

Spécialité Négociation et Relation Clients

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A Foxconn employee in a dormitory at Longhua.

Photograph: Wang Yishu / Imaginechina/Camera Press.



**Life and death in Apple's forbidden city**

Foxconn's enormous Longhua plant<sup>1</sup> is a major manufacturer of Apple products. It might be the best-known factory in the world; it might also be among the most secretive and sealed-off. Security guards man each of the entry points. Employees can't get in without swiping an ID card; drivers entering with delivery trucks are subject to fingerprint scans(..).

5 It's printed on the back of every iPhone: "Designed by Apple in California Assembled in China". (...)The vast majority of plants that produce the iPhone's component parts and carry out the device's final assembly are based here, in the People's Republic, where low labour costs and a massive, highly skilled workforce have made the nation the ideal place to manufacture iPhones (and just about every other gadget).(...)

10 Foxconn is the single largest employer in mainland China; there are 1.3 million people on its payroll. Worldwide, among corporations, only Walmart and McDonald's employ more. (...)

In 2010, Longhua assembly-line workers began killing themselves. Worker after worker threw themselves off the towering dorm buildings, sometimes in broad daylight, in tragic  
15 displays of desperation – and in protest at the work conditions inside. There were 18 reported suicide attempts that year alone and 14 confirmed deaths. (...)

The epidemic caused a media sensation – suicides and sweatshop conditions in the House of iPhone. Suicide notes and survivors told of immense stress, long workdays and harsh managers who were prone to humiliate workers for mistakes, of unfair fines and  
20 unkept promises of benefits.

The corporate response spurred further unease<sup>2</sup>: Foxconn CEO, Terry Gou, had large nets installed outside many of the buildings to catch falling bodies. The company hired counsellors and workers were made to sign pledges stating they would not attempt to kill themselves.(...)

25 Foxconn's Longhua complex is a typical example of a high-pressure working environment where exploitation is routine and where depression and suicide have become normalised.

Brian Merchant (342 mots)

<sup>1</sup> Plant : factory

<sup>2</sup> Unease : embarrassment