



27 June 2008

Do-it-all Staff

- Decline in consumer spending drives need for multi-skilled house workers -

Brits are making drastic cut backs on domestic staff revealing a trend for multi-skilled household help new research out today reveals.

According to the annual 'Domestic Staff Index' from leading jobs site Gumtree.com, British households are now forking out just £16.7billion a year hiring a range of staff from nannies to cleaners, a £3.3 billion dip on last year's £20billion.*

This curb in spending has resulted in the emergence of the 'multi-skilled helper', an employee capable of helping out with everything including cleaning the house, mowing the lawn, babysitting and cleaning windows.

Over a third (36%) of those who hire staff say their household help now provides a much wider range of talents than in the past. Ad postings in the housekeeper section of Gumtree echo this trend with an increase of 40% in the past year for employees offering multiple skills, and families seeking these 'do-it-all staff'.

Of the 40% of Brits who spend on household help, nearly half (43%) cite overtime in the office as the biggest reason for relying on others in the home. Over one in five (21%) see their weekends as too precious to waste cleaning the house and a quarter believe that 'life's too short to clean'.

The findings also reveal the current economic climate is making it difficult for over a third of Brits (37%) to justify keeping their staff at a time when they are tightening their belts on other spending. With inflation at an 18-year high, an uncertain property market and the rising cost of living, almost a third (31%) worry their income will soon mean they can't afford domestic staff at all, even a low-cost cleaner.

In an effort to save money and still hold on to help around the home, people are adopting savvy ways to cut costs:

- Almost one in five (18%) are sharing staff with friends and neighbours
- 13% are skill-swapping to afford their staff, such as offering English lessons to their Polish cleaners (an option for the 22% who have formed such an emotional bond that they can't let their staff go)
- Nearly one in ten (9%) are looking for cheaper alternatives to their current staff
- A number of people (13%) are using the time saved by hiring help to boost their income with a second job

Gumtree spokesperson Trisha Routledge says: "The introduction of a more multi-skilled housekeeper means people are using Gumtree as their one-stop-shop to find one person who they can hire to look after all their needs. We see new posts daily for people looking for someone who offers a three-in-one package in a bid to save money."

This decrease in spending and sharing of labour is, however, having a knock-on effect on domestic services, forcing workers to up their asking price and actively seek out extra employment. Multi-trader Ray Nuelle owns Castle Builders in Surrey and has noticed a major difference in the past year: "For the first time, in my many years of trading, I've become very concerned about where our next job is coming from. We're being forced to offer even

more services in a bid to keep the business running smoothly and I can't see it changing anytime soon, with the current situation as it stands. Gumtree is perfect because at least it's free for us to advertise our services saving us valuable funds and also reaches out to a wide community in our area."

The top five household services Brits are still spending on are:

- Cleaner
- Window cleaner
- Gardener
- Launder/ironer
- Babysitter

And even though times are tough and look set to get tougher, there are some services we simply couldn't live without, the top three being a window cleaner, cleaner and gardener.

Consultant Rebecca Wheeler from Happy Home Childcare and Housekeeping Agency comments: "There has been a notable increase in the range of tasks that standard domestic staff are willing to do, as a result of the demand from households affected by tightening budgets. The more affluent clients are still willing to pay a premium for exceptional nannies and housekeepers who also offer a wide range of skills."

-Ends-

Notes to editor:

* Research carried out by Redshift among 1,020 adults in June 2008. Based on average spend on staff of £1,678 a year, multiplied by 40% of all British households (40% of 24.9 million) Research conducted in July 2007 revealed a total household spend on domestic staff of £20bn

For more information or case studies please contact the Gumtree press office at Lexis Public Relations on 020 7908 6589 or email gumtree@lexispr.com

Multi-skilled staff wanted on Gumtree

Desperately seeking a 3-in-1 nanny, housekeeper and dog walker for three small children in London. Will pay £265 per week.

<http://www.gumtree.com/london/47/23122847.html>

Looking for a live-in housekeeper and nanny to carry out all household errands.

<http://www.gumtree.com/london/19/25142619.html>

Housekeeper and handyman/gardener/driver couple wanted to help look after two children, three dogs, two ponies, two hamsters and two goldfish in North Yorkshire.

<http://www.gumtree.com/london/00/24975100.html>

Are you a Super Cleaner? Couple in Chiswick are seeking a world class cleaner/ babysitter who will know what needs done without being asked. Will pay £8 per hour.

<http://www.gumtree.com/london/73/24837373.html>

About Gumtree.com

- Gumtree.com was created in London in March 2000 and now covers 60 cities across 6 countries - the UK, and US Ireland, Poland, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa
- It is the UK's biggest website for local community classifieds including flat share, flat rentals and jobs
- Some Fast Facts
 - 20,000 new ads in a day
 - 100,000 new ads in a week
 - Half a million new ads in a month
 - One million ads live on the site at any one time
 - 150 million page impressions every month
 - Around 6 million visitors a month
 - Gumtree.com users spend 5,360,000 minutes on the website each month
- Gumtree is your local community online. Home to all the things you'd expect from your local community; a place to find and advertise rooms, flats and

houses, a notice board for selling and buying stuff, somewhere to find job or a date
even just to chat with friends