



The secret life of bosses

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Scrambling to the top of the [career](#) ladder doesn't leave serious suits with a surfeit of leisure hours. Some snatch their recreation on the golf course or bike path in the early hours. Mining magnate Gina Rinehart unwinds with creative endeavours. The world's richest woman revealed her literary side earlier this year with the publication of *Our Future*, a poem extolling the virtues of the resources sector.

Others favour more esoteric pursuits, a world away from the cut and thrust of corporate life. Here, four high fliers share their off-duty passions.

David Downie

Lawyer, children's author

From Monday to Friday, McCullough Robertson partner David Downie pores over contracts for high-tech clients who call on his intellectual property law expertise. Off duty, he unwinds by writing children's fiction. Books are dashed off at Enid Blyton-esque speed, with Downie typically churning out a 6000-word manuscript in a weekend, when the mood takes him.

He's produced three stories this year for the eight-and-up market and amassed a global team of volunteers to edit and illustrate his yarns and [translate](#) them into more than 30 languages, including Javanese and Irish Gaelic. Stories are for sale on Amazon.com or children can watch them read aloud on YouTube for free, by performers who donate their time gratis.

It's a benevolent literacy project, not a money spinner, says Downie, whose love of language drew him into the law.

"It's about making books available to children who wouldn't otherwise have access to them," he says.

"I hope kids around the world can enjoy a book for [free](#) in their own language. I get a great sense of satisfaction from it. Every now and then I get a creative spurt and spend a weekend writing another book."

Michael Sherlock

Entrepreneur, groupie

Speaker and corporate strategist Michael Sherlock made his dough from Brumby's, the hot bread business he grew from a single store in 1975 to a \$46 million, 320-strong chain at time of takeover by RFG in 2007.

Outside the boardroom he's a rock and roll groupie who has attended thousands of concerts, beginning with the Rolling Stones at Melbourne's Kooyong tennis stadium in 1972 and continuing through to Coldplay's Australian tour this month.

Younger years in London saw him taking in four gigs a week, including Pink Floyd, Elvis Costello and the Stones more than a dozen times apiece.

There's been the odd spot of celebrity shoulder-rubbing over the years. In 1973, an after-show encounter led to backstage passes for himself and a mate for the next night's performance and an invite from Rod Stewart to [join](#) his band, Faces, for the rest of their Australian tour.

"I stood at the side of stage, handing Rod his whisky and dry," Sherlock says.

"There was no one but us and the band."

These days, Sherlock gets to a gig around once a month; his taste taking in new talents as well as nostalgia rock.

"I've always got [tickets](#) lined up," he says.

"I always wanted to be part of a band and never had the chance ... I've been to that many concerts, wanting to experience it and not having the talent."

Lorie Helliwell

Change management chief, twinkle toes

When she wants to shut out the clamour that comes with running a national change management consultancy, Ogilvy Impact managing director Lori Helliwell returns to the hobby of her childhood.

The 40-something Sydney-based Brit donned ballet shoes and leotard 18 months ago after a 33-year hiatus and has become hooked on plies and arabesques. After hours of [classes](#) and weekend rehearsals, she recently performed in her first concert alongside a melting pot of other adult performers.

"It's given me a strength I didn't realise I had and made me a little more brave," Helliwell says.

Refreshingly, the ballet studio is a place where status and occupation count for little, she says.

"You're not judged by what you do or where you work."

Helliwell describes dancing as both relaxing and intensely focused - and as reinvigorating as the day job can be draining.

"You come out completely energised ... it keeps me sane, happy, fit and healthy."

David Hedemann

Retail development executive, petrol head

While formula one has a certain cachet and horse racing is known as the sport of kings, greyhounds and V8 supercars sit closer to the other end of the style spectrum. It's the latter that floats retail development consultant David Hedemann's boat.

A well-known figure in the Queensland property sector, the former Multiplex project director is no stranger to a bit of high life. If there are clients in tow, it's the cricket, rugby union or posh nosh at Aria or the Brisbane Club. Off duty though, he heads for the Willowbank raceway circuit outside Brisbane, fold-up chair in tow, for the smell of petrol and the sizzle of deep-fried Dagwood Dogs.

Sitting on the sidelines didn't come easy to at first, after a youth spent racing a modified Datsun 1600. These days though, he's happy to watch and relax in a milieu somewhat removed from his usual.

"V8 has a large blue-collar following, but not exclusively," Hedemann says.

"Formula one is a very refined sport. There's not much contact between cars - it tends to be race-ending. V8s, it's a bit more push and shove."

And an escape from the corporate world, he adds.

"I've never taken a client - it's a sneak-off hobby, not something that gets discussed very regularly."

What hobby helps you unwind from the 9-5 grind?

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