The 4 Day Work Week

Table of Contents

The 4 day work week, something that originally felt like a farfetched dream, is now gaining momentum with more companies adopting this new work schedule for companies of all sizes:

■ **Small/Medium (1- 200 employees):** Wildbit, Buffer, Cockroach Labs, G2i

◤ **Large (201 - 1000 employees):** Headspace

● **Enterprise (1001+):** Bolt

This can be attributed in part to the mounting data showing that the 4 day work week increases employee happiness, engagement, approval of leadership, and productivity while reducing employee stress and burnout.

While there are several positive aspects of the 4 day work week for employees, it also helps increase bottom lines for companies.

A few of the top benefits for companies include:

1 Recruit top talent with a competitive advantage

We all want the best talent who can deliver the most value on our teams, but the market is competitive. Competing with the salaries and benefits for developers against tech giants like Google and Apple can seem impossible.

Therefore, differentiating on work place benefits, like the 4 day work week can become a heavy tool in your corner. A study from Zip Recruiter found that job postings offering a 4 day work week saw **15% more applicants** than those of a 5 day work week.

Offering a stronger work/life balance can make up the difference between tens of thousands of dollars in base salary, benefits, and bonuses between offers, especially for senior talent. At the end of the day it's not just competing with FAANG companies on salary, but that we've seen for ourselves at G2i the ability to get much higher quality candidates because we have a culture that promotes work-life balance.

2 Retain the talent you already have

Hiring and turnover are incredibly expensive and it doesn't help that technology has one of the **highest turnover rates** of any industry. It's predicted that replacing a technical role has an average cost of **100% - 150% of an employees salary**. Costs comprising this loss include recruiting, onboarding, lost productivity, lost engagement, new employee errors/lower task completion, and training.

Therefore, once we've attracted top talent to our companies, it's important that we retain these employees in order to keep costs down. **Around 63%, nearly two-thirds**, of employers adopting the 4 day work week in the UK reported it helped attract and retain talent. The 4 day work week has been shown to increase employee happiness and engagement, leaving them satisfied with staying with companies longer.

3 More, higher quality work completed

a.) Focused work hours

Employees spend their time at work 40 hours a week, but that's not the same as working 40 hours a week. The 4 day work week allows employees to be more present, undistracted, and focused during the time they're at work (see Keys to Success below). This shows time and again that less hours actually equates to not only more productivity, but a higher quality of work that's completed. In fact, when Microsoft Japan experimented with implementing a 4 day work week they found a **40% increase in productivity**.

Killer Visual Strategies moved to a 4 day work week to support employees mental health and found themselves unexpectedly **20% more productive** than before. These reduced hours create an environment where employees can really focus. This means less bugs, mistakes, and oversights, and more clarity, energy, and attention to detail leading to an overall reduction in technical debt and the costs associated with rushed, exhausted, and distracted employees.

b.) Honing MVP employees

MVP athletes perform at the highest level of their sport, however they don't do so consistently for 40 hours a week. These athletes have significant, routine time off for rest and recovery. The same is true for our MVP employees. Would you have Tom Brady performing at his highest level 5 days/week? No. So why would we do that with our engineers? Meaningful, undisturbed time off to rest means employees will be better equipped and energized to perform their best when they're at work.

Getting better talent, retaining that talent, and increasing productivity means **our bottom line** increases even though we've decreased hours.

Experiment Design

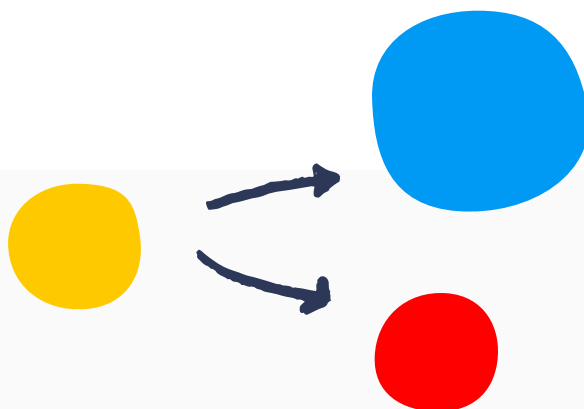To begin successfully experimenting with the 4 day work week we recommend the following:

Timebox
Put a start date and end date on the trial period.

Surveys
Survey employees on their engagement, happiness, and stress levels.

Collect data
Measure productivity and work completed.

Beyond this, companies of varying sizes, growth stages, and business models, therefore we don't recommend a one-size fits all implementation to the experiment. Here we outline several designs so your company can begin the experiment with the approach that works best for you!

1 Quarterly

Run the experiment for 1 or 2 quarters, preferably during a slower time of the year. Typically this may be Q1 and Q2, however this may be different for everyone. Pick the time of year where your company will be able to best focus on the experiment and implementation with consistency.

2 Every other Friday

Split your employees into two teams (red and blue, A and B, etc) and switch off every other Friday. Red team takes off the first week, Blue team the second week, and so on. Alternating weeks eases the company into removing hours. Measure the results, and once this is successful, experiment with the entire company having every Friday off.

3 Rotation

For larger companies or companies that partner with entities that operate on Friday, implement a rotation. Split up employees into five groups where each group has a day off during the week. For example: group one has Monday's off, group two has Friday's off, and so on. This leaves Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday always open for meetings, where Monday and Friday may have less.

4 32 hour work week

Sometimes work has to happen five days a week, but that doesn't mean 8 hours in the week can't be cut out. This experiment allows employees to allocate the same hours as a 4 day work week however works best for them. This could look like four 8 hour days, three 8 hour days with two 4 hour days, and so on.

5 Start with one team

For larger companies it may be nearly impossible to implement a 4 day work week across the board. In this case, find a team (or a few) to start with. See how this team, or teams, do with the 4 day work week experimentation and as they find success, extend this to more and more teams.

Keys to success

Despite enthusiasm to adopt a 4 day work week, the truth is old habits (and meeting ceremonies) die hard. The following tips are meant to make make this new structure easier to adopt and work better for all. If you'd like to discuss in more detail, schedule some time **here**!

1 **If we aren't living it, it's not real**

Influence begins at the top. Ensure that leadership is modeling the new design as well as employees. It's difficult to show employees that it's ok to take this new time off if their bosses are not doing the same.

2 **Async communication**

Async communications as much as possible. Release employees from the expectation that every message, email, and call must be treated with the utmost urgency. Most communications can wait at least an hour if not a day or two. Adopt tools like **Loom** for sharing long threads of thought or screen sharing videos for colleagues to watch at a less disruptive time.

In your work communication channels like Slack, practice using scheduled messages when sending something outside work hours. This will allow employees to be more fully present during their time off and will still see the message when they return to work.

3 **Reinforce time off**

Even when an employee offers to do something in this off time, encourage them to wait until they return to office to complete it. If the task is time sensitive, have them make up the time off later in the week. Actually taking time off and resting is the only way to see the 4 day work week benefits.

3 **Cut meetings**

Most workplaces have more meetings than are necessary, (aka "this could've been an email"). Run another experiment in parallel where you cut 1-2 meetings in a week to free up more time for employees to work uninterrupted.

As you find success, continue removing meetings until you've landed on your essential gatherings with the employees that absolutely have to be there.

5 **Say yes to only the Hell Yes's**

Or to put this in other terms, if it's not a "hell yes", it's a "no". This may seem reckless or counterproductive, but in reality most of what we're doing doesn't matter. Our days our filled with work, but can we confidently say that work is driving forward our vision? Being judicious and intentional allows us to put more effort into fewer things meaning we get the bigger things done.

How do you know if something is a Hell Yes? Don't overthink it. Is your gut reaction "yes, we need to do this to support our vision?", then it's a Hell Yes. When you ask that question is there a pause? Then maybe it's a yes, maybe, or no, but it's not a hell yes, so in reality it's a no. Is your data screaming something at you? That's a hell yes. No fancy quadrant needed.

We hope this provides a starting point for your company to begin your 4 Day Work Week experiment! We believe every company has the opportunity to implement one of these designs which is why we've created the 100 Company 4DWW Challenge! This year we're challenging 100 companies to experiment with the 4 Day Work Week and see how it works for them.

To help make this possible, we will offer a free implementation consultation to dig into more specific questions. By creating a network of companies up for the challenge we'll be able to advise and support each other in order to be as successful as we possibly can!

Sign up for the challenge today here: https://g2i.co/32-work-week

Reach out to our team for a free consultation here: hello@g2i.co