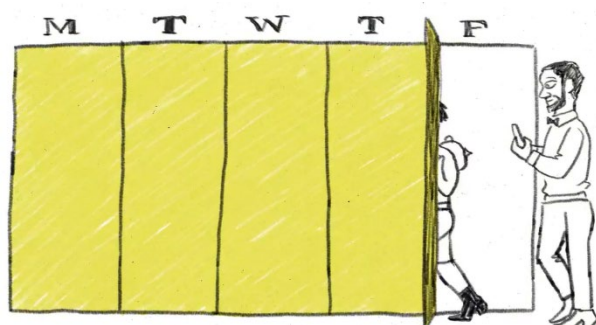


## Guidelines for implementation of reduced work hours in your business.

### Purpose & Programme Design



1) Planning for RWH trials is as necessary as any successful business strategy. At least six weeks before the proposed start date, set up a working group with various levels of employee's involvement from front line staff, managers, accountants, and partners.

2) Invite the working group to reflect on the company's values as a foundation for the

strategy and outcomes required from the trial. The guidelines produced are best if principal based rather than being too prescriptive about behaviour. Consider the impact on all types of employees within the company including the different generations, types of work and work patterns, productivity measures can be individualised for different people or parts of the business.

3) Let the working group decide on the RWH model that best suits your organisation. (Pang, 2023) suggests that organisations consider "what's your least productive day and what day off would have the biggest impact for your team" this helps in making a choice that balances these competing needs. In my survey, one comment mentioned that for their accountancy firm Friday was their least busy day and so that was the day chosen for the RWH. A bigger accountancy firm implemented different days, and this worked to smooth the client impact for their business.

4) Invite all employees to give the working party all views or concerns. The working group collates, discusses all feedback given into guidelines for the RWH so that employees anxieties can be reduced. There are many variations in what a RWH week can look like, and everyone should go into the trial with a spirit of experimentation to give it the best chance of working.

5) This working party discussion on how and what to measure in terms of productivity is a helpful discussion to stress what is important to generate business success. To really measure the outcomes on productivity, the trial needs to be for a full financial period. It is more normal for a first trial to be for a lesser period than an evaluation as to whether the success outcomes have been achieved or not for the trial to be extended (Jephson, 2019b).

6) In the working group clarify the main objectives of trial, so that everyone will know what outcomes the company is expecting and how it will be determined whether the trial has been successful and what criteria need to be in place for the initial trial to be extended. The 4DWG speak about the 100/80/100 principle you receive 100% of pay, work 80% of full-time hours, you achieve 100% at least of the same productivity as before the trial began.

7) Plan between 3 – 5 objectives for your RWH. The reported benefits of the RWH are: Increase perceptions of organisational support, increased team collaboration, improvements in readiness for change, improve work-life balance, work demands (lower perception), increase team performance, improve job attitudes (satisfaction, engagement and retention), Improve

feelings of wellbeing (life, health, leisure, community and family) plus a reduction in job stress, so work out what's important to measure and design your test questions around these

8) Survey all participants about 3 weeks before the trial starts asking these types of questions - based upon the objectives that you have set – These specific questions are an example only – on a scale of 1-10

- 1) If you were to assess your overall happiness (in both work and life) right now, where would it be?
- 2) How do you rate your overall mental wellbeing right now?
- 3) How do you rate your productivity right now?
- 4) How do you rate your connection with your work colleagues?
- 5) How do you rate your job satisfaction with your work?
- 6) How do you rate your ability to effectively work on side projects/hobbies/interests?

9) Check employment agreements to ensure there are no rights and entitlements set by statute or the employment agreement that this trial breaks, there must be excellent communication and consultation with all team members. Plan a RWH week no matter what, so on a week where there is statutory day, the company is not required to pay out for RWH that week.

10) Give clients a heads-up such as by changing your email signature that you are introducing a RWH and give an assurance that there is an expectation that service levels will remain consistent.

## **Toolbox**

1) Aim to introduce the trial with bold, clear guidelines and open communication, including a clear timeline from the start to the end, what the objectives are even the level of budget for business process improvement ideas.

2) Plan regular meetings with the RWH working group monthly to receive feedback including new survey reflections from team members and adapt guidelines to problems or concerns that have arisen.

3) Ensure everyone is ok, because change is stressful, ensure there are a variety of people to talk to if any team members are feeling under pressure and want to chat about it. Psychological safety where is ok to be vulnerable and speak about emotions, and even fail, is an important cultural tool to have present before you initiate a substantial change in an organisation like RWH. Managers need a “light touch” rather than micromanagement style to get more out of their teams.

4) Leaders need to actively demonstrate the new way of working because staff will not believe the culture has changed if only parts of the organisation adopt the RWH trial, particularly if the senior management continue working their old ways. The trial is about improving work efficiencies not just working different hours. The trial should be voluntary, so if some employees do not want to take part, that is fine.

5) Staff need to be invited to make their own decisions about how to improve their productivity. Many team members do not usually think about this topic, so even beginning the conversation will encourage creative thoughts, firms need to trust their team to make the right choices. It gives each team member feelings of ownership and responsibility rather than feelings of being controlled by being told what and how to improve their work.

6) Implement a flexible RWH so that employees understand they might not always get their designated rest day due to workload, projects, or customer demands. It should be acceptable for employers to occasionally ask employees to complete an important task instead of immediately leaving when their RWH hours begin (Bell, 2020). Similarly, it is fine if an employee chooses to stay and finish a task before going home. However, if an employee plans an event that cannot be rescheduled at short notice, such as travel or a medical appointment, they should consider taking annual leave rather than relying solely on their RWH schedule. This approach helps employees view the extra time off as a reward or privilege, rather than an automatic right.

8) Be consistent with messages that the team must meet or exceed performance expectations.

9) Encourage outside consultants in to help you plan, measure, and implement the RWH trial.

10) Recognise that the RWH is a tool to enhance a firm's productivity while increasing staff wellbeing, it's not the only way a firm can improve these objectives.