500 yuan (\$285-395) a month, the company said.
- 10 "This is the way capitalism should work," David Autor, an economist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, told *The New York Times*. "As countries develop, wages rise and life should get better for everyone.
- 11 "But in China, for that change to be permanent, people have to want to pay more for their products. People read about bad Chinese factories in the newspaper, but then they go to Amazon and only want to pay the lowest prices."
- 12 Nike had a problem in the 1990s when terrible working conditions were reported at some of its suppliers. International protests led to an improvement in the working conditions.
- 13 Foxconn is also trying to limit working hours. The workers are getting the pay rise because they can no longer do as much overtime, Simon Hsing of Foxconn said. Foxconn said it was working together with the FLA inspectors, promising again to provide a safe and fair working environment.
- 14 In 2010, suicides at a large Foxconn factory in the southern town of Shenzhen drew attention to the stress of many young workers.
- 15 In February, workers making video game consoles climbed to a Foxconn factory roof in the central Chinese city of Wuhan and some said they would jump to their deaths.
- 16 *The New York Times* reported that workers were happy to get the pay rises.

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4 Comprehension check

Choose the best answer to these questions.

1. Which bad business practices is the article about?
 - a. cheap labour and sweatshops
 - b. suicides and stress
2. Where are the Foxconn factories?
 - a. in India
 - b. in China
3. What is the business relationship between Foxconn and Apple?
 - a. Foxconn's products are put together at Apple's factories.
 - b. Apple's products are put together at Foxconn's factories.
4. Why is Foxconn being inspected?
 - a. because there are too many workers in their small factories
 - b. because working conditions at the factory are so bad that some workers have killed themselves
5. Which other companies work with Foxconn?
 - a. Dell and Microsoft
 - b. Nike and Hewlett-Packard
6. How are we keeping the working conditions bad?
 - a. We want to pay the lowest price possible for our electronic goods.
 - b. We buy too many electronic goods.

5 Working conditions

Complete the Foxconn column in the chart with information from the article. Then complete the 'you' column with information on the working conditions in your job. Compare.

working conditions	Foxconn	you
hours per day		
days per week		
stress level	high / low	high / low
motivation	high / low	high / low
breaks per day		
days of holiday		

6 Discussion

How do your working conditions compare to those at Foxconn?

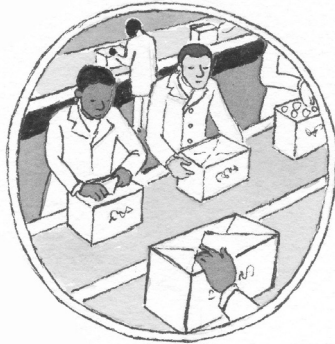
Is your workplace 'fair and safe'?

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7 A talk with the boss

Role cards:



Employee

Talk to your boss and try to get better working conditions for you and your colleagues. Your boss might not do everything you want but try and make an agreement.

Be factual, professional and realistic.



Boss

Your employee has asked to talk to you about working conditions. Listen carefully and try to make an agreement that will be good for both of you.

Be fair, factual, professional and reasonable.

Images: Macmillan South Africa

Prompt cards:



hours

At the moment, you work _____ hours a day.

You want to work fewer hours.



holiday entitlement

You currently have _____ days' holiday a year.

You want to have more holiday.



work days

You currently work _____ days a week.

You want to work fewer days.



breaks

You currently have _____ break(s) of _____ minutes a day.

You want more / longer breaks.

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KEY

1 Warmer

Teacher's note: If anyone in the class has items produced by either Apple or Nike with them, ask them to check whether they can see anything that indicates where the item was made, produced or assembled.

2 Key words

1. cheap labour
2. inspect
3. factory
4. publicity
5. suicide
6. working conditions
7. suppliers

3 Similar words

1. wages; salary
2. raise; increase
3. staff; workers

4 Comprehension check

1. a
2. b
3. b
4. b
5. a
6. a

5 Working conditions

working conditions	Foxconn
hours per day	<i>up to 14</i>
days per week	<i>six or seven</i>
stress level	<i>high</i>
motivation	<i>low</i>
breaks per day	–
days of holiday	–

7 A talk with the boss

Teacher's note: Cut out enough role cards (one Employee card and one Boss card for each pair of students) before the lesson. Make sure you give the students time to prepare their roles. The students playing the employees could sit together and the students playing the bosses could sit together and work out what they want to demand and how they are going to demand it before they start to talk in pairs or groups of four. Remind them that their aim is to reach an agreement that is acceptable to both sides.

The prompt cards are to help the students get started. The students can, of course, talk about other working conditions too. They can use the information in the table in exercise 5 to help them and also think back to how they answered the discussion question in exercise 6.