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Four-Day Work Week

The five-day work week has been the standard in business for many decades. The Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 formalized the five-day work week in this country and established overtime pay for any hours beyond 40 hours per week (U.S. Department of Labor). Prior to that time, employees often worked at least six days per week.

Recently, however, the push is on for a shorter work week. Employees are seeking a better work-life balance, and many believe they would be more productive if they were only required to work four days per week.

Some of the reasons a four-day work week has gained momentum include an increase in employee burnout with the current schedule, as well as studies that have shown an increase in productivity, even though the number of hours worked has decreased (Donges 112). This generation’s employees are seeking a better work-life balance, and happier employees are more productive.

Improved Productivity

Employees who have shifted to a four-day work week report more job satisfaction, leading to greater focus and improved efficiency of operations.

Enhanced Work-Life Balance

A four-day work week reduces stress by allowing more “down” time. This has a positive effect on mental health. Employees who began working a four-day schedule feel their mental health improved measurably over the course of that work schedule. Companies experienced a reduction in absenteeism and lower employee turnover rates as a result of that improved job satisfaction.

Cost Savings

There are cost savings for all sides in establishing a four-day work week. The employer is able to reduce utility costs and other overhead costs, including labor costs for custodial and building maintenance services. The employee may enjoy savings in commuting and daycare costs.

Challenges

There are also challenges to a business offering its employees a four-day work week. These may include a reduction in service to its customers due to the shorter hours worked by its employees. Employees may experience difficulty in maintaining their workload while working fewer hours.

The push for a four-day work week is driven by the desire of employees for better work-life balance. It is seen by companies as a way to improve work culture and employee retention in the face of changing workforce expectations.