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Considerations for the implementation of a 4-day work week



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Introduction

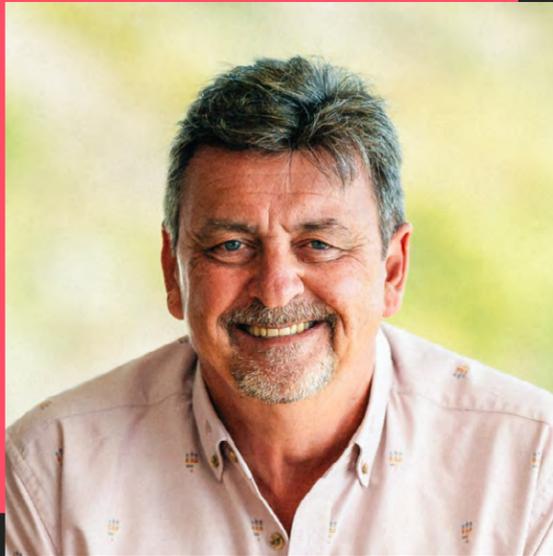
In 2018 Andrew Barnes made headlines in New Zealand when he announced his company Perpetual Guardian were launching a four-day week trial, with all staff receiving an extra day off work, on full pay. The trial was a huge success with the company permanently implementing a 4-day week for all staff. This change not only helped them win several HR awards but also gained the company widespread international interest. Fast forward a few years and Andrew Barnes is now considered the pioneer of the 4-day week movement and is the founder of 4 Day Week Global.

Today Andrew and his co-founder and CEO of 4 Day Week Global Charlotte Lockhart are responsible for implementing the largest 4-day week trials currently taking place across the globe including Australia, South Africa and the UK. So far more than 250 companies and 100,000 employees around the world have taken part in trials.

The growing interest in trials across the world has helped make the 4-day working week one of the hottest recruitment and workplace topics in 2023.

But is it the right strategy for your organization? Would it honestly increase productivity, retention and make it easier to recruit new employees?

In this report we explore insights from our own 4-day week webinar with Andrew Barnes, founder of 4 Day Week Global and Anne-Marie Lister, Chief People Officer at Atom Bank as well as data from recent Robert Walters polls around what organisations must take into consideration when implementing a 4-day working week.



“Its not about compressing a 40 hour week into 4 days, but instead maintaining productivity and good customer service whilst delivering other benefits to employees”

**Andrew Barnes, Founder,
4 Day Week Global**

The fundamental principal of a 4-day week

The 4-day working week concept is based on the 100-80-100 rule built out by the pioneer of the 4-day week movement Andrew Barnes. The concept stands for

100% pay,
80% time but still
100% productivity.

This reduction in time spent at work but still receiving your full salary has grabbed media headlines and caught the attention and interest of employees across the globe.



In a recent Robert Walters Survey

91%

of employees would like their employer to implement a 4-day working week trial.

The latest trials have been deemed a huge success...

Here's the key stats you need to know:

92% of companies are implementing a 4-day week after completing a trial

71% companies reported that burnout was down by 71% in the trial period

65% companies reported that sick days reduced by 65%

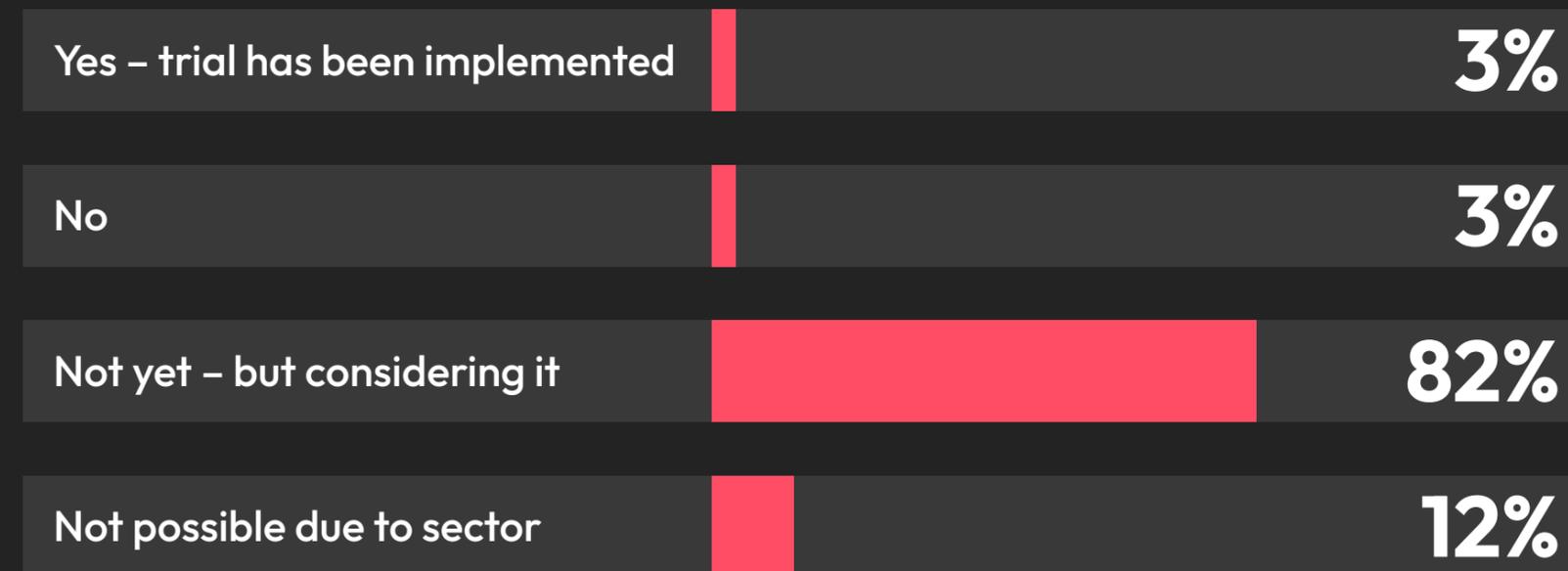
1.4% on average revenue was up by 1.4% across all businesses that took part in the pilots

Some of the companies that have participated in the pilot scheme:



Whilst professionals are interested in trying a shorter week, it's still a relatively new concept...

Has your employer implemented a 4-day working week (with full pay) trial?





“Of course we have experienced scepticism from business leaders around closing their businesses on a Friday. But on our pilot programs we help you work that out; what’s going to work for your business, your people and your customers. It’s about finding the right time off.”

**Charlotte Lockhart, Co-Founder & CEO,
4 Day Week Global**

How can your business adapt to a 4-day week...

In our webinar we discussed how there is no one size fits all approach for organisations – it's about adapting to what works for your business, your people and your customers. For some businesses that may be as simple as everyone having Friday off whilst for other businesses each team having different days off may be a better solution so that they can continue operating 5 plus days a week.

Watch the full webinar on the 4-day working week with Andrew Barnes here.



These are the 5 key points to consider:

- 1** Understand the needs of internal and external stakeholders
- 2** Look at how you ensure coverage across departments for every weekday
- 3** Stagger 'off' days
- 4** Build a culture of trust & accountability
- 5** Focus on business continuity

Increasing productivity with a 4-day week...

Leaders of the 4-day week movement and pilot participants agree there are four key areas organisations need to review when implementing a 4-day working week trial to ensure productivity remains the same or even increases:

1

Work Reorganization

Review your own internal practices and ways of working. Look for areas where you can make small and relatively quick changes at a high level across your organisation.

2

Meeting Culture

Most businesses taking part in the 4-day week pilot program raised concerns around the sheer number of meetings with employees feeling the number of meetings they needed to attend daily was hindering their productivity. Review the frequency, length and attendees list of each meeting to see where they can make cuts to give everyone back time. Enable employees to feel that they can where appropriate challenge meetings – do they need to attend, should there just be one representative from each team or could the meeting be replaced with just a well thought out email?

3

Deep Focus Time

Allowing employees to safeguard blocks of time so that they can solely concentrate on a piece of work is vital to enabling them to be more productive, it has also been linked to increasing creativity and efficiency.

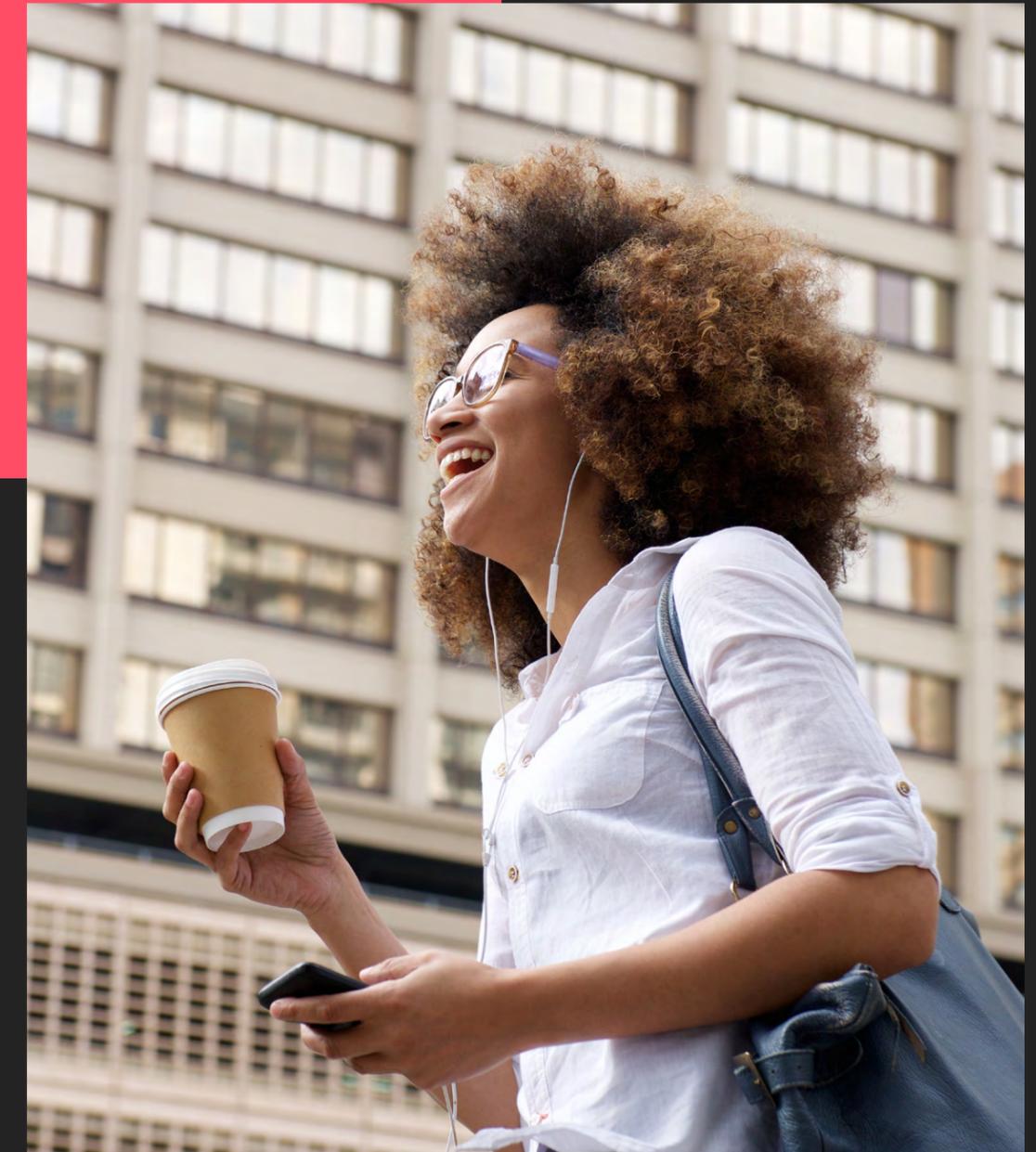
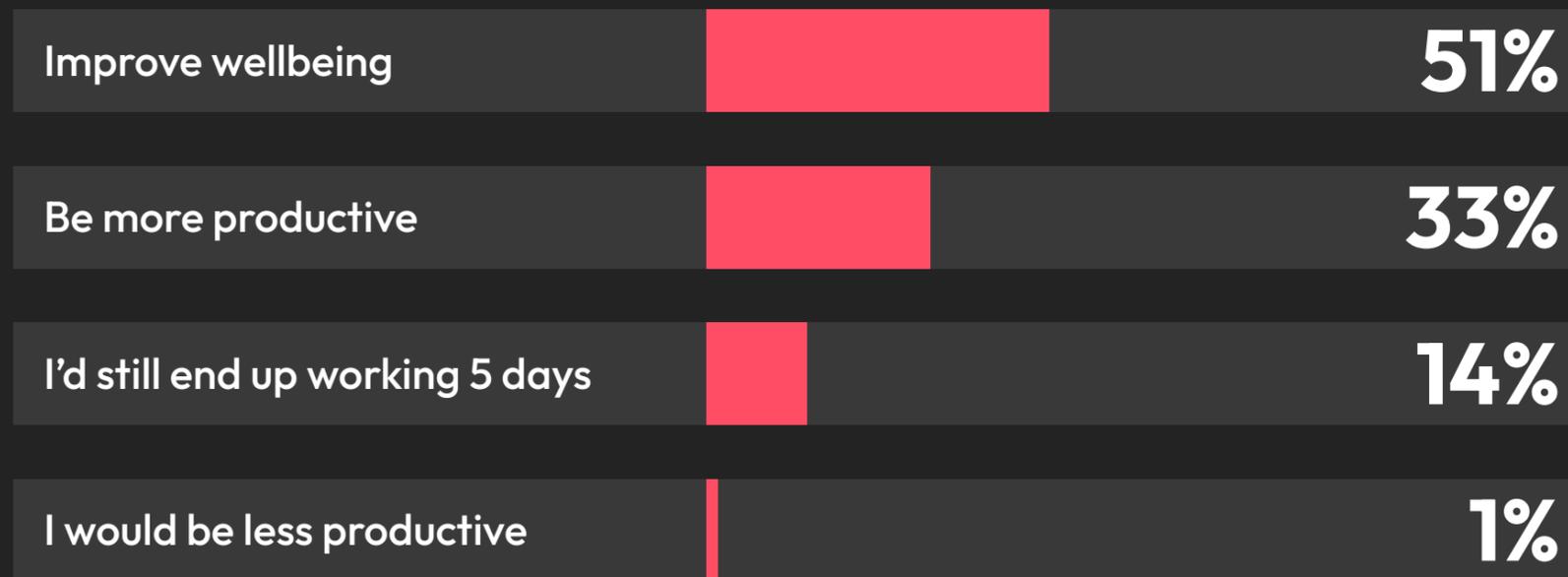
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Empower Your Employees

Companies have seen the pace of work naturally go up when making the switch and trials have shown that employees like getting their free time as a whole day instead of half an hour here and there throughout the week and that they will adapt their own ways of working to protect this time. Empower your employees to look at their own roles in the business, what are their daily inefficiencies, what can they adapt straight away and give them the opportunity to flag what support and or tools they need to be more efficient in their roles.

Employees believe that moving to a 4-day week will improve their wellbeing as well as increase their productivity

How do you think moving to a 4-day week would impact you?





“The 4-day working week is the only true EVP differentiator left in a world of unlimited holiday, work perks and incentives potentially helping organisations to stand out from their competitors in the war for talent.”

**Sam French,
HR Recruitment Manager**

Attracting new talent with a 4-day week...

As more trials and stats are released, we believe we will continue to see an increase in appetite from employees and a 4-day week may become a bigger consideration when moving to a new company in the future.

Organisations that become early adopters to a 4-day week may not only see an increase in company productivity but also an increase in staff retention and job applicants for advertised roles; this was the case for Atom Bank the week they announced that they would be running a 4-day week trial in 2021, direct applications increased by 500% and while they have now stabilized somewhat, they are still seeing an 35% increase in direct applicants year on year.



49%

of employees would like their employer to implement a 4-day working week trial.

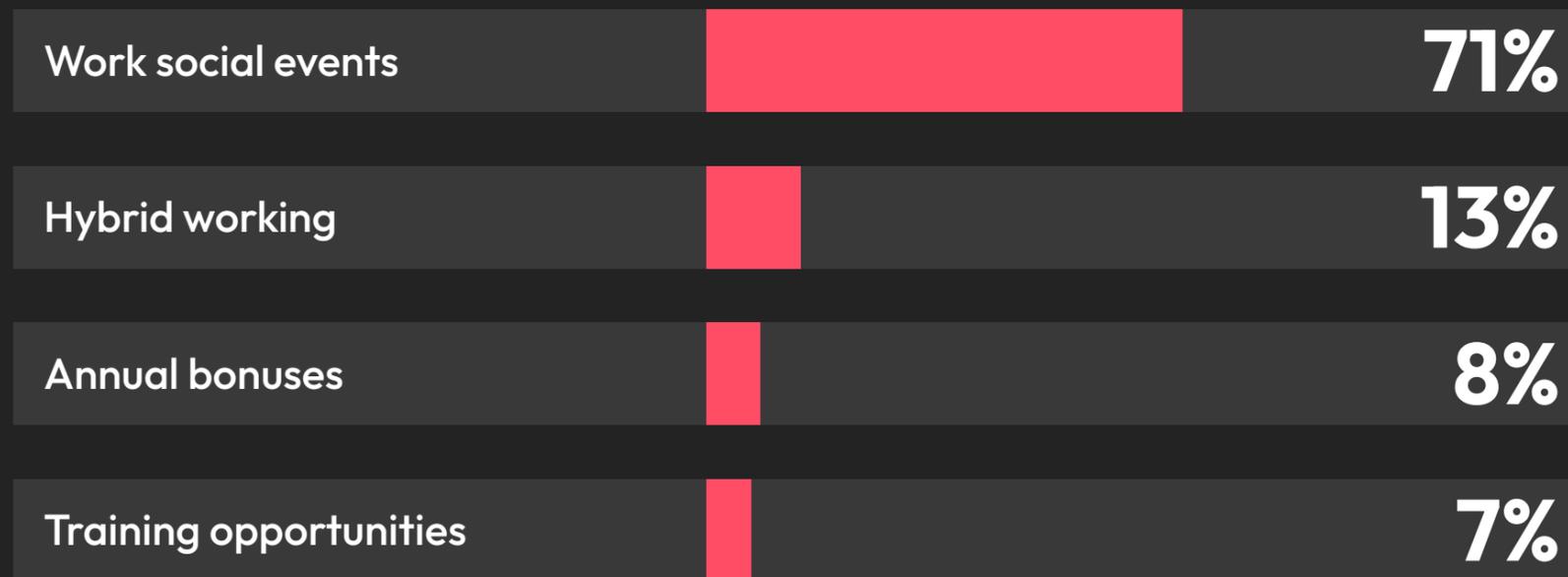


“You are creating more interesting work for people, which not only plays into the retention of people in their roles but also attracts new talent”

**Anne-Marie Lister,
CPO, Atom Bank**

Research suggests that employees now value a 4-day week more than other benefits...

Which of the below would you give up in order to be eligible for a 4-day working week with full pay?



But is a 4-day week too good to be true?

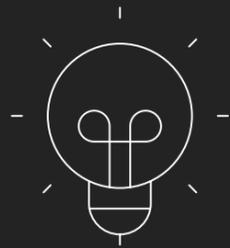
While headlines have painted a positive picture and initial pilot results are overall promising there are still some negatives in the data from the pilots and our own research around burnout, increased stress levels and workload increasing.

- Overall working hours only reduced by **4** hours – falling short of the **32** it was meant to achieve
- **28%** reported either working more hours, or no change to their 5-days a week hours
- **49%** reported no change in the typical amount of overtime they do – further **17%** reported doing more overtime
- **22%** reported an increase in burnout-symptoms
- **15%** reported an increase in sleeping difficulties – further **45%** stated that their sleeping quality hadn't improved/changed significantly
- **36%** reported no-change to work-life balance – further **10%** reported a decrease
- **26%** reported no change to work-ability – with **19%** reporting a decrease
- Just **2%** stated workload had decreased – **20%** reported an increase, and **78%** reported no-change
- **36%** reported work-intensity had increased
- **42%** reported an increase in complexity of their work



“Highlighting this data is by no means a way of pointing out that a 4-day week cannot work. Just as with every kind of trial, tweaks need to be made and it feels that we aren’t 100% there with this being the silver-bullet to increase productivity and improved wellbeing.”

**Chris Poole, Managing Director,
Robert Walters UK**



Key takeaways to consider for the 4 day week...

Watch the full webinar on the 4-day working week with Andrew Barnes here.



1

There is not a one-size fits all approach for all, adapt to what works best for your business and your employees.

2

Empower your employees to be part of the transition – get their thoughts and feedback and encourage a culture of trust and accountability for all.

3

Consider how implementing a 4-day week may help you stand out against competitors in a war for talent.

4

Moving to a 4-day week does not mean that productivity will decrease, results have shown reducing hours can increase productivity due to work reorganisation.

5

The 4-day week concept is still in its infancy, and we expect to see tweaks as more organisations trial and implement their own versions of the concept.



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