

Outstanding Worker Hotline Better Factories Cambodia



A toll-free hotline for workers to access information about the labor law and personal health as well as rate the performance of their factories.

About Better Factories Cambodia

Better Factories Cambodia (BFC) is a program managed by the International Labor Organization (ILO) whose mission is to monitor factories, train management teams and workers, and provide guidance and advice on factory improvements. The program was launched in Cambodia in 2001 and targets over 500 factories and 500,000 workers.

The Problem

Rising to prominence since the late 1990s, the garment sector is a key driver of the Cambodian economy, employing over 500,000 workers and accounting for over 76 percent of Cambodia's total export revenue in 2013. Despite consumer concerns and global campaigns, basic salaries and working conditions in Cambodian garment factories remain poor, even by regional standards. With limited knowledge of the labor law and of their health and welfare rights, the Cambodian garment workers are particularly vulnerable and ill equipped to demand adequate enforcement of the law.

The Challenge

In addition to monitoring factories and training workers and factory management on their rights and obligations, BFC works to empower workers through information. Given the size of its target group, BFC's main challenge was in designing a system that could provide information to a critical mass at a minimal cost. With virtually all workers owning a cell phone with basic call and text functions, BFC decided to turn to mobile technology to tackle this challenge. Due to illiteracy, low education levels and the fact that workers rarely text and often do not know how to use the Khmer font on their phones, however, standard SMS-based approaches were not adapted.

Technical Profile

- Design Elements**
 - Health & safety awareness
 - Garment worker engagement
- Call Direction**
 - Incoming call
 - Outgoing call
- Verboice Features**
 - Call flow designer
 - Menu/input option
 - Play recorded audio
 - Reg/deregister option
 - Record feedback
 - Quiz

To be effective, it became apparent that this communication program would need to rely on the phones' voice function.

The Solution

BFC turned to the Verboice software to design an automated hotline that workers can dial into at any time. Besides offering information about the labor law and personal health on a 24/7 basis, the Verboice-powered hotline offers the benefit of simultaneous calling, permitting hundreds of workers to call at the same time without the need for additional staff input.

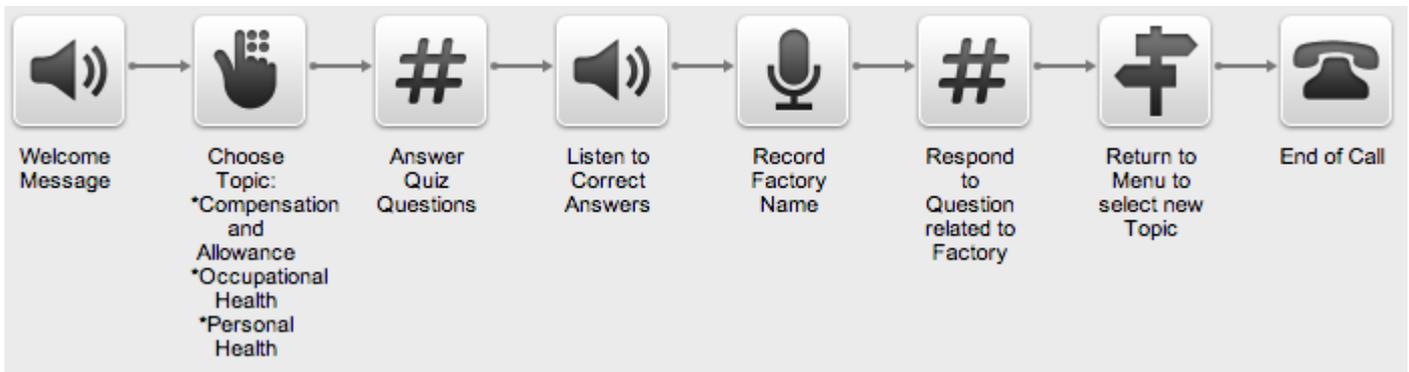
For more on the Better Factories Cambodia program, please visit www.betterfactories.org



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“Verboice has allowed us to reach a much larger number of workers than we were able to through our traditional face-to-face training. Though the hotline is obviously not as in-depth as an all-day training, it has enabled us to get information out to over 30,000 callers. More than that, it has provided us with valuable information on what the workers know and don’t know.”



The Design

When workers call shortcode 8397 they are asked to choose between three topics: wages and allowances, occupational safety and health, and personal health. Once the worker selects a topic, they are led through a short quiz that they answer by pressing the appropriate numbers on their phone. After each question, the system explains whether the worker answered the question correctly or not, and provides the correct answer. At the end of each quiz, workers are asked to identify the factory they work in and to rate their factory on a specific measure related to the topic they just learned about. They can then return to the menu to select their next topic of choice.

Results

The Verboice-powered hotline has enabled BFC to provide information to an increasing number of workers. Prior to launching the hotline in September 2013, BFC conducted day-long trainings. Whilst the information provided during these trainings was more in-depth, BFC could only reach about 2,000

workers annually in that way, a fraction of the 30,000 workers it has been able to reach in its first 9 months and of the total number it will be able to reach once the hotline is widely advertised. By tallying the “right” and “wrong” answers to the hotline quiz, BFC has also been able to gain a window into what workers know about their rights and personal health, and what they still need to learn.

Next Steps

Moving forward, BFC is looking at using the information provided by workers regarding their factory to facilitate information sharing between workers. For each of the topic categories, workers are asked to confirm whether or not their factory adheres to the law and BFC is looking at using this data to produce monthly listings of top rated factories. These listings will be shared back with workers through targeted media campaigns. Looking ahead, BFC is also looking at developing a smartphone application that will support this crowdsourcing effort.



Verboice is a free and open-source platform that enables non-programmers to design and run a variety of interactive and automated voice-based applications (hotlines, alerts, reminders, quizzes, surveys, ...). Everything is done through a drag and drop interface which lets users combine Verboice’s several features into a multitude of different applications.

Open source; easy to use; highly customizable and scalable

For more information, please visit www.verboice.com