

A four, five or six-day working week?

Level: Intermediate (B1-B2)

Time: Approximately 90 minutes (plus possible extra time for writing and discussion)

Business topics: working hours, production, efficiency, work-life balance, motivation

Business language: useful business vocabulary, phrases, and expressions, language for explaining and justifying changes and employee well-being

Activities: discussing changes to working hours, key words, understanding the text, business language, discussion, writing an informative and motivational email

Groups: Whole class, one-to-one, small groups

Overview: This article discusses how, where and why a 4-day working week could be successfully implemented, and it looks briefly at the history of working hours for blue collared workers.

1. Warmer

- a. Students answer the questions, compare and talk about their answers.

2. Key words

a.

Key:

- | | |
|------------------|----------------------|
| 1. factories | 7. practicalities |
| 2. providing for | 8. expands |
| 3. production | 9. efficiencies |
| 4. pressure | 10. enforce |
| 5. shrink | 11. unpredictability |
| 6. output | 12. notice |

3. Understanding the article

- a. Students read the statements and decide whether they are True or False according to the information in the article. Then they rewrite any that are false to make them correct.

Key:

1. True
2. True
3. False. In 1926 Henry Ford reduced his workers' working week from six to five days with no loss of income (i.e., they got the same money).
4. False. The average working week in the UK is 36.3 hours, and in Iceland they reduced the working week from 40 hours to 35 or 36 per week.
5. True
6. False. People who already work a four-day week will be moved to full-time pay.
7. False. Employees in low-paid sectors such as retail, hospitality, and care already have unpredictable working hours. A four-day week could make this even more difficult for them.
8. True

4. Business language

- a. Students find the phrases in the article.

Key:

1. under the radar
2. sign up for (something)
3. common thread
4. in the long run

- b. Then students use the phrases to complete the sentences.

Key:

1. in the long run
2. common thread
3. under the radar
4. sign up for (something)

- c. Finally, they use the phrases in sentences of their own.

5. Business quotes – Henry Ford

- a. Without looking back at the article, students try to remember which words are needed to complete the quotes. After they have attempted the task, they can look back to check their answers and then discuss whether they agree with the quotes.
- b. Students find three business quotes from Henry Ford that appeal to them, write them on the worksheet and share their quotes.

Key:

1. *We can get at least as great production in five days as we can in six, and we shall probably get a greater, for the pressure will bring better methods.*
2. *The harder we crowd business for time, the more efficient it becomes.*

6. Discussion

- a. Put the students in pairs or small groups and ask them to discuss the questions. When students have covered all the questions, bring the whole class back together so that they can share their answers and any interesting information that arose from their discussions.

7. Wider business theme – employee communication

- a. Students work through the task as laid out on the worksheet in groups of two to three people, and share their final work to the rest of the group, talking through and explaining what they have found out by doing the task. Discuss which emails are most likely to incur a positive response from the employees and why.