

I was working a four-day work week, now my employees do the same

The recent four-day workweek UK trial, the largest trial of this work pattern seen thus far, confirmed that the four-day week can be implemented successfully. It's also clear that it's a popular choice among many workers. According to a survey by Reed, more than 80% of people in the UK would prefer a four-day workweek.

Temps de lecture : minute

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As a working mum and CEO, I went down to four days a week after I had my second child and I noticed a massive difference in my work-life balance. After seeing the difference this change made in my life, along with the move to a more flexible working week following Covid, the next clear move was to a four-day workweek for our whole team.

Leading by example with the four-day workweek

The UK four-day workweek trial saw over 60 countries test out the shortened week from June to December last year. Of those that took part, 90% chose to continue with the four-day week, with 18 deciding to make it a permanent initiative. Research has shown the four-day workweek to be a 'resounding success' globally, with employees reporting lower stress levels, better physical and mental health, as well as improved engagement.

After working four days a week myself, I knew the personal benefits of

working on this schedule. The added confirmation that companies throughout the UK and the rest of the world were experiencing the benefits of this system encouraged me to see it in action in my own business.

Understanding that I was bettering myself as a mother, a friend and a CEO, I wanted my employees to be able to better themselves too. I knew I had to lead by example and asking my employees to work a day when I wasn't didn't feel right and I urge other CEOs to do the same. If you 'walk the talk' you will see higher morale, loyalty and support from staff as you are echoing your company values daily.

'Walking the talk' also pertains to those who struggle to switch over to four days a week. Leadership cannot preach about the importance of work-life balance if they are working outside of hours or late nights, as this will only trickle down to other employees. You must be able to switch off from work to reduce burnout.

Four reasons to go to four days

Competitive Edge. Offering the four-day workweek to your staff and advertising this in job ads is a tool for competitive advantage in the modern world of work. It's extremely possible that the reduced working week will become more popular and those who won't act quickly to adapting this initiative will be left behind.

Future Proofing Your Business. Millennials are the future generation of business leaders and they will make up 75% of the workforce by 2025. Investing in this generation and ensuring what they want out of work is matching what your business offers will extend the life of your company. They are known for high job turnover, so companies that introduce initiatives such as the four-day week will see their retention among younger employees improve.

Happy Employees, Bigger Profits. Businesses that support and display an interest in their employees' well-being perform better across the board. Research contends that the companies that prioritise their staff's engagement and mental health outperform those that don't. Offering employees a weekly schedule that will improve their work-life balance not only benefits the workers, it benefits the business.

Adaptable Businesses Last. Being able to adapt to new situations is essential for any business and is a great experience for any employee and the younger generations agree. One survey of Gen Z and Millennial workers described 'flexibility and adaptability' as the most critical characteristics of a successful business.

Flexible working for everyone

Industries like hospitality and retail simply cannot achieve the four-day workweek. This means leadership must strive to achieve flexible working in other ways for their staff. Initiatives such as shift swapping and hybrid working where possible can give employees what they want. As well as this, managers must create a culture of openness and value communication so those who are experiencing burnout and disengagement feel comfortable speaking out.

Additionally, working four days a week may not be for everyone in your office as different working styles and personalities fit various ways of working. This is why we have offered overtime work on a Friday. This way, our staff can earn some extra cash if needed or catch up on work they didn't manage to get to in the week.

In conclusion

The modern workforce is all about flexibility and adaptability with Millennials and Gen Z leading the charge. This is apparent in the recent

adoption of the four-day workweek throughout the UK. However, trying out this initiative can't be where leadership stops. They must adopt these same principles themselves and lead by example. Those in senior roles who currently work four days a week and have staff who do not must look at how it has bettered their life. They must offer the same thing to their employees so they will see the benefits of a happy workforce.

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