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Study finds it's all work and no play for some small businesses

A new study released by Curtin Business School explores whether the benefits of owning a successful small business outweigh the drawbacks.

The study '*Money Can't Buy Me Love*' (authors Paull Weber, Louis Geneste and Carolyn Dickie), explores the reflections of 59 financially successful Western Australian small businesses and finds that lack of personal time and harm to family life are common owner concerns.

Lead investigator, Dr Paull Weber, said society often focused on financial indicators as a measure of business success, and in doing so ignored the large personal sacrifices business owners make.

"In recent years we have seen a strong shift in research and management focus in larger organisations towards the importance of work-life balance. However, work-life balance is often a foreign concept for small business owners," Dr Weber said.

"The results from the study suggest the small business owners, while they are overtly financially successful, pay for their success through a lack of personal and family time."

The study, focuses on a group of financially successful business owners who had an average salary of \$209,000 per annum, categorising the benefits and drawbacks of owning a business into six areas; community, career, work-life balance, family, workplace and financial.

Dr Weber said the results created as many questions as they provided answers.

"Our study shows that there needs to further research into the area of work-life balance amongst small business owners.

"Perhaps a better way to monitor success is to include more relevant measures of performance such as profit per hour worked.

To delve deeper into this issue, Dr Weber and his colleague Professor Jack Carlsen are currently analysing a larger sample of 388 businesses who took part in Western Australian Small Business Benchmarks to get a more complete picture of some 43 identified benefits and drawbacks of success.

The results of this larger study are due for release in early 2012.

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Category	Benefit	Drawback
Career	Autonomy, Achievement, Pleasure in teaching others	Isolation from my profession, responsibility bears heavily. Future for small business looks "bleak".
Community	Recognition <i>by</i> the community and giving <i>to</i> the community	None mentioned
Family	Work opportunities for family members, more capacity to support family needs	Reduced time with family, strained relationships, lack of suitable successor within the family.
Work-life Balance	Flexible work time and choice of task/direction, following a passion, work-life balance, money buys the lifestyle	Odd hours and long hours lead to limited free time, pressure & stress, limited friendships, Have become a workaholic.
Workplace	Professional esteem, satisfying clients, variety and challenge, the challenge of starting something new	Always being on call, unsociable hours. Stressful workplace, difficult customer.
Financial	Higher income, financial security, rewarding, stability in the bad times (not being made redundant), pay less tax. Accumulating assets/equity. More money for family needs.	Variable income, too much red tape, cash flow unpredictable, mixing of home and business finances puts a strain on home finance, variable external economic conditions.