



EARN MORE, WORK LESS: EXPLORING THE 4-DAY WORK WEEK

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BY NINA GREEN

This week, Nina Green deep-dived into the concept of a 4-day work week. It's not so much a trend as an idea that had its 15 minutes of fame not too long ago when Sweden trialed a 6-hour work day and the world questioned whether 40-hour work weeks could be altered finally.

Nina asks the question, does time really equal money (and does money equal happiness, satisfaction, health, etc...) ?

Slowly making the switch

I wanted to know, can more money be made in less time when taking the proper approach? Young professionals are working long hours across Europe and some people think it's time to change. I wondered if I was one of those people.

In order to live in modern society, we recognize that we need jobs. More specifically, we need to work a certain number of hours to achieve the things we want in life - things like affording an apartment, keeping a pet, buying groceries. Living to a desired



hours a day. The British work culture of long hours actually isn't having a positive impact on productivity when compared to other countries with similar economies.

“Full-time employees in Germany work 1.8 hours a week less than those in the UK but are 14.6% more productive. And in Denmark workers put in over 4 hours less than UK workers, but productivity is 23.5% higher”

Commitment to employee happiness

Productivity seems to be higher in those working less hours in a week, perhaps because there is less time to procrastinate when 5 days' worth of work has to fit into 4. But I wanted to also look at whether working fewer hours effects employee happiness - and if that's important to companies or not.

Recently I've seen several progressive companies that are doing a lot to increase employee satisfaction; offering benefits like kombucha on tap, paid gym memberships, work from home days each month, and dog friendly office spaces. If companies are seeing the benefit of keeping employee morale up, does cutting work hours fall into this category as well?

To investigate how shorter working weeks would effect employee satisfaction, we have to think about what you or I would change if our income stayed the same but our work week was shortened. I reflected on whether my habits would change, whether I might be more focussed, what I'd have more time to do if I had an extra day... and in the end I decided to ask someone who was already in this situation.

Working 4 days a week in the FIRE & wtv. offices, Juliette Schack told me about what it was like to have Fridays off work, how it changed her habits, and why it made her feel more human:

I've been working at 80% for a year now, with Fridays as my off-day. To put it really simply it's been fantastic.



my own business. I can also, you know, go to the doctors or the bank on my day off whereas other people only have Saturday morning to do that.

And I think that's essentially how I use the extra day: either to be restful, creative or productive. It adds value to my week. I've actively noticed that it's positively affected my well-being and my ability to just enjoy life. It's one less day outside of the office.

Even though you might love your job, it doesn't mean you always want to spend 5 days out of 7 doing it. A shorter working week may mean more control over our lives and how we spend our time.

Practical for all or only some?

A major point to consider is if all industries and jobs benefit from this structural change, or if some are simply better suited for maximum work hours by design.

There are some examples where a 4-day week might be harder to implement. For instance, school teachers.

If teachers were to work 4 days a week, it would go to follow that students/pupils would probably go to school 4 days a week too. Which then begs the question, could this be a change beneficial to everyone in society and does the integral structure of our weeks - the way we view the weekly passage of time - need a total overhaul? Could we do with a change?

As another example, a startup or small family business may not be able to offer its employees less hours the same way an established multinational corporation can. Small to medium sized enterprises (SME's) could find it hard to compete with larger organizations.

SMEs, though, are also exceptional because of the smaller, more personal relationship that employees may have with either the company itself or the employers. Start-ups or smaller businesses vying for a slice of the market have the excitement factor, often



Country-specific or worldwide?

We also need to look at this on a global scale. Every country has different work cultures, so it's possible that this idea couldn't thrive everywhere.

Countries struggling to boost economic growth may want to put in more work in a few concentrated years before being stable enough to offer four days of work.

Technology also plays a role. As more and more processes become automated, getting more work done in less time isn't an impossible thought. However, not all countries

have access to the same technology therefore perhaps developed countries are more equipped to be able to offer a 4-day week.

Countries that rely on farming and agriculture rather than technology would have a hard time seeing the benefits of shorter hours, especially during the busy harvest season.

So why is a 4-day week important? The health and economic impacts

Health-wise, burnout and work-related stress for employees would become less common. New parents or those caring for a family member would benefit from additional time away from work. With more hours to spend caregiving, there would be less of a work-life conflict.

As Juliette told me, a 4-day working week can make you feel more human - more a part of this world than just a part of the office furniture. It can help you be more productive and therefore more restful on your day off; it can be a chance to create your own projects and perhaps achieve personal goals that would increase your life satisfaction. It offers more control over your own time.

But if we worked less official hours, does that mean we can be contacted outside work hours for emails and calls? I know most people are mentally checked out on a Friday



The main question to think about is, can companies maximize the well-being of staff while minimizing the number of hours worked?

Most organizations are realizing that the only way to truly measure the feasibility of this is through trial runs, and most need several years to evaluate long term results.

While European companies are deciding whether or not to implement this change, take some time to think. If your company started implementing a 4-day work week, what would you do with your extra time? Spend more time with family and friends? Pick up a new hobby or just take some extra time for self-care and relaxation?

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