

CloudFactory aspires to create a million jobs

A programme to create outsource jobs for tech-savvy Nepalese draws interest.

By Surath Giri for Khabar South Asia in Kathmandu

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The seminar hall of United World Trade Center in Kathmandu is packed. Around 500 people, mostly students and fresh graduates, have converged for one reason.

CloudFactory is hiring.

The social enterprise plans to create 1 million jobs in developing countries like Nepal over the next five years for anyone who can comfortably use a computer and who speaks a little English. The company teaches Ruby on Rails computer programming in a team-based approach, building a high-tech workforce to run companies' web development and e-commerce divisions.

Kathmandu native Barun Thapa, 22, is just a few months away from obtaining his computer engineering degree. "I have applied for a job at CloudFactory and looks like I will get one," he told Khabar South Asia.

Anjita Pathak, 42, is just as optimistic -- after she too applied.

"I came here to know about the jobs for my daughter but from what I understand, even I can do the job," she said.

According to Mark Sears, the 35-year-old Canadian founder of the start-up, the idea of CloudFactory germinated during a two week trip to Nepal in 2008. He saw many engineers and business graduates idling around in search of a job.

So he decided to stay and found a company that would connect those would-be workers to the global economy.

"I found that Nepal has a huge, well-educated (http://www.al-shorfa.com/en_GB/articles/apwi/articles/features/2012/04/16/feature-02) young population tied to the world when it comes to entertainment but disconnected when it comes to work and employment opportunities," Sears told Khabar.

Realising the opportunity, Sears began training three engineers on Ruby on Rails programming code.

"Then I was able to get an outsourcing job which helped me start the enterprise," he said. Today, it employs around 190 people, including part-timers. That growth is not likely to slow down in the near future.

"We organised the CloudFactory open event to reach out to more potential employees," he said. "We plan to hire another 500 people in the next two months. I believe we can create as many as 150,000 jobs in Nepal and about a million jobs in developing countries like Nepal in the next five years."

Before applying for a job at CloudFactory, aspiring workers must first take a 30-minute basic computer skills test on Facebook and then form a group of five other people who passed the test.

Once accepted, employees are assigned various outsourcing jobs like data entry or accounting. Though they can telecommute, group members are asked to hold weekly 2-hour meetings to track their progress because it helps promote knowledge exchanges and accountability, Sears said.

Anil Ghimire, 24, who hails from Sarlahi district, has worked at CloudFactory for a year since his graduation from Kathmandu University. He feels a sense of pride in working for a world-class company he feels will change the lives of people in Nepal and beyond.

"The flexibility provided by CloudFactory is very helpful but unlike other on-line jobs, it is more organised and helps you connect with other people," said Sushmita Acharya, 21. She's worked at CloudFactory for two months and recently bagged an award for completing the company's one-millionth task.

As a part of their social responsibility, work teams are also asked to go out to communities every two months and perform social work, helping build schools and donating books.

Sears said other companies are also showing interest in investing in Nepal.

"Nepalese youth (http://www.al-shorfa.com/en_GB/articles/apwi/articles/features/2012/09/03/feature-06) underestimate their capabilities," he said. **"Given the right opportunities, they too can become world-class engineers and experts. Arrival of more companies will provide them with such opportunities."**

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