

Over the past few days, Time magazine as well as Agence France-Presse have reported on the phenomenon of an increasing number of young Taiwanese preferring to work in China. This is nothing new, as Taiwanese have been looking to China for business opportunities for decades.

However, as salaries and opportunities in Taiwan continue to stagnate, this number will only increase, despite increasing cross-strait tensions and an ever-growing and maturing sense of Taiwanese identity.

Why bring this up now? Both articles cite an uptick in China's various programs and incentives to lure Taiwanese talent. Yes, there are worries that Taiwanese could abandon their loyalty and political ideals once in China, but what happens to them once they are on the other side of the Taiwan Strait is beyond Taipei's control.

Political ideology does not put food on the table, nor does it advance careers. However, you can work in China without compromising your beliefs — just do not talk about them in public. For many, that is not too steep a price to pay for a better future.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Labor has approved raising the monthly minimum wage from NT\$21,009 to NT\$22,000. That will help quite a few people, but it will not help much with Taiwan's overall salary problem. Those looking to China are not the ones earning minimum wage, they are the ones who slave for long hours in local companies making a "livable" salary, but with little hope of buying a house or even raising a family.

On the flip side, people making NT\$30,000 per month will likely remain at that salary level, and companies might even be tempted to offer less money to prospective mid-level employees to compensate for the increased minimum wages they have to dole out. They might even raise the prices of their products and services, rendering the wage increase meaningless.

The government can do its part to create higher-paying and more inspiring jobs in various industries, but the problem is not the lack of jobs — the heart of the problem lies within the nation's corporate culture. For example, with even such a tiny proposed increase in the

## Corporate culture repressing Taiwan

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minimum wage, corporate representatives had pushed for even less. They walked out of the talks and complained afterward that they were being treated like automated teller machines, disregarding the fact that starting wages have been stagnant for many years. It is clear that things cannot stay the same if Taiwan wants to have any hope of saving its economy.

This is a corporate culture that tries to squeeze as much as it can out of its workers while giving them as little as possible, completely disregarding the fact that happier workers lead to greater productivity. It is a culture that is often riddled with bureaucracy and values seniority over ability; one that only looks at short-term gains, disregarding the long-term future of the company and its workers.

There are many ways to go about making a company more productive and efficient while avoiding the near-exploitation of its workers. For example, companies could try to inspire their workers or give them incentives to work harder and more efficiently. A positive work environment where people are rewarded will attract and retain more talented, young employees, who are the key to propelling an organization forward.

Furthermore, higher salaries mean more purchasing power, which is good for the nation's economy in the long run, and businesses will also benefit. By no means will this make Taiwan as attractive as China as far as money and opportunities go, but not everyone prefers to live in China.

A change in corporate culture will give some young people at least one more reason to stay.

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