



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

News/Business/Finance/Lifestyle/Health Editors

### **Community Business' Latest Survey shows that 1 out of 4 Hong Kong employees would consider leaving for better work-life balance overseas**

**Although working hours have improved from last year, work-life balance has not improved**

**Hong Kong, 23 October 2007** – The latest survey by Community Business, a leading Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) organisation in Hong Kong, has shown that 27% of employees said they would consider moving out of Hong Kong in pursuit of better work-life balance. Commenting on the finding from the State of Work-life Balance in Hong Kong Survey 2007, Shalini Mahtani, CEO of Community Business said, "This finding should be a major concern for Hong Kong employers and is perhaps the greatest business case for work-life balance in Hong Kong. As economies around the globe compete for talent, work-life balance for employees must become a key component of Hong Kong's competitive advantage. Our survey has revealed a lot of important information that would assist companies to strengthen their work-life balance initiatives."

The survey is the second study of its kind commissioned by Community Business and conducted by Dr Robert Chung at the Public Opinion Programme (POP), The University of Hong Kong. It was conducted by random phone interviews in July 2007 and the 1,014 respondents were all full-time employees aged 15 and above.

The survey is the brainchild of Community Business Leadership Team (CBLT), a group of business leaders whose aim is to raise the awareness and promote CSR in Hong Kong. Benjamin Hung, Chair of CBLT and Country Head, Consumer Banking of Standard Chartered Bank remarked, "Some companies are doing more to promote work-life balance than others because they are aware there is positive impact on business if their employees are happy with their work-life balance. At present, over 60% of employees say they suffer from prolonged fatigue and 33% say their productivity is being impacted. Work-life balance is important for Hong Kong- for our productivity and our appeal for the best global talent."

**The survey shows that employees are working less hours in 2007 (49.2 hrs per week) compared to 2006 (51.3 hrs per week) and contractual hours are also down.** However, all these hours continue to be greater than 40 hours per week which is the maximum international limits as defined by the International Labour Organisation (ILO). The survey also shows those on lower incomes tend to work the longest hours, and there is a gender bias in working hours. Contractually men (48.9 hrs per week) are required to work longer hours than women (44.2 hrs per week). In terms of actual hours, men work longer hours (50.9 hrs per week) than women (47.5 hrs per week).

**However, although working hours have fallen, work-life balance has not improved.** Respondents in last year's survey said 61:39 was the ideal split in terms of work and life activity hours while their actual split was 84:16. This year, the ratios have dropped to 60:40 and 83:17 respectively. According to Dr Robert Chung, Director of POP, these figures indicate that people's expectation has changed along with their work environment - both in favour of a more balanced lifestyle. However, employees' self-rating of their achievement of work-life balance dropped from 5.7 out of 10 to 5.6, while the percentage of those who said they led a balanced work and private life dropped from 44% to 42%. All these changes seem to indicate that although working hours has shortened, work-life balance has not improved, said Dr Chung.

**Poor financial well-being has overtaken long working hours as the greatest work-life challenge this year.** When asked to pick the biggest challenge to their work-life balance, 19% of the respondents chose

“financial well-being or wealth management” compared to 14% last year. Dr Chung said, “This shows that although the economy has improved, more people have become worried about their financial well-being. As employment rate and job mobility go up, more people may have to adapt to their new working environment, and to face new pressure. Coupled with rising expectations on work life balance, it seems that there is still a long way to go before Hong Kong has a happy and life-balanced work force.”

Ms Mahtani advised, “Enlightened companies should acknowledge that financial security is a huge issue for employees and may wish to consider how to address this - perhaps looking at ways of educating its employees about good financial management. This greater financial awareness may help to reduce financial concerns and therefore stress of staff. “Long working hours” is ranked the second greatest challenge followed by “Having to take care of children or family members”.

**A majority (26.8%) of the employees said that a 5-day work week would most help them achieve better work-life balance.** Findings show that this year, more employees are enjoying 5-day work week - 35% in 2007 versus 28% in 2006. However, 62.6% of them say their companies are not adopting or are thinking of adopting a 5-day work week.

**The second most desired corporate initiative that employees say would help them with work-life balance is more annual leave.** But worryingly, the average annual leave entitlement has reduced significantly to 13.9 days from 15.3 days last year, and 36.3% of employees do not always take their annual leave entitlement. “It is vital that companies address this issue. They can start by strongly encouraging employees to take the full amount of annual leave as stated in their contracts. Also, companies who do not already give employees a minimum of 7 days paid leave per year must be made aware that this behavior is unlawful,” she said.

**Working overtime has increased this year and this may be partly because contractual hours are down.** It remains that the top 3 reasons for working overtime on a regular basis are too much work need to support co-workers and requests from the boss, respectively. This is the same as last year. But also worryingly, over 25% of employees say they work overtime because they do not want to be seen to be the first to leave the office or leave before their boss. Ms Mahtani urges corporate leaders and senior executives to be role models for employees in work-life balance by setting examples, such as leaving on time. “This would empower those employees who are at work simply to “give face” to also leave on time and add credence to those companies who say work-life balance is important to them,” she said.

The survey is sponsored by ABN AMRO, Baker & McKenzie, Cisco, Lehman Brothers, Prudential, Standard Chartered Bank, Time Technology, Towngas and The Walt Disney Company in Hong Kong. For full survey findings, visit <http://www.communitybusiness.org.hk/documents/2007/WLB07.pdf>

### **About Community Business**

Community Business is a unique membership based non-profit organisation whose mission is to lead, inspire and support businesses to continually improve their positive impact on people and communities. Community Business provides training, facilitation and advice to some of the world’s largest companies in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and its major areas of focus include CSR strategy and policy, corporate community investment and diversity in the workplace. Founded in 2003 and based in Hong Kong, Community Business currently works with a number of organisations, small, medium and large, committed to CSR. For more information, visit [www.communitybusiness.org.hk](http://www.communitybusiness.org.hk).

For further information, contact:  
Kym Leo, Community Business  
Tel: 2152 1889; Fax: 2540-9520  
E-mail: [kym@communitybusiness.org.hk](mailto:kym@communitybusiness.org.hk)

Hui Yuk-min, ABN AMRO  
Tel:2700-5644; Fax: 2700-5874  
Email : [yuk.min.hui@hk.abnamro.com](mailto:yuk.min.hui@hk.abnamro.com)