



Harder, better, faster, *shorter*

4 day weeks / 6 hour days & more

This accompanies the [Eat Sleep Work Repeat](#) podcast episodes about shorter working

With burnout at record levels more and more firms are considering changing the way they work - with one of the catalysts being the productive achievement of working parents. Here is some of the key evidence to support a discussion.

If you liked this episode

Whenever we look at how much people produce, it doesn't support working *more* as the winning approach.

[Read Alex Soojung Kim Pang's book 'Shorter'](#)

Barnes' original inspiration: **The Economist: 'UK workers are only productive for 2.5 hours a day'**

[Read Andrew Barnes' book 'The 4 Day Week'](#)

The way we're working isn't working: In the UK 54% of days lost to ill health are lost to stress/anxiety or depression

Henley Centre Research on 4 day week: Two thirds of UK businesses operating on a four-day week reported improvements in staff productivity. 2/3 of Gen Z workers say it would help them choose a place to work. The biggest concerns came from employees who thought they would be badly perceived if they moved to a 4 day cycle, others were worried of the impact of handing work to colleagues.

[Listen: Eat Sleep Work Repeat on Remote working](#)

The 52/17 ratio - one piece of research by University of Toronto suggested that the key to producing more was taking regular breaks. The most productive workers stepped away from their machines for 17 minutes every 52 minutes of working.

[Listen: ESWR on Flexible working](#)

Alex Soojung Kim Pang's benefits of shorter working:

Four day weeks reduce turnover: Pursuit Marketing saw their staff turnover drop to 2%. Japanese firm Cybozu saw turnout drop from 28% to 4%

Four day weeks improve recruiting: A 2015 survey said that only 6% advertised jobs paying over £20000 offered flexible working. Over £100k it was 2%. But even the schemes offered aren't effective - 90% of US law firms offer flexible working, only 4% lawyers take them up. Real flex attracts candidates.

Four day weeks improve performance: The Henley Centre research above suggests that 64% firms reported productivity increases. 62% also saw a fall in sick days.

Four day weeks improve creativity: Bråth AB in Sweden reported their team felt a competitive edge vs old working. Cockroach Labs' software developers reported the benefits of a fluid, relaxed mind. W+K London reported that exhaustion is 'not when good ideas happen'.

Andrew Barnes' steps to 4 days:

Trust - starting from a position of thinking people are lazy won't get you out of burnout. If you don't trust your team you've got the wrong team. It's why this needs buy in at the very top

Don't over think it - better to test than spend months in meetings discussing change

Run a trial - create the rules and test it. The team need to feel like they have made the rules. Leaders shouldn't try to solve this for them

Embrace time as scarce - generally these things fail if you keep to the old routines. You need to eliminate wasteful meetings

Get the lawyers approval - in his case he kept everyone's contract as 5 days. 4 days was earned for hitting productivity goals

DO NOT DISTURB - find a way for focussed workers to signal they are working, not waiting to chat

Know different types of people - some people were persuaded in different ways

Cows need milking twice a day - some parts of serving customers need doing 5 days a week - don't neglect them - plan for them.