

nbn™
BUSINESS

Australia's broadband network

nbn™ S-ME time





Foreword by Bernard Salt

In one sense this is a story of Australian ambition. This is the work-life dream that drives small business owners to take a chance on their business pursuit in the first place. This is the idea that ‘there are better things to do’ like engage with family, friends, hobbies or to simply have more “me time” which I think fits in nicely with the Australian way of life.

KPMG Partner Bernard Salt founded and heads KPMG Demographics a specialist advisory group that looks at social, cultural and demographic trends over time.

Bernard has worked as an advisor to business and government for more than 25 years drawing on census and other datasets.

He is a twice weekly columnist with The Australian newspaper and he is one of the most in-demand speakers on the Australian corporate speaking circuit.

Bernard holds a Master of Arts degree from Monash University and since 2011 has been an adjunct professor at Curtin University Business School.

Bernard also holds a number of board positions in education and the arts.

I am reminded by this research of AB Paterson’s classic Australian poem Clancy of the Overflow which was in fact a city clerk’s lament, a daydream if you like, about how he’d like to be like Clancy and “take a turn at droving where the seasons come and go.” This suggests that we Aussies are still daydreaming at work thinking about what we’d rather be doing.

It speaks to the desire that drives people to start their own businesses in the first place. What it shows is that things start-off simply enough – Baby Boomers look to reinvent themselves in the workforce and Gen Y ditch the traditional workforce all together. But as small businesses become more successful and take on more staff there is a greater time commitment from the business owner. To some extent a bigger business requires more management time but I suspect that success can become intoxicating leading some owners to lose sight of the need for the work-life balance that is so essential for mental and physical health.

In fact, it was this finding – the bigger the business the greater the time commitment from the owner – that most intrigued me. SME owners want the independence and the financial rewards of running their own business but success in this field can have the effect of closing down other worthy pursuits such as hobbies, sport, friends and sadly sometimes family and marriages.

I loved the response to the question that asked how many hours you would like to work and to which the collective answer was effectively half the hours that are now being worked. Another way to look at this is to say that SME owners (like the rest of us I suspect) are working twice as hard as really they want to. The irony is that as they get more successful they actually work more.

A stressed let alone an obsessed SME owner is bad for their own health and bad for their key relationships. Another aspect of this research demonstrated hope; it followed on from questions around what owners say they would do with the time that could be given back to them if they didn't have to commute or if they found better ways of running their business online. Here is where I think you see what SME owners really want. Here is where you see modern-day workers thinking about the life of Clancy

Baby Boomers think about working from home and taking holidays while empty nesters think about catching up with families and loved ones. Ambitious Millennials on the other hand would rather put more time back into sleep or, if they're single, perhaps looking for love. We may be at work and working on our own business, but secretly deep down we are yearning for something else. Life is more than work. We all want to put the "ME" back into the SME.

In the future I think we will see even more of a shift towards work-life balance, where work fits around lifestyle and not the other way around. And especially as we get access to new technologies and software like remote collaboration technologies and cloud access and of course access to fast internet such as services over the **nbn**TM network. After all the quicker we get our work done the quicker we Aussies can do what we really want to do.

It would appear that early-adopting Millennials are actually leading the "S-ME" revolution. According to the research they see cloud-computing as a key way to save time. Almost half of this generation is already using cloud-based software such as accounting, email marketing and collaboration platforms to do just this.

It's only a matter of time before we see these new technologies infiltrate the older generations of business owners who will surely upscale their internet usage to find even more ways to save time that they know can be better spent elsewhere.

The research on the work habits and aspirations of business owners tells a story that deep down I think we all knew: we work hard, we want independence, we don't like wasted time and we want more time back in our lives to pursue the things in life that really matter.

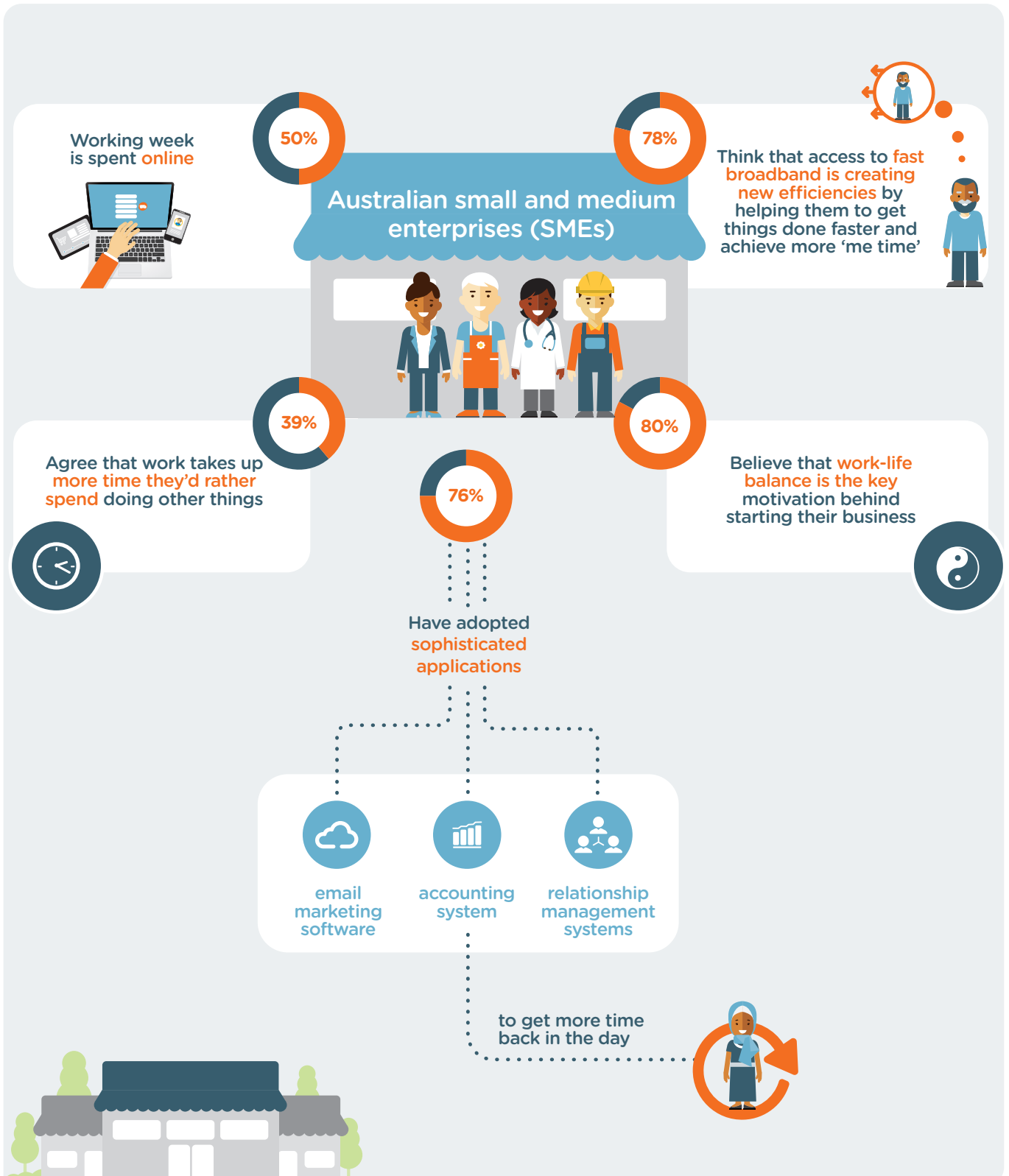
What Australians want is control over our lives, some measure of control over our working situation and the income so derived, and the freedom within our working environment to follow a stream of thought uninterrupted by tiresome download waits.

Perhaps with technology improvements, like access to services over the **nbn**TM network and cloud services, there will be less dreaming and more doing so that Aussies can finally do what they want to do rather than to just dream it. It would appear that Australians are still dreaming about the life of Clancy.

“What Australians really want is control over their lives, some measure of control over their working situation and the income so derived.”

Key findings

In a quest to squeeze more valuable hours back in the day, Australian business owners are embracing access to fast broadband and cloud applications to help them save time and achieve a better work-life balance.



Australia's obsession with 'SME time'

While four in five (80 per cent) Australian business owners agree work-life balance was the key motivation behind starting their business, more than a third (39 per cent) say work takes up precious hours they'd rather spend on 'me time'.

80% Work-life balance is a key motivation for starting a SME business



- ★★★★★ 47% Very important
- ★★★★ 33% Somewhat important
- ★★★ 11% Neither important nor unimportant
- ★★ 3% Somewhat unimportant
- ★ 5% Very unimportant



46% ★★★★★ work the hours I want



48% ★★★★★ flexibility to work when I want

38%

get frustrated by the amount of time they have to spend working in their business



☯ **84%** work-life balance is most important

39% work takes up time I'd rather spend doing on other things

Age Group	Work-life balance is most important	Work takes up time I'd rather spend doing on other things
18-34 yo	69%	46%
35-44 yo	81%	44%
45-54 yo	84%	53%
55+ yo	87%	32%



Baby Boomers vs Gen Y



87% started their business to become their own boss



79% are more likely to be motivated by financial rewards

68% would rather reinvest their free time in holidays, rather than work



42% would rather catch up on their sleep



In SMEs regained time, the most popular activities would be

56%



more time with partner/children

51%



more focus on health and wellbeing

47%



more time by myself 'me time'



22%



Male

59%

28%



Female

48%



Singles and couples

44%



Empty nesters

63%

Singles and couples with no kids are more likely to spend spare time on:

38%



meditation, practicing yoga / mindfulness

17%

looking for love



SMEs would spend their 'me' time on



64% holidays or travel



55% hobbies and interests



53% home chores and maintenance

Driving Efficiencies

Business owners have surpassed using the internet for simple email and file-sharing tasks with 76 per cent now adopting sophisticated Software as a Service (SaaS) applications such as cloud-based customer marketing, accounting and relationship management systems to get more time back in their day.

SMEs are not just sending emails

The internet is integrated into businesses and fundamental to how they operate



- 96% Email
- 87% Banking and paying bills
- 85% Web browsing
- 52% Online customer service
- 48% Procurement: online purchasing of goods and services
- 46% Taking orders and payments
- 36% Online marketing
- 34% Cloud based services including storage and computing (e.g. using Office 360 in the cloud)
- 30% Online training
- 29% Video calling / conferencing (e.g. Skype)
- 27% File transfer systems (e.g. WeTransfer)
- 22% VOIP (or using the internet for phone calls)
- 21% Video streaming
- 20% Collaboration applications (e.g. Intranet, Project management systems, Skype, Slack, Trello)
- 16% E-commerce (my business is an online business)
- 16% Virtual Private Network (VPN) or other remote access
- 9% Competing internationally
- 4% Other



Saving personal time

key reason for using SaaS applications

83% all SMEs describe SaaS applications as important to saving time

49%

Very important



34%

Somewhat important



98% Gen Y SMEs find SaaS capabilities particularly important to saving time

66%

Very important



33%

Somewhat important



38% all SMEs

use SaaS applications in their business, most common:

20% accounting systems



14% email marketing software



10% collaboration platforms



47% Gen Y SMEs

adopted cloud-based SaaS applications which include:



26% accounting systems



22% email marketing software



20% relationship management systems

Services vs non-services industry using SaaS

54% use daily
78% total users



Services
accommodation, ICT professional services, education, training, etc.

71% total users
39% use daily



Non-Services
manufacturing, construction, retail, transport, trade etc.



March 2017

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The S-ME Time report was commissioned by **nbn** and authored by Bernard Salt on behalf of KPMG. The study examined how small and medium enterprises experience time and how their interactions with technology change how they spend their time and what they do with it. The report included insights from a survey conducted by Evolve research in January 2017 of 699 Australian small and medium sized businesses with less than 100 employees across every state and territory.

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March 2017

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