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Community Business' latest survey shows that one third of employees in Hong Kong would consider leaving their current job for better work-life balance

Work-life balance has worsened since 2007

Hong Kong, 17 October 2008 – The latest survey by Community Business, a leading non profit organisation specialising in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in Hong Kong, has shown that one third of employees say they would consider leaving their current job for better work-life balance. Commenting on the findings from the State of Work-life Balance in Hong Kong Survey 2008, Shalini Mahtani, CEO of Community Business said, "This finding should be a major concern for Hong Kong employers and is the greatest business case for the need for companies to address work-life balance in their organisations. Particularly in difficult economic times, employers need to ensure that they have the best people to help drive business performance - this survey tells us that if you don't treat your employees well, they may well leave you in search of better options elsewhere."

The survey is the third 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 2008 and the 1,011 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 awareness and promote CSR in Hong Kong. Benjamin Hung, Chair of CBLT and Chief Executive Officer of Standard Chartered Bank (Hong Kong) remarked, "This research shows that leaders' and managers' attitudes play a key role in employees' work-life balance. This year over 13% of employees in Hong Kong say that the biggest challenge to their work-life balance is the attitude of their manager. The onus is on us as leaders in Hong Kong to do more."

The survey shows that employees have less private time in 2008 (10.4 hours per week) compared to 2007 (12.0 hours per week). The survey also shows those on lower incomes tend to have the least amount of personal time and that there is a gender bias in personal time with men tending to have more personal time (11.1 hrs per week) than women (9.6 hrs per week).

Employees in Hong Kong have a worse work-life ratio in 2008 (84:16) compared to 2007 (83:17).

More employees state poor work-life balance is having a negative impact on work productivity and work quality. Similar to previous years, over 60% of employees state that they are suffering from prolonged fatigue and extreme tiredness as a direct result of poor work-life balance. Ms Mahtani advised, "Significantly more employees (38% in 2008, up from 33% in 2007) are stating that long working hours are having a negative impact on their work productivity and work quality. This clearly shows that working long hours can be bad for business."

Hong Kong employees remain as pragmatic as ever and have adjusted their ideal work-life ratio in line with the economic situation. Respondents in last year's survey said 60:40 was the ideal split in terms of work and life activity hours while this year the ratio increased to 62:38, and employees' subjective self-rating of their achievement of work-life balance increased from 5.6 out of 10 to 5.7. According to Dr Robert Chung, Director of POP, these figures indicate that people's expectations have changed along with their work environment. "All these changes seem to indicate that although actual work-life balance is slightly worse in 2008, employees in Hong Kong are flexible and will adjust their expectations of work-life balance in accordance with the market." said Dr Chung.

Long working hours has overtaken the need for financial security as the greatest work-life challenge this year. When asked to pick the biggest challenge to their work-life balance, 18% of the respondents chose "long working hours", compared to 15% last year. Dr Chung said, "Most people last year were concerned with their financial security and this year the biggest obstacle to work-life balance is long working hours. Employers should be discouraging a culture of long work hours and should focus employees on delivering the job at hand." This year "Financial well-being / Wealth management" ranked second followed by "Leader's attitude" which ranked third.

Employees rate employers' efforts in promoting work-life balance lower than last year. This year employees rate their employers' efforts in promoting work-life balance as 4.6 out of 10 and last year it was 4.7.

A majority (27%) of the employees said that a 5-day work week would most help them achieve better work-life balance. The second most desired corporate initiative that employees say would help them with work-life balance is more annual leave followed by career breaks. "All of these initiatives suggest that employees say would help them with better work-life balance point to more personal time", said Diana Tsui, Member of CBLT and Corporate Social Responsibility Director of KPMG.

The survey is sponsored by Baker & McKenzie, CLP Power Hong Kong Limited, KPMG, MTR Corporation, Pinsent Masons, Prudential, The Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS), Schrodgers, Standard Chartered Bank (Hong Kong) and Time Technology. For full survey findings, visit <http://www.communitybusiness.org.hk/documents/2008/WLB08.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.

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