

What would you do with a four-day work week?

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Fun, work, freedom

I read this article on Inc. recommending switching businesses over to four-day work weeks. Obviously this is not something that would work for restaurants, retail outlets, hospitals, or anywhere in the service industry (if the word “emergency” can be legitimately used in any portion of your business, in other words). For businesses that invent, improve, and manufacture, it *could* be done. Software designers, computer manufacturers, car manufacturers, ehm... writers, artists, and so on *could* work ten-hour days four days a week, with one of those days dedicated solely to research, and it would change us.

But how? I know I couldn’t make it work for myself. I start getting itchy on Saturday and Sunday when I’m taking enforced time off. For me, that’s what it is. Enforced. If I don’t make myself do it, turn my computer all the way off, and stay the hell out of the office, I *will* end up working because working is what I like to do. It’s my form of fun.

But self-employed is different than job-employed. I’ve done both, and while I was doing my toughest job, working ER, I

worked twelve-hour shifts two days a week. I exchanged every weekend of my life for less pay (compared to the nurses who worked five days a week), no vacation or sick time, and no benefits for five days of absolute freedom. For me, it was worth it. I could not miss a single day, or I would lose half my pay for the week.

But on my five days of freedom each week, I accumulated six out of my seven years worth of rejection slips, wrote several novels, sold the second and all that followed, spent time with my kids, and built the career that let me finally, after ten years of working seven days a week (five of them on my second job), walk away from my nursing job to live the life I'd earned.

So, for those who chose to use it, a four-day work week could be like that. A third day into which you could pour your efforts for yourself. Look at what you do with your days off now, and think about what you would do if you had an extra one. Obviously, if you aren't using your current days off to build the life you want, an extra day would be of no real value.

But if you are already using your time off, what changes would that extra twenty-four hours allow you to make? Would you take it if it were offered?

If you have employees, what benefits other than the ones listed in the article could a four-day work week offer? Conversely, what problems would it cause? Would the trade-off in employee satisfaction and employee retention be worth whatever downside you see?

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