NEW YORK (Reuters) - Cellular telephones and wireless BlackBerry email devices may be addictive, but most business executives insist mobile technology has improved the balance between their work and home, a study said on Thursday.

The study, by executive recruitment firm Korn/Ferry International (NYSE:KFY - news), found four out of five executives globally are always connected to work through mobile devices, such as cell phones, PDAs (personal digital assistant), laptops or pagers.

More than one-third of 2,300 executives surveyed in 75 countries believed they spent too much time connected to communications devices.

But more than three-quarters, or 77 percent of respondents, said they believe mobile communication devices primarily enhance their work/life balance rather than impede it.

Jim Craig, a spokesman for strategic communications firm Sitrick and Co. in New York, said his handheld BlackBerry has made a significant difference -- and was mostly positive.

"It has helped me manage things without being the office all the time. I travel a lot, to South America, and I can use it there, in the street, or in New York," said Craig. "It has also made me much more efficient.

"Addicted? Some people have said that I am. It really is a part of my life now."

Ontario-based Research In Motion Ltd.'s (Toronto:RIM.TO - news) (Nasdaq:RIMM - news) BlackBerry became a technology must-have in the late 1990s as a tool that delivers email automatically to users on the move as well as providing phone, text messaging, Internet, organizer and corporate data applications.

It is now jokingly called the "CrackBerry" by many users.
In the first quarter of fiscal 2007 ending June 3, RIM shipped 1.2 million devices with the total number of BlackBerry subscribers rising by 680,000 to about 5.5 million although the firm now faces competition from rival wireless devices entering the market.

The survey coincided with a U.S. academic warning that keeping employees on electronic leashes such as laptops, BlackBerries and other devices could lead to lawsuits by those who grow addicted to the technology.

Gayle Porter, associate professor of management at the Rutgers University School of Business in New Jersey, wrote a paper now under review saying workers whose personal lives suffer due to tech addiction could turn on their employers.

"These people that can't keep it within any reasonable parameters and have these problems in their lives, at some point may say: 'My life is not all that great. How did this happen? Who can I blame for this?'" Porter said.

(Additional reporting by Wojtek Dabrowski in Toronto)
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