



» Allison Ashby, right, with her personal concierge Abbie Martin. Hiring help about the house is about making "me time", Mrs Ashby says.

taking care of business

The "do-it-for-me" generation is upon us, outsourcing the housework and taking on personal assistants in all areas of life, writes Nadine Williams.

DID YOU KNOW? IF THEY HAD TO LIVE THEIR LIFE OVER AGAIN, 29.1 PER CENT OF RESPONDENTS WOULD WORRY A LOT LESS, 18.6 PER CENT WOULD SAVE MORE MONEY AND 14 PER CENT WOULD TAKE BETTER CARE OF THEIR HEALTH.

» Meaning of Life survey, www.wiresurveys.com

CASH-rich, time-poor baby boomers are spawning a burgeoning new industry - lifestyle and personal concierge services.

The do-it-yourself boomer generation of the 1980s has metamorphosed into a new "do-it-for-me" mindset in middle age, with boomers forking out to off-load the mundane responsibilities of life. KPMG partner and demographer Bernard Salt says boomers have hit a "take charge" transition stage of their lives.

"They have already created a new life form in society - the teenager - and boomers are now aged 45 to 60 and the mid-point is 53," he says.

"Their grandparents were old people at 53 but boomers have another 30 years."

As a generation, they have been "gifted" 20 more years of life compared with their grandparents.

"What they are doing right now is what they did in the '50s and '60s when they crystallised the teenage phase," Mr Salt says. "We are now seeing people at 53 who are young, fit, healthy, attractive and looking for new challenges."

Instead of renovating Victoria bluestone villas in the 1980s, 20 years later people in their fifties are paying others to do the back-breaking work.

And instead of the mundane work their mothers did, lifestyle managers pack the pantry.

"Back then they were on their way up, carving out their niche," Mr Salt says.

"They couldn't afford to buy in services, so they did it all themselves. By the turn of the century, they had been swept along by two property booms which gave them wealth and the capacity to buy in services for a "Do-It-For Me" generation."

Mr Salt says the shift was triggered by three boomer philosophies. They:

LIVE busy lives and can afford to hire helpers.
ARE at the peak of their earning capacity, most with two-income households.

DON'T have time to do it all anymore - and don't want to.

Enter Lifestyle Elements - the brain child of GenY entrepreneur Abbie Martin, who has launched a personal concierge service to handle people's domestic scenarios.

"My clients are all females; they are the ones who choose to work or do what they enjoy instead of the traditional household duties," she says.

Ms Martin worked as a nanny while finishing a UniSA marketing degree and found herself running endless errands.

"It is absolutely the norm in America and booming in the UK; it is certainly growing in Australia as a new industry." ■

case study: The old adage "time is money" is the mantra for Allison Ashby, founder of Ashby Molitor Executive, who has hired a lifestyle manager to help her run her domestic life.

The busy recruitment executive wanted to outsource her weekly shopping trip but a personal "concierge" has helped her find leisure time. Ms Ashby, 51, has engaged Abbie Martin of Lifestyle Elements to handle the mundane household tasks as well as filling the family larder.

"I run a business and I run my home the same way," she says. "I am not arrogant to think I can do everything. I outsource things I am not particularly good at or I don't particularly like. In my home Abbie does my shopping because I hate it."

Ms Martin also organises maintenance and gardening for Ms Ashby's rental properties and care-takes their home when they travel.

"I see Abbie's time as a gift; I have taken up gym since I hired her," Ms Ashby says.

"She helps give me the time to go to the gym and to take cookery classes."

However, the biggest thrill of hiring a concierge was at the end of a working week. "On Friday, I come home to a clean house and my shopping is packed away and I can begin to relax," she says.

A brush with breast cancer triggered a quantum change in Ms Ashby's thinking.

"I looked at my life differently and put some 'me' time in there." ■