

Work-life balance the great juggling act

Ben Schneiders, Workplace reporter, The Age, 1 March 2008

IT IS the great juggling act of modern life. Employees would prefer greater balance between work and the rest of their lives but also face cost-of-living pressures that mean they have to work more than they would like.

Nearly 80% of people asked in a study by **McCrindle** Research thought that work-life balance was either very important or important to them. But nearly two-thirds of respondents said they were "driven to work more in order to earn more money for life expenses", the survey of 800 people found.

The results are part of a paper to be presented at a work-life balance forum in Melbourne on Monday. The emphasis on balance, the paper argues, reflects profound social changes.

"Even as late as the recession of the 1990s, gen Xers (and the baby boomers before them) were grateful to have a job. Now in our economic climate, staff of all ages are more empowered to see work-life balance," the paper says.

The **McCrindle** study found that if pay was within the average range, it was not the main factor for people staying in that work. Job satisfaction, flexibility and security were the top three conditions respondents valued.

"Work is an important part of my life, but it is not my (whole) life," said one person in the study. Another said: "If there's a clash in the work-life balance, life wins."

And people seem willing to move if they don't like the results. In 1960 the average job tenure was 12 years, but now it is less than four years.

Converge International's Lindsay McMillan, who commissioned the paper, said there was a challenge for business to acknowledge the shift in attitudes. "Business needs to address the fact work is not central to new generations as it was to baby boomers and their parents," he said.