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Samasource: Give Work, Not Aid

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Abstract

Samasource sought to use work, not aid, for economic development. The company secured contracts for digital services from large companies in the United States and Europe, divided the work up into small pieces (called microwork) and then sent it to delivery centers in developing regions of the world for completion through a web-based interface. Different from traditional business process outsourcing companies, Samasource relied on a marginalized population of workers to execute the work. The case explores how the company can grow its capability to help individuals around the globe through the provision of digital work. This case includes color exhibits.

Learning Objective: Understand the challenges and the opportunities around the fragmentation of work (microwork). Understand the opportunity and challenge of running a social business. Consider how to scale the operation while providing quality to customers and protecting employees.

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