

CloudFactory, a Cloud Labor platform for creating work opportunities for people in developing nations

Developed by two idealistic Canadians and two open-minded Americans, the Cloud Labor platform [CloudFactory](#), launched this week in San Francisco, is an ambitious project based in Kathmandu, Nepal, with an objective to bring new opportunities of work to people in developing countries to help fight poverty.

Crowdsourcing.org had the opportunity to interview Tom Puskarich, VP Business Development of CloudFactory while he was in San Francisco for the launch of the platform at TechCrunch's Disrupt conference. We learned that CloudFactory is following a similar model to established providers such as [CrowdFlower](#), [Microtask](#) and others. CloudFactory allows businesses to design virtual assembly lines for all types of digital work such as inputting data from handwritten forms, extracting data from images, flagging bad content and categorizing things. However, "The main difference between CloudFactory and its competitors is its free self-serve toolset that allows users to set-up their own workflows" Tom Puskarich, VP Business Development, informed us.

The broader mission behind CloudFactory's model is that the rise of crowdsourcing has made it possible for remote regions of the world, such as Nepal, to become part of the global, labor supply chain. Initially the assembly lines at CloudFactory are being staffed by cloud workers from around the world through Amazon Mechanical Turk but a key part of the vision and plan is to train up and equip a new workforce in developing nations to increase the capacity of CloudFactory and drive quality up. By enabling the local Nepalese work force as the virtual command and control hub and by creating new groups of crowdsource workers in impoverished regions, new streams of income can be immediately directed towards the mission of fighting famine. "Similar to how [Kiva](#) connects people through micro-loans, CloudFactory is connecting people through micro-work," said Mark Sears, CEO of CloudFactory. "We see this market-based approach to poverty alleviation being a key to unlocking the massive human potential in developing countries."

This video explains how CloudFactory works:

The first seed of an idea that later blossomed as CloudFactory was planted in the Summer of 2008 when the Canadian Mark Sears and his wife Laurel went to Kathmandu, Nepal and decided to stay. "I have a passion for technology, business and making a difference in the world around me", wrote Mr. Sears in his LinkedIn profile. "Our skills, talents and experiences are now being applied in a slightly different way and in a completely different context". In 2010, an American couple Tom and Alana Puskarich joined to the team that is now around 40 strong with the majority from Nepal itself.



According to CloudFactory, it wants to lead by example showing how innovation can occur within the developing world. CloudFactory's platform was designed and coded in Nepal by bright young software engineers wanting to help create life-changing work for people in countries like their own.

The team in Nepal see the future of crowdsourcing as an industry with prospects of explosive growth ahead, now that platforms such as CloudFactory are able to provide the infrastructure to connect the work to the workers. CloudFactory is poised to capitalize on this new demand and is committed to growing its hand-picked workforce across developing nations through on-the-ground training, testing and equipping of cloud workers.

Early adopters like tech startups are finding unlimited uses for their custom created CloudFactory assembly lines whether it be at the core of their market facing value proposition or part of their back-office support model. Since an average developer can build and integrate an assembly line in as little as an hour, innovating is easy without the usual hurdles and costs associated with other outsourcing options.

CloudFactory is redefining work and fighting poverty along the way. It is a simple but huge vision for a group of underdogs from the Kathmandu Valley, in Nepal, as they define themselves.

"We aren't part of a fancy incubator program and we don't have VC backing. We are simply surrounded every day by millions of people who have so much to offer the world and we are working our butts off to create opportunities for them".

As scribed on CloudFactory's website: "People from around the world have entrusted us to build everything from simple web applications to large enterprise systems. These opportunities to perform work for leading companies has provided us with the skills, experience and money to build our own dream projects. [in CloudFactory] You are looking at it."

"CloudFactory is working to redefine crowdsourcing and create rewarding work for 1 million people in developing nations".



Tom Puskarich and Mark Sears during the TechCrunch's Disrupt conference in San Francisco.

The Interview:

Crowdsourcing.org: It is about a group of Americans living and working in Nepal?

Tom Puskarich: Well the team is mostly Nepalese but the owners of the company are Mark and Laurel (Canadian) and my wife, Alana and I (American). We all live and work in Nepal. Alana and I moved there in January 2010, Mark and Laurel 3 years ago after a 2 week vacation, training a couple of guys in a computer programming language called Ruby on Rails; they just ended up staying.

Crowdsourcing.org: Why Nepal, which is best known for its mountains like Everest, than for hi-tech initiatives?

Tom Puskarich: There are a lot of answers I could provide to this question but it's more that Nepal chose us than the other way around.

Crowdsourcing.org: Are you climbers and adventurers?

Tom Puskarich: It's actually laughable how little time we've had to go to do hiking, climbing, etc. I actually love to hike but have found that starting a business in a developing country takes a decent amount of my attention and time. =)

Crowdsourcing.org: Should we think of you as social entrepreneurs?

Tom Puskarich: Yeah, we look at it as really having 2 bottom lines. We think a truly market based approach that serves both workers and clients will ultimately drive a lot more work and opportunities for people to gain life giving income. But there's the other bottom line of are we succeeding in providing people in developing countries opportunities as well.

Crowdsourcing.org: Do you think is possible to make money with this new platform?

Tom Puskarich: Yes. Absolutely. We have competitors such as CrowdFlower, Microtask, etc. who run for profit companies on this type of model.

Crowdsourcing.org: And how do you believe you can improve the life of poverty struck people around the world?

Tom Puskarich: We see poverty all around us in a place like Nepal, where aid from countries is essential for meeting many immediate needs but aid has always fundamentally struggled to change the larger paradigm and actually create industry that in itself will generate jobs for the people, people who are now able to live longer and are more educated. CloudFactory can be that missing piece of the puzzle to connect people living in poverty to a global economy and the opportunities that come with it.

Crowdsourcing.org: What is the difference between work for CloudFactory or other crowdsourcing platform?

Tom Puskarich: Our short term difference is that instead of looking to expensive consulting costs that can be a big barrier, we let businesses, especially small businesses and developers, innovate their own ways to use CloudFactory with our free self-serve toolset of building virtual assembly lines. The long term difference, though, is that we're seeking to build a qualified and motivated workforce through on-the-ground training and cloud worker kits which we can provide through a microloan program.

© 2010-2014 Crowdsourcing LLC [Terms of Service](#) [Copyright Policy](#) [Privacy Policy](#)