

DOUBLE DUTY

Your neighbour might be one. So might your dentist, or even you. Many live in secrecy and fear of discovery, but as Cathrin Schaar finds, the job jugglers are starting to have their day.

PHOTOGRAPH: NICOLE BENTLEY

If only her corporate clients could have seen her. Then again, perhaps it's better they didn't. In 2006, occasional fashion model Jasmine Chew landed a particularly exciting job. She would be part of a body-painting display sponsored by M.A.C Cosmetics at the opening event for Australian Fashion Week. Apart from a small pair of briefs, she would pose dressed in a frock made only of paint and Swarovski crystals for the national newspapers and assorted guests. As Chew observes with a laugh today: "It's not exactly the kind of thing you talk about at a client meeting."

Because Chew lives a double life. Some might even call it a triple life. She partially financed her way through three degrees – law, business and arts – by modelling for both print media and on television. Then in the mid-1990s the high achiever sang and appeared in the video for the international number one hit song *How Bizarre* by OMC. And even though she has since risen up

through the ranks of Sydney's corporate lawyers, Chew continues to harbour musical ambitions.

"It was a bit like being Superman getting changed in the phone box," admits the now vice-president and assistant general counsel at a large US investment bank, who has had music lessons since she was three years old. "There's corporate, conservative Jasmine in her grey suit and glasses and sensible heels with very demure conversation. And then there's the flashy me, involved in music, clubs, nightlife and fashion in my personal time. I kept quiet about my passions, because in that other world you end up not being taken seriously. And you can't go playing small gigs in pubs or having band practice until 2am, and then go to work at 8.30 in the morning."

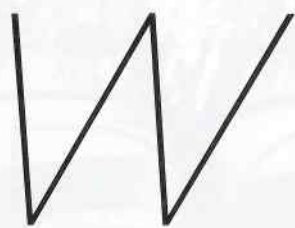
Chew's story is far from unusual. She's one of a growing number of Australians with double, triple and even quadruple professional lives, individuals who have two or more pursuits that they work at seriously and often earn money from. Indeed, they have a portfolio of different careers from which they pick and choose. ▶



"Actually, this type of thing has been going on forever, in lots of different ways," explains Marci Alboher, the author of *One Person/ Multiple Careers: A New Model for Work/Life Success* as well as the now-defunct *New York Times* column *Shifting Careers*. She was one of the first to popularise the term "slasher", which applies to those with multiple different jobs, such as the artist/actor or the doctor/writer.

As Alboher says: "There's always been the Renaissance man or woman, and there's always been the moonlighter, struggling to make ends meet. And there's always been the wealthy dilettante who was an equestrian and then had some other business or really big, serious hobby. But I think when I started seeing it as something that would make a good book was when it [the phenomenon] developed this huge crossover.

That was when people – of all ages, all socioeconomic groups and all around the world – started to become proud of their slashing."



While many people's double lives remain undocumented or unofficial, and exact numbers are hard to come by, it is clear

the Australian workforce is changing. Recent statistics indicate that about 30 per cent of jobs are part-time, and recruiters report temporary assignments and job sharing has increased, while permanent, full-time placements have not grown as much.

"Generally, we are seeing quite a dramatic growth in part-time, temporary and contract work," says Professor Sharon Parker, of the University of Western Australia's Business School, who specialises in workplace psychology and employee relations. "Downsizing, changing expectations of employers and more uncertain economic times mean we are seeing fewer permanent, stable jobs. The job-for-life mentality is changing among both employees and employers. And, increasingly, we are seeing more and more portfolio workers, or people who work multiple part-time jobs with different employers."

For some, it's more of a necessity than a pleasure, something those in her line of work have always known, says Gracie Otto, a member of the Otto acting clan. Her multiple career paths all fall within the film industry: besides a spot of modelling and working as a celebrity spokesperson, she's acted, directed, edited, worked in a camera department and written for film. "It is certainly happening more among my group of friends who have come out of acting or film schools," says Otto. "Our industry in Australia is so small, I feel we have to be multi-skilled if we are going to make a living out of our chosen professions."

But it's not just the economy that's causing Australians to lead double lives; there are numerous contributing factors. Firstly, technological changes have made it possible for everyone to be more creative. It's the result "of the democratisation of the creative industries where anyone, with the right application and drive, can make it", British marketing strategy company The Future Laboratory reported in 2008, referring to all those who can now edit films or become sound engineers at their own desks. There's more opportunity for pursuing that dream of creativity simply because everyone has the tools on their own computer.

Technology also allows for more flexibility in the workplace, Suzi Dafnis, a Sydney-based entrepreneur and director of the Australian Businesswomen's Network, points out. "If we have a smartphone, we're online 24-7," Dafnis says, "so it's not like you walk out of the office and your work is done." It also means you could be running a business and writing a book at the same time. And, secondly, there's our more general change in attitudes toward work.

Edrei Cullen is a music manager and a children's book author. The mother of two wrote the *Flutterwig* trilogy as well as managing a stable of talented musicians, including Paul Kelly, through One Louder, the music management agency she runs with her husband.

She says slashers have adapted to the very different world we live in today. "We don't grow up in one village and find one partner and stay in one job for our whole lives. That's just not how the first world works now. It's harder to be loyal these days, I'd say, and I don't think there's a lot of loyalty from employers, either. So I think people are used to considering all the options these days."

Rather than focusing on climbing the office ladder and plotting an upward career trajectory, slashers are considering a more horizontal portfolio of working experiences, all of which fit into their chosen lifestyles.

"There's a notion that work should be about more than paying the bills," Alboher explains. "That it should be about your passion, it should be fun or expressive. Authenticity," she says, "has become acceptable

in the workplace. Just as you are now able to show more of your sexual identity and you're able to dress more fluidly at work to show who you are, so too has it become acceptable to admit there is more to you."

Lawyer/musician Chew is more philosophical. "People's values are changing," she says. "Now that we don't have to work in a field with a plough from dusk to dawn just to eat, that idea of working, working, working to buy fancy boats and cars is no longer everybody's idea of success. Hipsters are turning their nose up at mass consumerism and a younger generation is much more impressed by creativity. Being able to do something slashy, something that's a bit left of field, makes you feel like you have more to give back to the world."

As evolved as this sounds, there are, unfortunately, also disadvantages to being a slasher.

Actor/director/writer Otto admits as much. "The fact that I do the occasional modelling or celebrity appearance may sometimes detract from the serious aspects of my film work, for some people," she says. "Possibly people don't quite know how serious I am about my work, because I am always popping up somewhere else. And it can be difficult to develop one project consistently when jobs take me in different directions. But I hope the fact that I am developing my skills on a number of fronts will pay off one day."

Chew says she has to keep music and law separate. Despite her obvious qualifications and the long hours she puts in at her desk,

"A younger generation is much more impressed by creativity. Being able to do something a bit left of field makes you feel like you have more to give back to the world"

she worries that others in the legal profession might doubt her seriousness if they knew about her interests outside of work. "And it's hard on the flip side, too. Full-time musicians begrudge what you do; they feel you're not a real musician because you don't know what it's like to suffer. You're not struggling, you're not gigging and you don't go away on tour. But, personally, I don't think that makes you any less of an artist."

Performance pressure can also be far more personal. "Multi-tasking is a killer," confesses music manager/author Cullen. "I've got to go from being a clear thinker, to a patient one, to a creative one, without any ... kind of adjustment. Also, there's the concern that you're not doing any of it entirely properly. Or that you are but that you might collapse, knackered, in the process."

Working at several different jobs, rather than just one main earner, can also result in what Tina Brown, former editor of *The New Yorker* magazine, described somewhat scathingly as "the gig economy" in a January 2009 column on *The Daily Beast*, the influential current affairs web site she runs.

In it, Brown highlighted some of the other disadvantages of careerist multi-tasking. "Doing three things badly is the name of the game," she said as a criticism of slashers. "Everyone knows what it actually feels like, this penny-ante slog of working three times as hard for the same amount of money (if you're lucky) or a lot less (if you're not). Minus benefits, of course. That's why the gig economy is no picnic for the flailing employer, either," Brown complained. "With so many part-time people on – and not on – the job, corporate America has started to feel like it's on a permanent maternity leave."

It can be highly problematic for employers. As Cullen points out, while everyone is off pursuing creative and professional freedom, "the worry is, who will do the nuts and bolts?" She continues: "I expect the managers will end up doing more of this as people seek increasing satisfaction out of employment. I'd like to believe that this will ultimately bring a more equal balance between [the haves and the have-nots]. But a lot of us will go down while the system recalibrates."

A July 2011 *New York Times* article entitled "At Goldman, pressure on staff to keep a low profile" addressed the trickiness of balancing careers at seemingly opposite ends of the respectability spectrum. According to the article's author Kevin Roose, staff members at notoriously private investment banking giant Goldman Sachs were not supposed to go public about their "serious hobbies". An amateur rapper, nicknamed the "hip-hop investment banker" by local media, was told to stop performing and recording or resign. He resigned. Several bankers who were also fledgling writers were given strict instructions not to put anything about their professional lives down on paper.

"It depends on whether the spillover between the two careers is positive or negative," Parker notes. "Positive spillovers include, for example, a woman bringing skills and connections from one of her

careers into her other career. Negative spillovers include, for example, the woman not putting in enough time or energy into one career because of the demands of the other, or using in a non-professional way connections obtained in one career for personal self-interest in the other career."

"The smart employers will be the ones who can find ways to create positive spillovers between careers," Parker concludes. And research indicates that these kinds of employers are more likely to be more successful in business and in employee relations.

Sydney's "Dub Dentist" is living, cavity-filling proof of this. "What I've found over the years is that these creative pursuits have inadvertently given me and my business an identity that sticks in people's minds, different from the conservative image of the profession," says David Kagan, who's been a dentist for 25 years but whose "next level" hobbies, as he calls them – music production, DJing and photography – have informed his working life. His photos hang on the walls of his city practice and the music there is contemporary, chilled out and unique.

All that is good for him and it's good for his clientele, Kagan says. "A lot of people know about the unusual nature of the surgery and this has proved a huge positive both in terms of making a living and enjoying myself. The patients relax and genuinely enjoy hearing stuff they may not have heard before ... in what is traditionally perceived as a stressful situation. Although my interests and my main vocation are worlds apart," Kagan explains, "there is a nice symbiosis."

Parker points out the slasher model could actually be better for you in the long term. "Research shows that having multiple identities can be very important for an individual's mental health and wellbeing. If too much is invested into a single identity and then this identity is threatened, this can be quite destructive. For example," she says, "there are studies that show if a professional musician – such as a player in a major orchestra – has an accident and can no longer play their instrument, individuals who are too strongly invested in this one identity can struggle to move on. They suffer as a result. But if this same musician had other work identities they could draw on, like teaching or some other profession, they are less likely to be completely destroyed."

"In fact," Parker continues, "I'd suggest that being willing to pursue multiple passions can actually be a sign of maturity, because it can be easier to stay in a single, safe career. It can take

quite a lot of confidence and self-esteem to extend oneself to take up another, more risky career."

For Chew, "it's all about choice. For me, the joy of hearing a song I wrote, or performing it, is similar to the satisfaction I get from closing a great deal. And to be perfectly honest, there is a fear of failure [in art]. It's humbling. I really respect musicians who are making it."

While musical success can be hard to measure, success in the legal world is either "a tick or a cross", she notes. "So I just feel fortunate to be able to have the best of both worlds. It's the balancing of the left and right brains," she concludes. "If I am working non-stop, I feel a bit soulless. Having my other creative side makes me feel more complete." ■

"Being willing to pursue multiple passions can be a sign of maturity, because it can be easier to stay in a single, safe career. It can take quite a lot of confidence to extend oneself to take up another"