

A 4-day work week in Japan increased productivity

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The technology company Microsoft has said it successfully trialed a four-day working week in Japan, which saw improvements in workers' productivity and job satisfaction. The trial took place over the summer at the

tech giant's headquarters in Tokyo. Employees were given every Friday off as paid leave in August. The company monitored the effects a three-day weekend would have on workers' performance. Company executives said the shorter working week resulted in additional benefits. Productivity rose by 40 per cent and 92 per cent of employees expressed their satisfaction with the scheme. The trial could lead to a change in Japan's infamous workplace practices of long hours and lots of overtime.

Microsoft called the trial the Work-Life Choice Challenge. The company said it aimed, "to create an environment where each employee can choose a diverse and flexible way of working according to the circumstances of their work and life". Other aspects of the trial included shortening the length of meetings to a maximum of 30 minutes and encouraging workers to choose online chats over face-to-face ones. There were additional advantages to the trial. Microsoft said that 23 percent less electricity was consumed and 59 per cent fewer pages were printed compared with August 2018. Microsoft will conduct another experiment in Japan later this year and has asked employees for their input.

Sources: businessinsider.com / cnn.com / yahoo.com

Writing

No one should have to work more than four days a week. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

technology / Microsoft / trial / improvement / headquarters / employees / benefits / environment / diverse / flexible / face-to-face / meetings / electricity / printed / Japan

True / False

- a) A 4-day working week was trialed in Japan by Microsoft. T / F
- b) The trial took place in the spring of 2018. T / F
- c) Employees didn't have to work on Mondays but got paid. T / F
- d) Japan is famous for not asking its workers to do overtime. T / F
- e) The trial was called the "Work-Life Choice Challenge". T / F
- f) Workers were asked to keep meetings to less than 30 minutes. T / F
- g) The trial meant the month's electricity bill decreased by 59%. T / F
- h) The company will carry out a further experiment in Japan. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|-------------------------|----------------|
| 1. trialed | a. main office |
| 2. improvements | b. situation |
| 3. headquarters | c. increased |
| 4. monitored | d. ideas |
| 5. rose | e. advances |
| 6. flexible | f. carry out |
| 7. circumstances | g. adaptable |
| 8. encouraging | h. tested |
| 9. conduct | i. urging |
| 10. input | j. tracked |

Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you think about what you read?
- b) What are your ideal working conditions?
- c) What do you think of long meetings?
- d) Are online chats better than face-to-face chats?
- e) How might a shorter working week be good for the environment?
- f) What do you think of Microsoft?
- g) What do you think of working?
- h) What questions would you like to ask the Microsoft bosses?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. it successfully trialed | a. employee can choose |
| 2. at the tech giant's | b. infamous workplace practices |
| 3. the shorter working week resulted | c. another experiment |
| 4. employees expressed their | d. headquarters in Tokyo |
| 5. lead to a change in Japan's | e. flexible way of working |
| 6. create an environment where each | f. in additional benefits |
| 7. a diverse and | g. face-to-face ones |
| 8. shortening the length | h. satisfaction with the scheme |
| 9. choose online chats over | i. of meetings |
| 10. Microsoft will conduct | j. a four-day working week |

Discussion – Student B

- How hard do you work?
- How productive are you?
- Is a four-day working week a good idea?
- How satisfied are you with your job?
- How important is job satisfaction?
- Why might productivity rise with a shorter working week?
- Would a four-day working week work for every company?
- What is overtime like in your country?

Spelling

- the tech giant's treurdqahsea
- moietnrod the effects
- Company sxecteviu
- additional inetbfse
- satisfaction with the eechms
- Japan's fonsauim workplace practices
- create an vntmnineero
- a eidresv and flexible way
- cgroadcni to the circumstances
- Other etsscap of the trial
- gunoagrecin workers to choose
- conduct another rmpeeetnxi

Answers – Synonym Match

1. h	2. e	3. a	4. j	5. c
6. g	7. b	8. i	9. f	10. d

Role Play

Role A – Microsoft

You think Microsoft is the best company to work for. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their companies. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): McDonald's, Barcelona FC or Greenpeace.

Role B – McDonald's

You think McDonald's is the best company to work for. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their companies. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): Microsoft, Barcelona FC or Greenpeace.

Role C – Barcelona FC

You think Barcelona FC is the best company to work for. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their companies. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): McDonald's, Microsoft or Greenpeace.

Role D – Greenpeace

You think Greenpeace is the best company to work for. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their companies. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): McDonald's, Barcelona FC or Microsoft.

Speaking – Companies

Rank these with your partner. Put the best companies to work for at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|--------------|--------------|
| • Ferrari | • Microsoft |
| • Chanel | • Apple |
| • Barcelona | • McDonald's |
| • Greenpeace | • Starbucks |

Answers – True False

a	T	b	F	c	F	d	F	e	T	f	T	g	F	h	T
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.