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Weigh the Impact of Your Purchasing Demands

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This will be my last article in this series of standards intended to create a standard that informs consumers of the condition of the workplace, the environmental impacts and the quality of the products that are in our stores today. I was hoping that more people would have participated with input into the standards, however; I think that most people do not want to know this type of information because it is simply not important to them.

Before I end this series of articles, I would like to take the time to review some of the most recent online news posted on the Internet and further point out why I believe such standards should exist to help change our purchasing habits resulting in more manufacturing and jobs in our countries.

Last month, *Reuters'* reported that India has developed the world's cheapest laptop at a cost of \$35. The cost includes the motherboard the processing connectivity, all of them cumulatively cost around \$35 including memory, display, everything, as reported in

Reuters. They expect to go into production in the year 2011 and their goal is to bring the price down to \$20 and ultimately \$10. What happens when they have sold the notebooks to everyone in India and then set their sights to America?

In another *Reuters* article, the Honda China supplier is reportedly getting tough on striking workers. The striking workers were demanding a wage increase of 500 Yuan that is about \$74 per month. They claim that they cannot live on just 1,000 yen because everything is so expensive now. Additionally, those workers on-strike in Japanese electronics firms were asking for an additional 500 Yuan per month since they too make only 1,200 Yuan (\$ 150) per month.

A Microsoft mouse supplier in China is accused of virtually imprisoning workers as reported by *PC Magazine*. KYE Systems is accused of confining workers to dormitories and requiring them to work up to 14.7 hours a shift, including overtime that far exceeded even China's legal limits. The total pay averaged about 1500 RMB per month or simply \$218 per month. Are we to compete with this salary range and working conditions?

Unreasonably, low salaries do not even help the people in China; they only help to feed the greed that seems to be growing in our society.

Reuters' also reported that the U.S. government loses approximately \$37 billion per year in tax revenues because multinational corporations are able to stash money overseas legally.

So as a consumer, if we disagree with any of these practices, how can we make a difference?

The only way to make a difference is to select products and services that comply with our specifications, ethics and expectations with respect to employee's rights, environmental management, quality management and corporate leadership. After all, products that do not sell will not be on the shelf long and will be replaced with products that do sell (or meet the consumer specifications).

We can read the news; we can watch it on TV, and we see it every day with the lack of manufacturing and reasonably paying jobs in our cities. The biggest problem is that we do

not see it on the products in the stores.

If we want to buy meat that was farm raised organically and free roaming, we can because there is a label. However, even these labels do not tell us the environmental impact of the farm, who works on the farm and are they legal employees who are paid a fair wage and ultimately their policy towards treating the animals.

Perhaps this information is not available by design. Perhaps this information is not politically correct. Perhaps this information goes against free trade because of the regulatory nature to acquire and validate the accuracy of this information so that it is put on labels.

We simply have to look around our hometowns to see the impact that our purchasing demands--low prices--and the end result of the decisions we have made.

This ends my series on standards and I look forward to my next series on a simple topic such as quality-based challenges.

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