



UN reports on outsource jobs

21/07 at 12h19 - MANILA (AFP)

http://asia.afpmobile.com/pl/svt/si/afp/po/opint/dk/afpmobile.07-21-2010.4571/bp/1/sc/afp_en_asibus/ms/VJYUnmJw18/pa/170855/uid/

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The ILO did not say how many people worked in the BPO sector. But about 500,000 people work in this sector in the Philippines, according to government data.



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Outsource jobs good, but conditions could be better: UN
Posted: 21 July 2010 2227 hrs

http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/afp_world_business/print/1070723/1/.html

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- AFP/ir



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<http://content.usatoday.com/topics/article/Places,+Geography/Countries/Philippines/0aF11b052o5n3/1>

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Outsource companies demand higher output from RP workers

<http://www.cbcnews.com/?q=node/12397>

MANILA, July 21, 2010—Foreign-based companies that outsource labor in the Philippines demand higher productivity level among employed Filipinos, an international labor official said.

Lawrence Jeff Johnson, International Labour Organization's (ILO) director for the Philippines said there is a chance Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) companies in the country may stay longer if Filipinos employed in call centers increase their productivity level.

Johnson said it may be easy for government to create millions of jobs but what matters more is sustainability and productivity.

Around 500,000 Filipinos are employed by BPOs in the country today, with 350,000 of them into call centers.

The ILO official made the remark at the launch of the first-ever in-depth study of the workplace in the BPO industry titled "Offshoring and Working Conditions in Remote Work during a video-conference with main authors Jon Messenger and Naj Ghosheh.

Messenger described the industry as "rapidly growing" and now worth an approximate of \$90 billion.

The research focused on what authors described as four major "destination" countries which included the Philippines, India, Argentina and Brazil. Both Messenger and his colleagues examined remote work, its impact on the labor market in general and the workforce in particular and the possible implications for working and employment conditions in countries where the BPO industry is growing.

Messenger, a senior researcher with the Conditions of Work and Employment Programme of the ILO and co-editor of the study said a mixed picture emerges when analyzing the working conditions in the four countries mentioned.

"Remote work jobs are of a reasonable good quality by local standards," Messenger said. He added wages of Indian BPO workers are nearly double the average wages in other sectors of the Indian economy.

Speaking of the Philippine experience, Messenger said local BPO employees earn 53 per cent more than workers of the same age in other countries.

However, Messenger also admitted its downside such as stress, and working at night which he described as common in order to serve customers in distant time zones in 'real time'.

He added employees face heavy workloads backed with performance targets combined with tight rules and procedures, all enforced via electronic monitoring.

"This type of high-strain work organization is well-known to produce high levels of job-related stress," Messenger added. The study revealed a high rate of staff turnover "which in some companies can reach as high as 100 per cent or more annually."

Both Messenger and Ghosheh described BPO employees as young, generally well-educated and predominantly female.

"With a few notable exceptions, most prominently India, women constitute the vast majority (60% or more) of BPO employees in really all countries with a substantial BPO industry.

The authors suggested some "doables" to further improve the quality of jobs in the industry and increase productivity including stronger measures to protect the health and safety of night workers, "in line with the ILO Night Work Convention; a redesign of work processes, especially in call centers, so that BPO employees have more freedom to make use of their often considerable qualifications and greater latitude when to take rest and toilet breaks."

They also cited the need for more policies and practices aimed at improving workers; collective voice and promoting social dialogue in the industry to benefit both workers and employers alike.

Mitch Locsin, former executive director of the Business Processing Association of the Philippines said there are about 200 BPO companies in the Philippines, from small to very large companies.

"Some 70% of these companies are foreign-based," he said. He added bigger companies have bigger turnover rates at 30% while smaller ones including the non-voice and IT-based BPOs have a turnover of at least 20% per annum.

Asked of possible reasons for the turnover, Locsin said there are companies who continuously hire employees with higher wages and better benefits. (Melo M. Acuna)

Outsource jobs good, but conditions could be better: UN



Filipino call centre personnel attend to their US clients at a business process outsourcing office in Manila in 2007. Global back office outsourcing is creating "reasonably good" jobs in poorer countries, but staff are stressed and some work conditions have to be improved, a United Nations study said.

<http://ph.news.yahoo.com/afp/20100721/img/pbs-philippines-india-brazil-bcbe72abd37c0.html>

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Malaya Business Insight



BPOs urged to lessen work-related stress to stop high attrition rate **BY Albert Castro**

22 July 2010

<http://www.malaya.com.ph/07222010/busi10.html>

Business process outsourcing (BPO) businesses in the Philippines should implement policies that promote more flexible decision making opportunities for its employees to lessen work-related stress that contribute to the high attrition rate in the industry, the International Labor Organization (ILO) said.

The industry likewise need to implement "stronger measures" to protect the health and safety of these night workers as well as greater latitude when to take rest and toilet breaks. They should also and encourage dialogue to improve workers' collective voice, according to ILO senior researcher John Messenger.

ILO recently unveiled its study on the trends and working conditions in the offshoring industry entitled "Offshoring and Working Conditions and Remote Work," with focus on four major offshoring destinations in the world --- Argentina, Brazil, India, and the Philippines.

"This is a rapidly growing industry worth and approximate \$90 billion. A lot has been written about this phenomenon and its implications for economic growth and employment. However very little is known about the working conditions in the BPO industry," according to Messenger who spoke in a press conference held from Geneva.

The BPO industry, Messenger said, is a good source of reasonable quality of jobs vis-a-vis the local standard, and provides salaries which are above the average for a worker of the same age working in a different industry. In the case of the Philippines, the salary carries and increment of 53 percent above other industries.

Working hours likewise are quite reasonable, vis-a-vis other industries.

The problem however is highlighted by the 30 percent attrition rate of the industry which "is triple that of other industries in the Philippines." Messenger attributes this to the stressful environment, like constant night shifts in order serve customers in a different time zone, and occupational safety and health issues like sleep problems and fatigue.

The stress is compounded by "heavy workloads backed by performance targets, combined with tight rules and procedures enforced via electronic monitoring" resulting to "relatively low autonomy," especially in call centers.

"This type of 'high-strain work organization' is well known to produce high levels of job-related stress, and 49.2 percent of Philippine BPO employees surveyed for our study reported that that stress was a major concern for them," said Messenger.

Among the top stress-inducing factors cited by those surveyed were: harassment from irate clients, excessive and tedious workload, performance demand, monotony, and regular night work.

Messenger said the noted vices among BPO workers like binge drinking and smoking "could be related to the stress."

Messenger said "a few key changes in BPO policies and practice could make these good jobs even better, while helping staff turnover."

The BPO Association of the Philippines (BPAP) however said that locally, the association is "on top" of the issues cited by ILO.

COMPUTERWORLD

PHILIPPINES

BPO workers too stressed out, ILO study finds

By John Mark V. Tuazon
Computerworld Philippines
July 22, 2010

<http://computerworld.com.ph/bpo-workers-too-stressed-out-ilo-study-finds/>

Even if workers in the BPO industry enjoy steady work hours and a heftier salary than employees in other local industries, they tend to be too stressed out by other factors inherent within the nature of the job, an ILO (International Labor Organization) study on the conditions of BPO work environments in four top global destinations revealed Wednesday.

Because BPO work, often called call center jobs, requires workers to report during nighttime due to time zone differences between customers and agents, stress levels are at an all-time high, caused mainly by disruptions in individual sleeping patterns, voluminous workloads, and unsuitable design of workstations.

These are compounded by the fact that workers in the industry enjoy very little autonomy with regard the way they carry out their work, on top of very high demands from their superiors, according to the study—which collated results from Argentina, Mexico, India, and the Philippines—published in the book “Offshoring and working conditions in remote work.”

“The high demand [for employees] combined with low control is the core of the problem [in the industry],” explained Jon Messenger, co-editor of the book, during a Web conference from Geneva, Switzerland, with local reporters. “This is something we call a high-strain work organization. High job-related stress is [often] a result of this.”

The work organization in BPOs in the country often give heavy workloads bound with periodic performance targets, enforced by electronic monitoring, which give BPO workers—often young and well-educated individuals, the study found—very little autonomy within the workplace.

Even very basic things, such as time devoted for toilet or cigarette breaks, and control of their personal work desks, are deprived of these BPO workers, it added.

These are in spite of the fact that locally, BPO workers go home with a fatter wallet than the rest of the industry, at a rate at least 53% higher than the prevailing minimum wage paid to workers of the same age in other industries, or an average of more than P16,000 a month.

Despite heftier salaries, these work-induced stressors, according to Messenger, “are linked with high rates of staff turnover or attrition” within the industry, which affect both workers and employers, and keep them from fully achieving decent work.

In addition, stressed-out employees often turn to stress reducers and vices—such as smoking, drinking, and consuming large amounts of caffeine—to blow off steam.

Messenger refused to comment, however, on a local study which found high rates of risky behavior and HIV/AIDS prevalence within the industry, but surmised that due to the aforementioned stressors, “there may be some truth to [those findings].”

Call to Arms

Because of these findings, Messenger stressed the need to effect key changes in policies and company practices to make these jobs better. “We need stronger managers who will, for one, protect the health and safety of night workers,” he suggested.

“They also need to redesign their work processes, [for these workers to] have more discretion with their work, because these things can affect the employee’s perceived experience of the job,” he added.

Messenger likewise stressed the need for policies and practices aimed at improving workers’ collective voice and social dialogue in the industry, such as collective bargaining—which ultimately would benefit both workers and employers alike.

Thursday, July 22, 2010

Business

Labour

Outsource jobs good, but conditions could be better: UN



Filipino call centre personnel attend to their US clients at a business process outsourcing office in Manila. A United Nations study says global back-office outsourcing is creating reasonably good jobs in poorer countries, but employees are stressed and some work conditions have to be improved. AFP/FILE

Afp, Manila

<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=147716>

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13:19, Wednesday 21 July 2010

<http://uk.finance.yahoo.com/news/outsource-jobs-good-but-conditions-could-be-better-un-afp-4667161aea9d.html?x=0>



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Outsource jobs good, but conditions should be improved

The Post Monitoring
22 July 2010

<http://www.thepost.com.pk/CorpNewsT.aspx?dtlid=256301&catid=8>

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Outsourcing jobs good, but conditions could be better: UN

Wednesday July 21, 2010, 10:19 pm

<http://au.biz.yahoo.com/100721/33/2egru.html>



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Agence France-Presse**

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<http://www.hindustantimes.com/business-news/sectorsbpos/Outsource-jobs-good-but-conditions-could-be-better-UN/Article1-575628.aspx>

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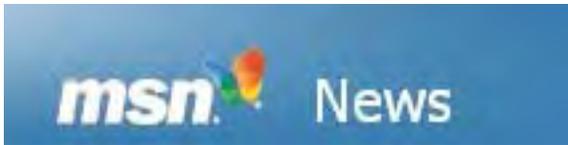
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<http://news.ph.msn.com/regional/article.aspx?cp-documentid=4231123>

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<http://bx.businessweek.com/global-outsourcing/>

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Wed Jul 21, 8:19 AM

http://ca.news.yahoo.com/s/afp/100721/business/philippines_india_brazil_argentina_ilo_it_jobs

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BPO industry should improve work conditions, says ILO study **By Tonyo Cruz**

<http://us.asiancorrespondent.com/tonyo-cruz-blog/bpo-industry-should-improve-work-conditions-says-ilo-study>



A new International Labor Organization (ILO) book launched on Wednesday in Geneva and Manila suggested that the multibillion-dollar business process industry (BPO), generally call centers, should now be open to listening workers' "collective voice" and engage "social dialogue" to improve working conditions in their "high-strain" workplaces.

In a video-conference from Geneva with journalists in Manila, ILO researchers and co-editors Jon Messenger and Naj Ghosheh presented the highlights of the book "Offshoring and Working Conditions in Remote Work", said to be the first in-depth study about BPO workplaces in Argentina, Brazil, India and the Philippines.

The Philippines has the second biggest BPO industry in the world, said Messenger.

The study found that the Philippine BPO industry provide reasonably "good" quality jobs by local standards, with BPO workers getting an average of P16,928 (\$364) in monthly pay aside from non-wage benefits.

While young Filipino women dominate BPO jobs by up to 59.3 percent, the study discovered that Filipino men earn 13 percent more than women.

Work hours in the BPO industry are likewise "good" compared to the excessively long hours endured by many other workers in other industries in developing countries.

But the ILO book said that "key changes in the BPO industry policies and practices" are needed to address problems and challenges in the workplaces.

Messenger said night work is common in the Philippine BPO industry, with 42.6 percent of BPO employees or 51.7 percent of all employees in call center positions working the night shift to serve customers, mostly in the United States, in real time.

"Night work is often associated with occupational safety and health issues such as sleep problems and fatigue," said Messenger. Nearly half (47.7 percent) of BPO employees surveyed reported suffering from sleeping problems or insomnia.

The study also described BPO work organizations as "high-strain" due to the heavy workloads, tight rules and procedures, and electronic monitoring but the employees are given little or no autonomy.

The result of these is high job stress among BPO workers. The BPO workers surveyed said stress-inducing factors include harassment from irate clients (45.6 percent), excessive and tedious workload (41 percent), performance demands (37.4 percent), monotony (33.7 percent) and regular night work (33.4 percent).

It was also noted that the BPO industry has a high rate of staff turnover, which in some companies can reach as high as 100 percent or more annually.

"Giving employees little control or autonomy is an outdated notion," said Messenger.

He added that "it cannot be a good business approach to have a model that leads to high attrition."

The authors also said that the BPO industry should "redesign" work processes, especially in call centers, to allow BPO workers more discretion or autonomy, to make use of their often considerable qualifications.

Messenger said other positive steps to improve working conditions include providing the proper, ergonomically-designed seats, computer screens and equipment.

In the Philippines, there is practically no union or labor organization covering or organized by workers in the BPO industry, but BPO industry players have long formed the Contact Center Association of the Philippines (CCAP).



<http://inform.com/world/outsource-jobs-good-conditions-997793a>

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<http://www.bullfax.com/?q=node-outsource-jobs-good-conditions-could-be-better-un>

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21/07/2010, by AFP



<http://hello.news352.lu/edito-57680-outsource-jobs-good-but-conditions-could-be-better-un.html>

Filipino call centre personnel attend to their US clients at a business process outsourcing office in Manila in 2007. Global back office outsourcing is creating "reasonably good" jobs in poorer countries, but staff are stressed and some work conditions have to be improved, a United Nations study said.

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<http://www.philippinenews.com/8800-article.html>

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<http://www.france24.com/en/20100721-outsource-jobs-good-but-conditions-could-be-better-un>

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INTERNATIONAL THE NEWS

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Thursday, July 22, 2010

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/print1.asp?id=252170>

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[Wed, Jul 21, 2010 15:19:40 pm]



<http://news.weyak.ae/article/view/lang/en/id/2162643>

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<http://www.orange.ug/news/?p=98512>

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Offshoring Creates Good Jobs in Poor Countries: ILO

International Labour Organisation (ILO) study found that improved work practices in the outsourcing industry could reduce excessive rates of staff turnover

<http://www.globalservicesmedia.com/BPO/Market-Dynamics/Offshoring-Creates-Good-Jobs-in-Poor-Countries:-ILO/23/28/0/GS100720858581>

Offshoring and outsourcing in services from call centres to accountancy and medicine have created good jobs in terms of pay and working hours in developing countries, according to a study published on Monday.

But the International Labour Organisation (ILO) study found that improved work practices in the outsourcing industry could reduce excessive rates of staff turnover.

The study gives the lie to claims that outsourcing of such work has created “cyber-coolies” or “electronic sweatshops”, said Jon Messenger, an ILO researcher and main editor of the study.

“The jobs being created in offshore business services in developing countries are reasonably good quality jobs by local standards in terms of wages and working conditions,” he said.

The book looks at outsourcing in the two biggest markets, India and the Philippines, and two growing Latin American centres, Brazil and Argentina.

A study by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (Unctad) last year found the global market for information technology-enabled services was about \$54 billion in 2008. The industry includes companies such as Infosys Technologies and Wipro.

Wages are below those for similar jobs in rich countries — one of the main motives for companies to outsource operations — but average pay in the sector in India is nearly double that in other areas of the formal economy, the ILO study found.

In the Philippines they were typically 53% higher.

The study found that average weekly hours were 46-47 hours in India and 45 in the Philippines, whereas one fifth of workers in developing countries work more than 50 hours a week.

But negative factors such as frequent night work to handle customers' different time zones, and demanding targets enforced by electronic monitoring resulting in a low level of worker autonomy, led to extremely high levels of staff turnover.

Sometimes the turnover rate in the typically young and well-educated workforce could exceed 100% a year, and rates of 30-40% are not unusual.

"A few key changes in policies and practices could actually make these good jobs even better while simultaneously helping to reduce staff turnover which would benefit businesses," Messenger told a briefing.

These could include steps to improve health and safety for night workers, such as regular check-ups, and more flexibility for workers to organise their time and to meet targets.

Naj Ghosheh, an ILO researcher and the other editor of the book, said governments would want the industries to develop and innovate to move up the value chain rather than simply replicating imported processes. They would also want to retain skilled workers at home rather than encouraging them to emigrate.

The industry is highly influenced by language skills, with India and the Philippines serving English-speaking countries, Argentina serving Spain and Mexico building up operations to serve Spanish-speakers in the United States.

Africa is relatively underdeveloped although Nigeria's computer-literate population gives it potential.



Outsource jobs good, but conditions could be better: UN
(AFP) – 16 hours ago

http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5hE4kaYkR_tZwd5mriMF2gVKqe2sQ?index=0

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Outsource jobs good, but conditions could be better: UN

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<http://www.allvoices.com/news/6360985-outsource-jobs-good-but-conditions-could-be-better-un>



ILO set to launch study on call center industry
By Nora Gamolo

<http://www.allvoices.com/contributed-news/6305948-ilo-set-to-launch-study-on-call-center-industry>



Business process outsourcing (BPO) to offshore destinations has grown rapidly in the Philippines, India and Central and Eastern Europe where for a time, the industry's annual growth rate even exceeded 30%.

Virtually unheard of a decade ago, the Philippine BPO industry has grown dramatically in scope and significance. The Philippines became second top BPO destination in the Asia-Pacific, next only to India in terms of people employed in this industry. The

previous Arroyo government has even targeted 40% growth for the industry that employed as many as 500,000 for a time and whose growth dipped only after the worldwide recession in 2008. In the Philippines, BPO employees earn 53 per cent more than workers of the same age in other industries. However, a mixed picture emerges when analyzing working conditions, since its workers are subjected to very stressful, prolonged work, among others.

Not everything in the industry looks rosy, and labor specialists advise that the BPO industry should now be subjected to a critical look, especially where it concerns the millions of workers it employs in many parts of the world.

Industry dynamics and how they affect workers are now the subject of the book "Offshoring and Working Conditions in Remote Work" which the International Labor Organization will launch on July 21 through a press launch-video conference.

The book is the first ever in-depth study of the workplace in the business process outsourcing/call center industry

Jon Messenger, Geneva-based ILO Senior Researcher and editor of the new book will talk about trends, working conditions and employment practices in the Philippine Business Process Outsourcing Industry (BPO).

Says Messenger, “A lot has been written about this phenomenon and its implications for economic growth and employment. However, very little is known about the working conditions in the BPO industry.”

The new book asserts that “remote work” or the offshoring and outsourcing of business services from developed to developing countries using information and communications technologies - is creating jobs that are of “reasonably good quality by local standards”, but that the industry has some way to go before achieving full decent work.

“Offshoring and Working Conditions in Remote Work” presents the first in-depth study of the workplace in the BPO industry.

Work in this industry can broadly be divided into “voice” services, such as call/contact centres, and “back office” services, like finance and accounting, data processing and management, and human resource development.

“This is a rapidly growing industry worth an approximate US\$ 90 billion,” says Messenger. The book presents case studies in four major “destination” countries. Aside from the Philippines, the book looks at the BPO industry in Brazil, India and Argentina.

It examines remote work, its impact on the labour market in general and the workforce in particular, and the possible implications for working and employment conditions in countries where the BPO industry is growing.

The book concludes by offering some suggestions for government policies and company practices that could further improve the quality of jobs in the BPO industry and increase productivity. Lawrence Jeffrey Johnson, the new Director of the ILO Country Office for the Philippines will also be present during the launch.

Venue of the launch is the ILO Country Office for the Philippines, at Meeting Rooms A&B) 19th floor, Yuchengco Tower, RCBC Plaza, 6819 Ayala Avenue, Makati City.

7DAYS

Thursday, July 22, 2010

A source of stress for workers

Thursday 22 Jul, 2010



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<http://www.7days.ae/storydetails.php?id=96632&page=localnews&title=A%20source%20of%20stress%20for%20workers>

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However Messenger said BPO workers suffered from higher-than-normal stress levels.

“BPO workers face heavy workloads backed by performance targets combined with tight rules and procedures, all this enforced via electronic monitoring,” Messenger said. “This type of high-strain work organisation is well-known to produce high levels of job-related stress.”

Among the stress factors, staff typically worked the telephones all night to serve sometimes difficult customers in distant time zones. Some firms also controlled when workers could rest and take toilet breaks.

In the Philippines, which has the world’s second biggest share of the market, staff turnover rates averaged about 30 per cent annually, compared with less than ten per cent in other sectors, Messenger said. In some companies in the four countries studied, turnover could reach 100 per cent or more every year, he added.

The ILO called on governments as well as companies to protect the health and safety of BPO staff working at night, and urged call centre operators to redesign work processes so staff enjoyed more autonomy at work.

Outsource jobs good, but conditions could be better: UN

http://www.eneWS.ma/outsource-jobs-good_i180856_2.html

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(© AFP/File - Romeo Gacad)

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WEALTH CREATING

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<http://www.apnaville.com/outsource-jobs-good-but-conditions-could-be-better-un/>

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Teleconference Calling

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<http://www.teleconferencecalling.net/outsource-jobs-good-but-conditions-could-be-better-un/>

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