

Commission: International Labour Organisation (ILO)

Subject: Does technology help or hinder working conditions?

Author: Amazon

With the ongoing development of technology, many employers and employees are faced with challenges concerning the workplace as well as opportunities to embrace the change. Automation of the workplace, when implemented properly, can create jobs instead of taking them away in favour of machines. As new markets emerge in the world, it is crucial to invest in equal opportunities and education necessary to reduce the skill gap. The COVID-19 pandemic has also heavily influenced the working conditions and forced many businesses to adapt accordingly.

When expanding employment opportunities, Amazon aims to prepare its new employees for the modern working conditions. In India, the company has invested over 5,5 billion US\$ already, with a plan to commit an additional 1 billion dollars to help digitise small and medium businesses and allow them to operate online. With more than 60,000 employees, the company works with more than half a million sellers on the marketplace. (Following the Indian law, only third-party goods from independent sellers can be put up for sale on the site.) Amazon has allowed many of these sellers to expand their business as more than half of them come from small towns and cities and would not be able to reach as many customers without the help offered by the company. A partnership with local stores has helped some 50,000 Indian sellers ship \$1bn worth of goods to destinations outside India. These “mom and pop” stores can reach many more customers thanks to an Amazon partnership which allows them to list their products on the site. “We are investing to create a million new jobs here in India over the next five years,” Bezos said. “We’ve seen huge contributions from our employees, extraordinary creativity from the small businesses we’ve partnered with, and great enthusiasm from the customers who shop with us—and we’re excited about what lies ahead.” In the United States, the company offers various education opportunities to its employees. In July 2019, Amazon announced a plan to invest \$700 million into training employees. By 2025, 100 000 employees will have received necessary training to pursue high skilled jobs, at Amazon or anywhere else. In February 2019, The Future Engineer program was announced, with a goal of providing computer science courses to more than 100,000 underprivileged kids in 2000 high schools across the United States. Four year, \$10,000 scholarships and Amazon internships would also be awarded to 100 students every year. In June 2020, Amazon announced that it will create an additional 3000 jobs in South Africa with the ability to work from home.

As the COVID-19 pandemic shook the world economy and threatened many jobs, Amazon took adequate steps to ensure the safety of both the clients and employees. In June, a one-time Thank You bonus totalled \$500 million and provided employees with up to \$3000 of additional income. Approximately \$4 billion were invested in COVID-related initiatives, keeping employees safe and developing COVID testing capabilities. All necessary measures such as social distancing, cleaning and disinfecting the workplace, as well as distributing the protective equipment such as masks, were implemented to ensure a sanitary workplace for everyone. Health benefits are offered to employees as soon as they start their job, and those diagnosed with COVID-19 receive up to two weeks of paid time off. Customers can have the package delivered and left at their door, with no need to come in contact with the delivery team. In addition, all delivery vehicles and equipment are disinfected each day, and delivery devices and mobile phones are disinfected after each delivery appointment. The company acts against price gouging to help protect customers, help ensure fair pricing, and combat those seeking to profit off the COVID-19 crisis.