



WORKING NINE TO FIVE

By Emma Mills



he Blackberry:

- A lovely, summer fruit reminiscent of a countryside childhood, messing about among brambles and returning from a walk with purple teeth;
- The bane of every office worker's daily existence; a hungry, demanding infant that slowly squeezes the life out of you with it's constant nagging, blinking, twinkling and beeping?
- The best invention since the computer which has revolutionised the lives of everyone lucky enough to have one.

Whatever your view, there is no doubt that we are all working harder than ever. Competition from other skilled workers means a pressure for us to outperform our colleagues, and an international market now means having to coincide with US and Asian working hours, even if it falls way past our bedtimes.

The aforementioned Blackberry, among other things, means we have the ability to work from home, the car and even the beach or ski slope. Most worryingly some managers expect this as standard. Overtime is becoming

mandatory, and a definite must if you want to progress up the career ladder.

Added to this, with the cost of living ever more expensive, and most people wanting to juggle careers with families there is the need for couples to stagger their working hours around both the school day and the office. This can mean a constant feeling of 'catch-up' and working long and uncivilized hours.

It is all these reasons which mean people are now finding it much harder to ensure they maintain a healthy work life balance.

So, what can you do?

- **Information is key.** Track everything you do for one week, both in and out of the office. Then decide what's necessary and satisfies you the most, and cut activities you don't enjoy, don't have time for or do only out of guilt.
- **Flexible friends.** Find out if your employer offers flexi hours, a compressed work week, job-sharing or telecommuting for your role. The flexibility may alleviate some of your stress and free up some time.
- **Manage your time.** Look at your

culture.

