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4 Day Week: Productivity Hack Or New Normal @Workplace?

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The Covid pandemic has disrupted not just how we work but the way we view our work. Today, hybrid work culture with porous borders between offices and homes is the new normal. An offshoot of this blended work environment is the four-day workweek, the latest buzz at our workplaces. As we discuss more of it, the chorus for a compressed work schedule is growing louder. Though not a votary of this **four-day week** concept, I can see how it is gaining traction. Countries and companies have been toying with the idea, experimenting with lesser work hours to check if it really works wonders for employee productivity.

Is the four-day workweek as fresh a concept as it is packaged to be? Not really, folks. I'll dive a bit into the history of how it has all evolved. The auto industry icon Henry Ford in 1926 broke free of the archetypal six-day schedule and offered a five-day working week to his employees. Of late, some organizations have created a flutter. Cyber Security Company TAC Security has shifted to a 4-day work week for seven months now, though not made it permanent yet. Bengaluru-based Fintech firm Slice is one up in the race, offering a three-day workweek to fresh hires, though with 20 per cent less compensation than what the market offers.

Fewer Working Hours - The Future Of Work?

The craze for embracing a four-day work roster has raised the question- is it going to be the future of work? The answer can't be an emphatic yes or a stubborn no. I feel it's early to judge when we haven't got great results to evaluate. Amazon experimented with the four-day workweek in 2018 but couldn't sustain it. Spain, New Zealand and Japan are on a trial mode- they haven't embedded it into their policy playbooks. Many top-notch global firms haven't warmed up to the idea of the four-day week, making it evident that the concept has not matured for widespread adoption.

True, many positives back the concept. A four-day week at the workplace means employees have more time to perform their personal chores and pursue their other passions. There is also the argument that fewer working hours translates into higher productivity as it assuages **stress** and overcomes burnout.

Why Four-Day Work Isn’t For All Roles And Industries

The example often hyped is that of Iceland, where 80 per cent of the workforce can work four days a week. Enthusiasts of the four-day work regimen have been citing the success of Iceland’s **transformative workplace culture**, predicated on the survey findings of 2500 respondents, where workers reported better mental health with more productivity. The meaty part of the survey, however, has skipped our attention. While the number of workdays shrunk to four, the working hours didn’t go down proportionately.

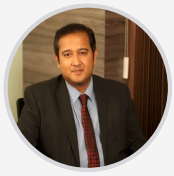
The Iceland story goads us to chew this over- how can we switch to a four-day work plan when we haven’t got the math right. Say, if your employees are investing 8 hours each day in a five-day week? It will be grueling for them if you enforce a four-day week with 10 hours of work each day! Then, a compressed workweek may not be feasible for all industries. If I go back to the Amazon example I cited above, won’t it be stressful for the delivery boys to complete all their orders in just four days? What about service-oriented industries with more customer interfacing tasks? If the whole organization opts for a three-day or four-day week, it would mean more unhappy customers as AI chatbots are not always the answer to deal with them. Besides, for any industry, a shortened work schedule may not apply to all roles and portfolios. And having separate work rosters within an organization can leave some of your colleagues sulking.

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Flexi-Time Model, Not Shorter Week, Is The Real Perk

I agree that today every company is pulling all stops to attract and retain the best talent. Some of them are dangling lesser work hours as a productivity perk. But I believe employees crave for more flexi-time work models instead of reduced work hours. **Organizations can enhance employee experience to keep them engaged and perked up, not by reinventing the workplace wheel but by keeping the vital cogs connected to the wheel. I'm not averse to change but I'm not writing off the five-day week.**

The article was posted on Priyadarshi Nanu Pany's **Medium** Handle.



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