

New Joint Research by The Josh Bersin Company and Work Time Reduction Shows that Work Redesign and Productivity Tools Are the Key to the 4-Day Work Week

- In 1926, carmaker Henry Ford limited the work week to 5 days. Could we be witnessing the start to a similar shift today – this time to a 4-day work week?
- Anticipating multiple benefits like increased productivity and reduced employee burnout, 4-day weeks are an idea many organizations have been experimenting with
- New Josh Bersin Company and Work Time Reduction analysis of successful 4-day trials at mid-range organizations shows successful implementations require significant work redesign and effective, tech-based productivity tools

OAKLAND, Calif., November 29, 2023—New research from the world’s most trusted human capital advisory firm, [The Josh Bersin Company](#), undertaken in collaboration with [Work Time Reduction Center of Excellence](#), shows that a 4-day work week is now possible and can work well if CHROs and leadership teams take conscious steps to redesign work and ask employees to embrace productivity and time-saving techniques.

Anticipating multiple benefits like increased productivity and reduced employee burnout, the 4-day work week is an idea many organizations have been experimenting with in trials dating back to the 1970s. But, says the study, a new model has emerged: one which focuses on productivity and work redesign. The research points to three important innovations:

- Measuring work through outcomes instead of more time-based metrics
- Introducing practices to boost employee focus and productivity
- And leaders fostering a new approach to flexibility and employee autonomy

The research shows that these practices make the 4-day work week into a powerful and practical model, one that not only boosts employee experience but also often increases overall company productivity.

The findings show that true “work time reduction,” coupled with these practices, outperforms models which focus on condensing 40 hours of work into four days. Reduced hour work schedules for *the same level of pay*, when coupled with work redesign, is a much more powerful approach, the report found.

The findings have emerged from a joint Josh Bersin Company research study with [The Work Time Reduction Center of Excellence](#), which also shares critical insights from co-authors Joe O’Connor, CEO & Co-Founder at Work Time Reduction Center of Excellence, and John Trougakos, Professor of Management at the University of Toronto.

Josh Bersin Company experts analyzed nine mid-range organizations from across the world designing and running 4-day experimentation.

Benefits identified by participants included:

- PRAXIS, a marketing agency in Toronto, Canada, saw a 26% increase in mental health, 42% increase in work-life balance, and 15% decrease in time spent on internal and admin tasks
- The Ross Firm, a law firm in Ontario, Canada, exceeded its business targets and saw sick days nearly disappear

- An environmental consultancy based in the UK, Tyler Grange, saw productivity go up by 22%, producing 109% of previous work outputs across 4 days
- Inventium, a workplace consultancy in Australia, saw a 26% increase in productivity, a 21% increase in energy levels, and an 18% decrease in stress for employees
- An affiliate marketing organization in Europe, Awin, observed that 92% of staff reported being more productive at work, 94% said work-life balance had improved, and the organization reported a 33% reduction in employee turnover

The Josh Bersin Company and expert collaborators found that what unites this first wave of successful 4-day pioneers is a willingness to adopt a cultural shift towards continuous improvement, with a focus on performance, collective responsibility, communication, and accountability.

The findings suggest that organizations with supportive and innovative cultures with strong norms of communication and trust are also best positioned to implement these changes successfully.

Best practice tips on moving to a 4-day week include:

- **Reprioritize what's urgent and let non-essential work fall away:** Companies cannot transition to this new model without revisiting what is most important. This starts with getting clear on business goals, assessing which work contributes to outcomes, clearly assigning accountability for each task or project, and removing obstacles so employees can contribute most meaningfully.
- **Allow employees to operate “top of license.”** Enable people to focus on what they are most uniquely qualified for instead of being distracted by admin or meetings that get in the way.
- **Understand each employee's passion and career goals:** High-performing companies take time to understand what each employee is uniquely good at, as well as passionate about, and allow them to spend most of their working time on those things. This hallmark approach of [“dynamic organizations”](#) enables each employee to “self-optimize” their time for optimum productivity in fewer days.
- **Embrace asynchronous communication:** When teams adopt a 4-day working schedule where employees aren't all off on the same day, asynchronous communication becomes essential. Project management tools can be helpful for project-specific communications, and employees can control their notification preferences easily. Defining new norms around how communication tools are used will also be important. Along with reducing live meetings, embrace written or recorded status updates, which allow employees to consume the information at a time that works for them.
- **Empower employees to adopt their own productivity practices:** Some of the organizations involved in the study created a list of best practices around work habits, even offering training to employees. Others may leave it up to the individual to determine what works for them.
- **Create a clear policy for action in emergency escalations.** Identify urgent situations that typically need to be addressed quickly, and define the expected response. While some escalations are inevitable, others may be avoidable, and defining what truly requires an escalation is important and can help to preserve employee focus during the workday, as well as employees' days off if action can wait. Consider being very specific about what requires an escalation, including who should be brought in and when.

More details on the organizational and HR policy steps needed to make 4-day work are available in the [full report](#).

Julia Bersin, report lead and industry analyst at The Josh Bersin Company, said:

“Employees increasingly want more flexibility and autonomy at work, and they want to spend their time on work that’s meaningful. It’s going to continue to be essential for companies to provide these things, and the four-day work week can be one such way.

Implementing a four-day week takes hard work, and in many cases, a cultural shift, but our research has shown that it can yield big benefits for both companies and employees, while giving people valuable time back in their weeks.

This is much more than a wellbeing perk – it’s an opportunity for organizations to transform how they work, increase productivity, and remove obstacles that inhibit employees from focusing on what’s most impactful.”

Josh Bersin, global industry analyst and CEO of The Josh Bersin Company, said:

“Driven by the ever-increasing march of automation, the working week has evolved from six or even seven days a week in the early eighteen hundreds to today’s 40-hour five day week. Now, driven by highly connected new work tools, the world is shifting toward an even more flexible environment: 4-days of scheduled work, eight hours per day.

“The big surprise in the 4-day week is not that people have more time to go to the dentist or take care of their pets: it’s that this structure forces the company to be more productive, eliminate wasted time in meetings, and clarify accountability. These are major business performance improvements which go far beyond the flexibility offered to employees.

“Our message to senior leaders and baby boomers is simple: get ready for this shift. Younger, ambitious employees see this as a new norm and they don’t see the value of just “being in the office all week” to show their face.”

Joe O’Connor, Work Time Reduction Center of Excellence Chief Executive Officer, said:

“The evidence from recent global trials of the four-day work week emphatically demonstrates the potential for organizations to leverage productivity and wellbeing as complementary forces through work time reduction. In addition to boosting employee satisfaction, recruitment, and retention, when designed properly the four-day workweek acts as an operational excellence initiative in disguise.

“This research collaboration with The Josh Bersin Company offers valuable insights to leaders who are intrigued by the ‘why’ but unsure of the ‘how.’ It uncovers the unique characteristics that make companies that successfully adopt four-day workweeks tick: trust and autonomy in exchange for innovation and accountability.

“The market leaders of tomorrow will not be the organizations that prioritize hustling harder and working longer – they will create a virtuous circle by offering a greater quality of life to attract and retain top talent, and reinforce this competitive advantage by embracing AI and new technologies to streamline their processes.”

About The Work Time Reduction Center of Excellence

The Work Time Reduction Center of Excellence is on a mission to change the way the world works. We are the world's leading consulting and research organization supporting future-forward businesses to implement shorter work weeks.

Our world-renowned experts help organizations work smarter not longer, to deliver sustained results. We design bespoke shorter work week solutions, help streamline processes, and provide operational diagnostic assessments. For more, go to <https://worktimereduction.com/>

About The Josh Bersin Company

The most trusted human capital advisors in the world. More than a million HR and business leaders rely on us to help them overcome their greatest people challenges.

Thanks to our understanding of workplace issues, informed by the largest, and most up-to-date data sets on workers and employees, we give leaders the confidence to make decisions in line with latest thinking and evidence about work and the workplace. We're great listeners, too. There's no one like us, who understands this area so comprehensively and without bias.

We help CHROs and CEOs be better at delivering their business goals. We do that by helping you to manage people better. We are enablers at our core. We provide strategic advice and counsel supported by in-depth research, thought leadership, and unrivaled professional development, community and networking opportunities. Our offerings include the industry's leading AI-powered HR expert assistant, Galileo™, fueled by 25 years of in-depth Bersin research, case studies, benchmarks, and market information.

We empower our clients to run their businesses better. And we empower the market by identifying results-driven practices that make work better for every person on the planet.

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