

These companies tried a 4-day workweek. More than a year in, they still love it

Warm-Up Questions:

What do you think about working four days a week instead of five? How would it affect your personal and professional life?

Listen: Link to audio [\[HERE\]](#)

Read:

AILSA CHANG, HOST:

The four-day workweek for five days of pay is proving to be **the gift that keeps on giving**. Companies who are trying it report happier workers, lower **turnover** and greater efficiency. NPR's Andrea Hsu reports on the latest research coming out of those trials.

ANDREA HSU, BYLINE: Around this time last year, early results from a large trial in the U.K. caused a **hullabaloo**. Of 61 companies that had moved to a four-day workweek with no reduction in pay, 92% said they would continue with it. Now another whole year has passed, and all but a few have either made it permanent or extended their trials. Boston College sociologist Juliet Schor is part of the research team.

JULIET SCHOR: People are feeling really on top of their work with this new model.

HSU: She says the gains are not a **novelty effect**, and they're not limited to the U.K. Survey data from elsewhere, including here in the U.S., show lasting improvements in things like physical and mental health and work-life balance.

SCHOR: The results are really stable.

HSU: A couple of the U.K. employers talked about their experiences in a webinar hosted by the researchers. Nicci Russell, who leads a water conservation nonprofit in London, says she realized early on...

NICCI RUSSELL: You know, if we close on a Friday, nobody dies. We aren't doctors. We're not running a chip shop.

HSU: Still, they were busy, so to make it work, they now keep all their meetings to half an hour. They **block off** focus **time** in their calendars. They're more **mindful** about email.

RUSSELL: So I only do my emails now at certain times of the day. I'm not sort of drawn into them all day every day.

HSU: All 10 people at the company loved the changes. Most of them said they wouldn't consider a five-day-a-week job again without a significant raise.

RUSSELL: It's brilliant for retention, which is super-important in a teeny organization like ours.

HSU: Now, one thing the researchers have learned is that there's no one size fits all. Giving everyone Fridays off wouldn't have worked for the housing cooperative in South Wales where Ruth Llewellyn works. They have 240 employees working in roles from customer service to home repairs and maintenance.

RUTH LLEWELLYN: We still operate a Monday to Friday service because, for us, the thought of dropping a repair service for our tenants one day a week meant that we wouldn't be providing the same service.

HSU: So employees work a variety of schedules. Some have a set day off, and for others, it changes.

LLEWELLYN: We've also got people that do two half-days, people that do five days shorter hours, which allows them to do things like drop the children at school and pick them up.

HSU: Llewellyn says there are fewer sick day call-outs, and employee performance has been consistent. Still, they want to collect more data, so they extended their **pilot** for another year.

LLEWELLYN: We're really hopeful at that point that we can make it permanent.

HSU: Now, the researchers did talk about one of the very few companies where the experiment failed. A small **consultancy** struggled with managing client and **stakeholder** expectations. Although employees were happier, management had a change of heart. The researchers suggest that better planning and more flexibility might have changed that outcome.

Vocabulary and Phrases:

1. **Gift that keeps on giving:** A phrase used to describe something that continuously provides benefits or advantages.
2. **Turnover:** The rate at which employees leave a company and are replaced by new employees.
3. **Hullabaloo:** A commotion, a fuss, or a noisy disturbance.
4. **Novelty effect:** A temporary increase in performance or interest when something new is introduced.
5. **Block off time:** To reserve or set aside a specific period for a particular task or activity.
6. **Mindful:** Being conscious or aware of something, paying close attention.
7. **Pilot:** A trial or test run of a program or initiative to assess its efficacy before wider implementation.
8. **Consultancy:** A professional practice that gives expert advice within a particular field.
9. **Stakeholder:** A person or group with an interest or concern in something, especially a business.

Comprehension Questions:

1. What benefits have companies reported from shifting to a four-day workweek?
2. What did the early results from the U.K. trial show regarding companies' willingness to continue the four-day workweek?
3. According to Juliet Schor, what are the lasting improvements observed from the new work model?
4. How did Nicci Russell's organization adapt to make the four-day workweek feasible?
5. Why did Ruth Llewellyn's housing cooperative decide not to give everyone Fridays off?

Discussion Questions:

1. How do you think the transition to a four-day workweek would affect workplace culture and employee satisfaction?
2. In what ways can companies be mindful to ensure the success of a shortened workweek?
3. Discuss the importance of flexibility in the workplace. How can different schedules meet the needs of various employees?
4. What challenges might a company face when implementing a four-day workweek, and how could they overcome them?
5. How do you think the concept of a four-day workweek aligns with the priorities of modern society and work-life balance?