

## Stressed-out IT women tempted to quit, survey finds

News Story by [Kathleen Melymuka](#)

MARCH 15, 2001 ([COMPUTERWORLD](#)) - Stress

and lack of work/life balance in the IT workplace is taking such a toll on women in the industry that 41% of the respondents to a recent survey reported that they were considering leaving their jobs.

That and other findings led the survey authors to conclude that women in IT are the "canary in the coal mine" warning that the New Economy workplace is destructive for employees -- both men and women -- and for organizations in the long run.

The survey ([download PDF file](#)) of 265 members of [World Women in Technology](#) (WorldWIT), an online networking community of more than 7,000 women, found that they are passionate about the creative freedom and relative lack of barriers to leadership in the IT world but that they have equally strong negative feelings about the around-the-clock lifestyle in the technology industry.

"You cannot live your life on burst mode. It's not sustainable," said Liz Ryan, founder of WorldWIT and Ucentric Systems LLC, a home networking start-up in Maynard, Mass. "You will not win, and your employer will not win."

The survey found that 73% of respondents reported a great sense of achievement, impact, satisfaction and opportunity for growth and creative freedom in the IT world. Further, they are willing to spend more time working if they can have flexible hours or work at home and have their success tied to performance rather than "face time" in the office.

Women were equally passionate about the downside of IT, however, with 68% saying that they're worried about the stress of the around-the-clock lifestyle and the lack of work/life balance, and 65% reporting that work has had a negative impact on their personal lives.

The bottom line is that despite the positive aspects of their work in IT, 41% were considering leaving their jobs. "The reasons we got involved in the first place are still there," said Ryan, "but they're being countered by the enormous draining pace and expectations. Women are asking, 'Is it still worth it?' And that's a very big question mark."

Mary Mattis, a senior research fellow at Catalyst, a New York-based research organization that focuses on women in business, said the survey is in line with other research on women in IT, and the implications for managers are clear. "Managers in IT need all the talent they can get, and turnover is costly, especially with people working on projects."

The survey findings, said Mattis, underscore what's been called "the stupid curve." "Fifty-five percent of your hires are women, but you lose a much larger percentage of them than men. This business case doesn't work," she said. "Turnover costs money."

The survey was conducted by Mindy L. Gewirtz and Ann Lindsey, principals of GLS Consulting Inc. in Brookline, Mass. They said IT managers should realize that what women are experiencing in the IT workplace is very likely a reflection of men's experience and that unreasonable stress and lack of work/life balance have the power to destroy productivity in the long run.