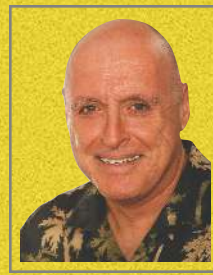


# THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



## # 860 Here We Go Again: The Four-Hour Workweek

Is the world headed for a four-hour workweek? I'm Jerry Roberts, and I know we've been down this path before, but never like now. Details are next, on The Extra Point.

The four-hour workweek. Employers scoff that it will ever happen, and I've had my doubts. However, this is a serious conversation in numerous markets around the globe, including at least one that will raise your eyebrows.

Right now, the idea about four-day workweeks and hybrid employment models, are again gathering steam. Part of this is attributed to the pandemic, as we've seen many people work part-time or even full-time from home.

With the whole COVID affair possibly winding down by the end of this year, employers around the world are wrestling with the idea of whether to bring those folks back into the traditional workplace, or let them continue working from home.

At the same time, studies have been conducted that show shortened work weeks, and shortened work *days* lead to a happier workforce. In example, Iceland ran a study with 1% of their total workers, testing 35-36-hour workweeks, without any cut in pay.

The results showed no reduction in productivity, and in some cases it actually improved. It was judged so successful that, today, 86% of the country's workers are now employed for shorter hours or have gained the right to shorten their hours.

There's more. Worker well-being improved, from perceived stress and burnout, to health and work-life balance.

The concept of a four-day workweek has gained support in the United Kingdom, with some 45 members of parliament calling for a commission to examine doing something

similar to Iceland's project. Spain is also planning to experiment with a trial four-day workweek, likely a three-year program without a reduction in compensation.

The *Washington Post* reported that the Spanish government will reduce employers' risk by making up the difference in salary when workers switch to a four-day schedule." Spain will invest around \$60 million toward the costs of the pilot program for the companies that want to give it a try. They figure upwards of 200 companies and 6,000 workers will participate.

Now, the part that may raise eyebrows. Japan is also giving strong consideration to the four-day workweek. Yes, Japan, with their never-ending "continuous hustle" work culture, and where overwork is the norm, and depression is a massive problem — The Japanese government is offering plans to persuade companies to adopt four-day workweeks.

Microsoft Japan ran a trial of a shorter workweek program a couple of years ago, giving its 2,300 employees the opportunity to choose from a variety of flexible work styles.

Management wanted to see if there would be a corresponding increase in productivity and morale when hours were cut down. The results: It was reported that workers were both happier, and 40% more productive.

Martin Schultz, the chief policy economist at Fujitsu's global market intelligence unit, said: "The government is really very keen for this change in attitude to take root at Japanese companies."

Andrew Barnes and Charlotte Lockhard, the founders of New Zealand-based financial services firm Perpetual Guardian, implemented a four-day workweek at their company.

(Con't.)

The results were so positive that they established the 4 Day Week Global Foundation to fund research into the future of work and workplace well-being. They're pushing for multinational support toward widespread adoption of a four-day workweek.

One more thing. They're looking for a shorter work day as well. They say the future of work could be a four or five-hour day, plus staggered flexible schedules that are based on lifestyle needs.

So, you ask, "Could it ever happen here in Guam?" That answer is yes, if it catches on in the Mainland U.S.

I don't think it will happen anytime soon, but if it's a "go" in Europe, then also in Asia if Japan finds success with shortened work days and hours, America will eventually adopt a similar standard. When they do, we'll have it here.

If it does, what do you think the minimum wage will be?

That's The Extra Point. Be responsible and make something good happen today. For 93.3 and the Ray Gibson Show, I'm Jerry Roberts. ###

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