Four-Day Workweek: The Microsoft Japan Experience

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ABSTRACT

This case study presents an in-depth analysis of the four-day workweek experiment conducted at Microsoft Japan in August 2019 as part of its *Work Life Choice Challenge* (WLCC) summer activity. It also evaluates various perspectives surrounding the advantages and limitations of the four-day workweek as applied in the context of Microsoft Japan's operations. Furthermore, the complexities and uniqueness of the four-day workweek are discussed in the light of the theoretical and practical implications from the literature regarding the adjustment of time management policy and introduction of technology-assisted strategies to optimize work hours. The four-day workweek is seen to be of special significance to the Japanese work culture because of the increasing number of *karoshi*-related deaths (Takami, 2017). Thus, the case study also expounds on the dilemma of the famed Japanese practice of hard work (Ballon, 2018). In addition, an exploration of best practices, a reflection of lessons learned, and the identification of practical recommendations discovered from the study of Microsoft Japan's four-day workweek experience are summarized.

Keywords: four-day workweek, overwork death, karoshi, overwork suicide, karojisatsu, Japanese work culture, Microsoft Japan, Work Life Choice Challenge, WLCC

INTRODUCTION

The twenty-first century continues to be a defining period of change and disruption that continues to result in a more virtually and seemingly smaller world (Gilligan, Leontaris, & Lopez, 2019). Along with the influx of innovative technologies, globalization is revolutionizing every social, business, and household process via the pathways of digital connectivity and the imperatives of trade and commerce (Ghemawat, 2018). Consequently, employees now perform their work more efficiently and effectively as computing technology grows exponentially. Per Moore's law, we can continue to expect to witness the speed and capability of our computers to increase every couple of years, and we will continue to pay less for them (Gilligan et al., 2019; Theis & Wong, 2016). To illustrate this point, we can simply look to the frequent daily office tasks, such as automated business telephone calls, or the scores of drones now making delivering items within a two-hour window, across the country (Gilligan et al., 2019). Within the context of this backdrop, a reduction in working time can be justified as many human activities may now be delegated to computers and other automated equipment.

Perhaps near the top of the list of time-related business issues most often scrutinized by organizations is the consideration of a reduction in employee working hours. In the US, human resource managers frequently debate the pros and cons of a four-day workweek, although a shortened workweek is already being implemented in many organizations around the globe with promising results (Dobush, 2019). De Spiegelaere (2018) reported that a reduction in working hours has successfully been implemented in Germany and Austria as an option for employees, and a company in New Zealand, the Perpetual Guardian, experimented with great success on a four-day workweek (Dobush, 2019). Even the International Labor Organization offers no opposition to reduced working hours, believing that such an arrangement can lead to a happier, healthier, and more sustainable society (Messenger, 2018). Therefore, this appears to be the most opportune time to introduce the four-day workweek to the Japanese work culture.

BACKGROUND

The Japanese are known to be very hardworking people, and their cultural work ethic emphasizes work as a way of life rather than working just for work's sake (Ballon, 2018). Overwork is culturally accepted as a rule rather than an exception, even in the modern era Japan. The image of Japan's intense work culture is often regarded as highly toxic, if not suicidal (Kim, Y., 2016). Several specific cases point to overwork as the culprit for the extremely high rates of work-related stress in Japan (Takahashi, 2019). As discussed in Edlin and Golanty (2012), the work culture in Japan is quite different than in most Western countries in several measurable areas, most notably, the number of hours that most Japanese work. A seven-day workweek has become standard practice for an increasing number of Japanese employees (Edlin & Golanty, 2012).

Stress magnifies a person's susceptibility to infection, disease, and even death (Dragos & Tanasescu, 2010; Uehata, 2005). Furthermore, the stress associated with overwork elevates blood pressure, lowers immune system function, and causes other bodily system changes, which may result in sudden death syndrome (Ke, 2012). Thus, a Japanese term, *karoshi* was coined to refer to overwork death, which is defined as the "extreme acute result of acute cardiovascular events including stroke" (Ke, 2012). Karoshi is the form of suicide that is referred to by the Japanese as karojisatsu (Tsutsumi, 2019). A few notable karoshi-related deaths include:

- Miwa Sado: A 31-year-old female journalist who took only two days off and recorded 159 hours of overtime in the month before dying from heart failure (McCurry, 2017);

- Matsuri Takahashi: A 24-year old woman who committed suicide. Stress was ruled as the cause of death, brought on by long working hours. She worked more than 100 hours of overtime in the months before her death. Weeks before she died, she posted messages on social media saying: "I want to die" and "I'm physically and mentally shattered" (McCurry, 2017); and
- Joey Tocnang: A 27-year old Philippine man part of Japan's foreign trainee program who died three months before his planned reunion with his wife and daughter. He worked between 78.5 hours to 122.5 hours of overtime a month before his death (McCurry, 2016).

The literature review conducted by Ke (2012) revealed several risk factors for karoshi including holiday duty, increased hours of overtime work, night shift work, and working in a new position geographically separated from family members.

Several specific aspects of the Japanese culture of work and ethics linked to long hours make it an ideal testing ground for reduced working hours. Japan's suicide rate is ranked as one of the highest in the developed world. and as early as 1987, the Labor Ministry of Japan officially recognized karoshi as a cause of death (Edlin & Golanty, 2012), although the first case was reported nearly two decades earlier in 1969 (Ke, 2012). Nearly 30,000 applications for workers' compensation due to overwork were filed between 1988 and 2013 (North & Morioka, 2016). Microsoft's commitment to employee well-being and safety directs one's focus to it as the quintessential company to undertake an experimental run of shortened working hours via a four-day workweek.

DESCRIPTION

In the summer of 2019, 50 years after the initial report of karoshi, Microsoft Japan conducted an experimental trial of the four-day workweek (Microsoft Japan, 2019b) dubbed as the *Work Life Choice Challenge* (WLCC). Microsoft Japan recognizes workstyle innovation as the center of its management strategy and its basic philosophy anchored on working style reform (Microsoft Japan, 2019a). Microsoft Japan endeavored to address the karoshi problem among the Japanese labor force through its 2019 summer WLCC program (Mourdoukoutas, 2019) hoping that this innovative approach would prove encouraging as a potential solution to the *karoshi*.

Microsoft's in-house project aimed to design an environment where employees were offered a choice among various flexible working styles according to their respective conditions of work and home/family life that best fit their needs (Microsoft Japan, 2019b). Implementation of new WLCC practices at Microsoft Japan was promoted as a challenge with the slogan, "work for a short time, rest well, and learn more" (Microsoft Japan, 2019a). A two-pronged initiative was implemented with the corresponding action steps, as discussed in Microsoft Japan (2019a):
1. Provision of opportunities in the promotion of work-life choices using four days a week shift and three days of rest.
   a. The complete shutdown of offices on all Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays of August 2019.
   b. Regular employees filed a special paid leave on all five Fridays.
2. Promotion and support of work-life choice practices through an employee support program:

      a. Support program for family travel, self-development-related expenditures, and social development contribution expenditure among three areas:
         i. Work: self-growth and learning
        ii. Home/personal life: private life and family care
       iii. Society: social participation and community contribution, etc. (Microsoft Japan, 2019)

MARKET

Microsoft Japan maintains more than 90% market share of the Japanese PC operating system industry (Bird, 2002). Otherwise known as the Microsoft Kabushiki Kaisha (マイクロソフト株式会社) or MSKK, Microsoft's Japanese subsidiary, was forged from severed business ties with ASCII so that it could be listed on the New York Stock Exchange. MSKK suffered initial difficulties in the Japanese market because of issues with Japanese text for the PC keyboards. However, they were eventually able to clear these hurdles with the first successful Windows version penetrating the Japanese market through Windows 3.1 (Information Processing Society of Japan, 2010).

INDUSTRY

Globally, in 1995, American companies, particularly IBM and Microsoft, dominated the computer software and services industry. However, in the computer hardware industry, American organizations were not as successful as many European and Japanese companies were (US International Trade Commission, 1995). Presently, in PC and laptops combined, Mitic (2019) revealed that the top company is Hewlett Packard, followed by Dell, Lenovo, Apple, Acer, and ASUS. In terms of operating system (OS) revenue, Microsoft is the industry leader with 78% market share, compared to Apple at 14%, and Google Chrome OS and Linux at 2% share each (Mitic, 2019). Thus, Microsoft Japan's parent company Microsoft is the undisputed leader in the OS competition with Microsoft Japan contributing a significant share towards Microsoft's global leadership position (Mitic, 2019).

ORGANIZATION HISTORY

Microsoft Corporation, the parent company of the Japanese subsidiary Microsoft Japan, traces its history from the humble beginnings of a childhood friendship from Seattle, Washington (Zachary and Hall, 2020). Boyhood friends Bill Gates and Peter Allen partnered together throughout high school and college and trailblazed their path to the high technology arena with grand dreams for success.

Gates and Allen facilitated the use of the popular computer language program for mainframes called Beginner's All-purpose Symbolic Instruction Code (BASIC) with the personal computer (Zachary & Hall, 2020). In this respect, Gates and Allen, who are largely associated with the Microsoft Corporation, changed the world by tweaking the mainframe language for use in the PC. Microsoft was founded in 1975 (Zachary & Hall, 2020) and its partnership with the International Business Machines created the operating system (OS) for the IBM PC in 1980. The following year, Microsoft purchased an unnamed OS from another company, modified it, and launched it as MS-DOS for the Microsoft disk operating system in 1981 (Zachary & Hall, 2020). Within a decade, MS-DOS sold over a million copies, overshadowing rival OS – CP/M and IBM OS/2. Microsoft solidified its hold of the OS market with MS Windows, now on its 10th version (Zachary & Hall, 2020).

Today, Microsoft remains the leading developer of PC software and applications, publisher of books and multi-media references, as well as manufacturer of its line of tablets and other computer-related products (Zachary & Hall, 2020). The company's computer-related products include email services, electronic games, portable media players, and input/output devices. As recounted in Zachary and Hall (2020), Microsoft Japan is the company's first foreign subsidiary. The company also operates research laboratories all over the world, the first in Cambridge in 1997, then in Beijing, 1998, Bangalore and California in 2005, New York in 2012, and Montreal, Canada in 2015 (Zachary & Hall, 2020).

Microsoft continues to influence the world with its technological innovations including its contributions to PCs, smartphones, tablets, smart TVs, and even the world of gaming with the Xbox (Kalin, 2015). Microsoft is well-positioned for continued industry leadership as demonstrated by its continued focus on innovation. For example, the HoloLens, a PC encased in the human eye, is yet another innovation that demonstrates Microsoft's commitment to research and development. This consistent, historical track-record of success pairs nicely with the opportunities that exist to creatively innovate solutions appropriate for addressing the Japanese work culture and, more specifically, to help solve the karoshi issue.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

In recent years, boosted trends of occupational mental disorders and occupational cardiovascular disease relating to overwork have come to the forefront, as well as increased claims and compensations resulting thereof (Yamauchi, T., Yoshikawa, T., Takamoto, M., Sasaki, T., Matsumoto, S., Kayashima, K., Takeshima, T., & Takahashi, M., 2017). National prevention strategies were created and submeasures adopted to attack such disorders. In June 2014, a national initiative was developed after the Japanese government passed the "Act on Promotion of Preventive Measures against Karoshi and Other Overwork-Related Health Disorders"; and in July 2015, the Cabinet adopted the "Principles of Preventive Measures against Overwork-Related Disorders" under the same Act (Yamauchi T, Yoshikawa T, Takamoto M, et al., 2017). There were still elements of change missing from these prevention strategies, thus more government intervention was necessary. In 2017, "The Action Plan for the Realization of Work Style Reform" was introduced by the Japanese government to impose an overtime limit of less than 100 hours/month by law and a regular working hours limit of 40 hours/week (Kikuchi, H., Odagiri, Y., Ohya, Y., Nakanishi, Y., Shimomitsu, T., Theorell, T., & Inoue, S., 2020). Japan enacted the Workstyle Reform Act in June 2018 to create a more flexible and healthier work environment in addition to limiting working hours, with different compliance deadlines imposed by The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare ranging from April 1, 2019 to April 1, 2023 for different requirements of the Act (Phillips, 2020). Nevertheless, the reductions in Japan's working hours were not what they appeared to be.

Based on the OECD rankings, Japan is situated at the bottom-fifth in terms of work-life balance a statistic reflecting long working hours. The Japan survey of the OECD revealed that although working hours were 16% lower since almost four-decades ago, working hours are still below the OECD figures (OECD, 2019). The OECD (2019) Japan survey further disclosed that the seeming decline in working hours was mainly a result of a significant increase in non-regular employment of workers who report with shorter working hours. Thus, legislative measures targeted to lower the statutory working week from 48 to 40 hours turned in minimal effects (OECD, 2019).

THE DILEMMA

Despite the presence of a legislative framework to reduce the average number of hours worked by Japanese employees, pushes continue for shorter working hours and more flexible work arrangements (Jackman, 2019). However, as is often discovered to be the case *after* legislation is passed, the reduced-hours law is not absolute since overtime work is permitted as per *saburoku kyotei* under Article 36 of the Labor Standards Act. Takami (2019) explains that a labor agreement between management and the labor union under *saburoku kyotei* permits workers to render service to their employers beyond the statutory limits or during their days off, without sanctions to employers. Thus, the 40-hour statutory limit per week offered practically no effect to the actual reduction of long working hours or excessive overtime work because of the absence of a "binding limitation on extension of working hours that could be negotiated under an Article 36 Agreement" (Takami, 2019).

THE PROBLEM

Long working hours and excessive overtime work is a chronic issue in Japanese labor. The Japanese term, *karoshi*, which means *death from overwork*, symbolized the characteristic practice of long working hours and problems associated with overwork (Takami, 2019). Practically all Japanese companies have similar situations battling *karoshi* attributed to long working hours and excessive overwork. Japan's first-ever *karoshi* white paper highlighted the urgent need to prevent overwork in Japan (Takami, 2017; Yomiuri Shimbun, 2019). The white paper bared the undeniable problems of the Japanese work environment, which resulted in deaths and suicides, which persists to the present day (Yomiuri Shimbun, 2019). If legislative measures lack executory teeth in implementing the 1997 and 1998 amendments to the LSA, then it may rest with individual organizations to reform the long working hours and excessive overwork culture of Japan. The Microsoft four-day workweek experiment is one such attempt to contribute to the solution of the *karoshi* problem that plagues Japanese labor. Microsoft Japan (2019b) approached the problem through their WLCC as an experiment to measure improvements in productivity and creativity, with a strategy to resolve these problems by attacking the root cause (long working hours and excessive overtime) and affect the desired improvements through work-life balance.

THE FOUR-DAY WORKWEEK EXPERIMENT

The Microsoft WLCC was a project undertaken by Microsoft Japan to accelerate labor reforms targeted to improve the work-life balance of their employees. As explained by Microsoft Japan (2019b) innovating the workstyle at the company is a core management strategy hinged on the basic philosophy of *Work Life Choice*. The philosophy entails company resolve to provide an environment for employees where they can choose from several working styles designed with the flexibility grounded on each employee's life circumstances and work (Microsoft Japan, 2019b).
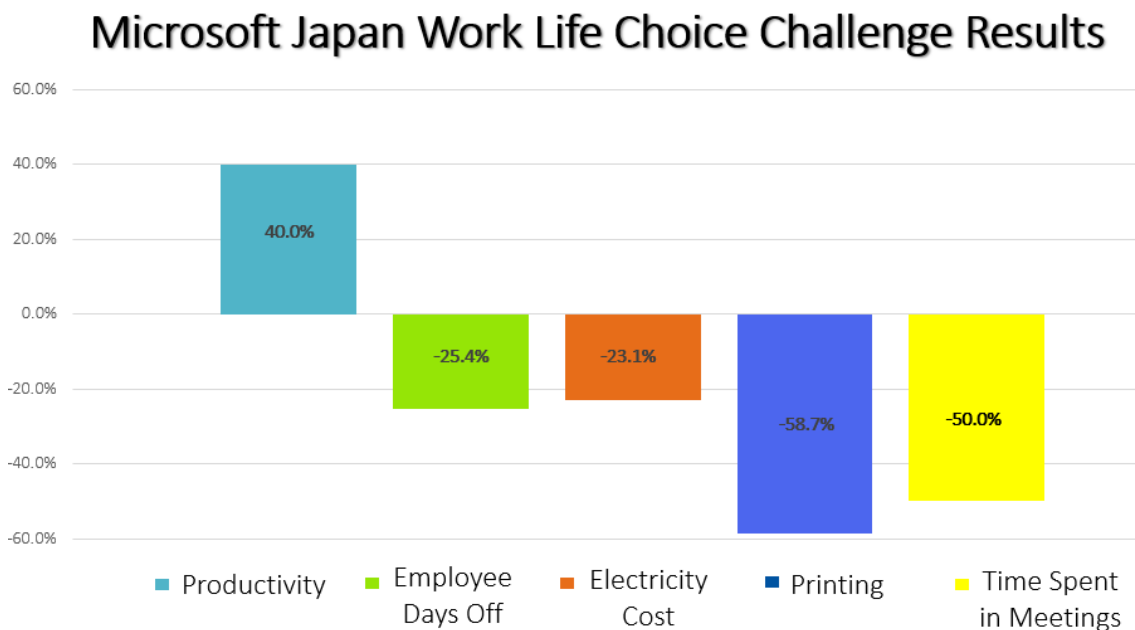
The in-house practices were designed to promote *Work Life Choice* to enhance both the productivity and creativity of employees (Microsoft Japan, 2019b). The company issued a company-wide challenge for employees to do their jobs within shorter hours while learning from the experience and getting enough rest. At the same time, the company also informed employees that the effects of the experiment in terms of improvements, reductions, and satisfaction would be measured and the results disseminated after the experiment. The WLCC implemented a two-pronged initiative centered on a four-day workweek with three consecutive days off and, employee support programs.

Along with the four-day workweek and three consecutive days off for August 2019, employees participating in the WLCC were offered paid leave for the Friday rest day. All offices on all Fridays of August were closed. Support programs were designed to consider three perspectives: self-growth and learning; private life and family care; and social participation and community contribution. Specifics of the support programs are discussed under best practices.

Results

As shown in Figure 1, Microsoft Japan (2019a) reported a 40% improvement in its overall employee productivity, and employees took 25% fewer days off during the month with the one-month company-wide challenge. Higher operational efficiency was also reported as electricity costs were reduced by 23% and printing was down 58.7% (Microsoft Japan, 2019a). By harnessing technology, 46% of all meetings were shortened by nearly 50%, from close to one full hour to 30 minutes (Microsoft Japan, 2019a). Inquiries and clarifications were also made directly to the person concerned, face-to-face, without emails, which are regarded as a waste of time (Chappell, 2019).

Figure 1. Microsoft Japan Work Life Choice Challenge Results

Source: Microsoft Japan (2019a)

BEST PRACTICES

The following best practices were noted in Microsoft Japan (2019b)'s *Work Life Choice Challenge* four-day workweek experiment.

Additional Paid Day of Rest

There are industries in Japan that do not provide annual paid leave. Takami (2017) highlighted the accommodations and restaurant sector in the JILPT Research Report No. 185 as industries that offer no annual paid leave. Microsoft Japan (2019b) provided a special paid

leave for the Friday rest days in August 2019 to all regular employees. The effect of rest on work performance and productivity was expounded on in a recent article by Blasche, et. al. (2018) based on two theories, the compensatory control theory (CCT) of fatigue and the effort-recovery model (ERM). In CCT, workers tend to increase effort concerning mentally demanding tasks to compensate for the fatigue associated with task-delivery. However, the body's natural processes activate the sympathetic nervous system, which generates strain reactions like an increase in blood pressure or elevation of adrenaline (Blasche, et al., 2018). The body's response mechanism is limited to a certain threshold, beyond which insufficient compensatory effort causes decreased performance which results in reduced productivity or error/accident (Blasche, et al., 2018). ERM accounts for strain recovery, which maintains one's well-being in the longer term. Nevertheless, sufficient recovery is required for maintenance of a worker's well-being, especially when work task demands are consistently at higher levels (Blasche, et al., 2018). In which case, the cumulative strain reactions will result in compromised health and well-being (Blasche et al., 2018).

Support for Self-Growth and Learning

Microsoft Japan (2019b) offered subsidies for self-development activities in August 2019. Subsidies were made available in terms of enrollment fees for various courses, examination fees, tuition fees, etc. Aside from support for self-development costs, the company also gave out 1.5 times the benefit points for employees who engaged in self-growth and learning during their additional rest day. This particular component of the WLCC embodies the learning part of the company-wide challenge for Microsoft Japan employees to do their jobs within shorter hours while learning well and getting enough rest. This in-house or company-sponsored personal/professional development, training, and seminars are officially recognized as formal training modes (Formal Learning, n.d.) leveraged by Microsoft Japan's for their support program for self-development, which was well-aligned to the articulated goal for the company-wide challenge.

Cross-Cultural and Cross-Industry Work Experience Program

During the additional Friday rest day in August 2019, interested employees were allowed to tour other organizations for work/learning experiences. Microsoft Japan (2019b) offered support in terms of menu-like recommendation list of companies, schedule, nature of experience, and matching with employee interest. Microsoft Japan employees participated in opinion exchange and group discussions, observation of organizational operations, and professional shadowing. There is profound wisdom in instituting support programs about cross-cultural awareness and cross-industry work experience. These twin programs are essentially the backbone of experiential learning in the workplace context, although the theory was expressed as a teaching/learning strategy to reinforce academic instruction (Kolb, 2015). The modern approach to the understanding and application of the experiential learning model, as discussed in Kolb (2015) frames the theory as a process that links education, work, and personal development to build lifelong learning and facilitate the development of individuals to their full potential as citizens, family members, and human beings.

Lokkesmoe, et. al. (2016) highlighted that both learning institutions and workplaces put a premium on cross-cultural competence and development. They also noted the challenges in the promotion of effective approaches for cross-cultural development among students, employees, and professionals. While cross-industry immersion is an academic approach to acclimatize senior students to the feel of the workplace, the workplace has a much different use for the cross-industry experience. Such experience is crucial in the

workplace to inspire creative genius and spur innovation. Lokkesmoe (2016) continues to explain the various industries that research the varying aspects of a business or service challenge. Immersion to these different perspectives of inquiry and knowledge offers a more robust model that engenders knowledge transfer and more creative ideas.

Family Life Support

Family travel and leisure support subsidies were also offered during the WLCC including domestic travel expenses and sports facility usage charges (Microsoft Japan, 2019b). As the transition from the Japanese work culture of long work hours to shorter hours would encounter challenges from a cultural perspective, the travel subsidy program served to facilitate a smooth adjustment during the WLCC period by providing benefits to employees to participate in leisure travel program with their families. The Society for Human Resource Management (2016) reports that leisure family travel during a vacation not only positively influences the work-life balance of employees but also positively correlates to enhanced job satisfaction.

IMPLICATIONS

In a firm which operates on a multinational level, it is expected that the Microsoft Japan workforce comprises of a richly diverse people. Aside from being a trend characteristic of the most successful global companies, diversity is an essential driver of innovation (Bouncken, Rem, & Kraus, 2016). Cultural development and competence will be predicated on intuitive and carefully crafted interventions, mentoring, and active feedback. The matching of skills and recommended cross-cultural and cross-industry prospects, which is already embedded in the firm's support program, play a crucial role in the continued success of a four-day workweek once Microsoft Japan decides to adopt this working arrangement. However, it was not mentioned in the program description whether measures exist to evaluate the gains in cross-cultural competence derived from the program. In addition to the availability of multiple measures of cross-cultural competence, Lokkesmoe et al. (2016) clarified that the actual gains in cross-cultural development programs may not become apparent immediately. The implications point towards the need to further enrich and bundle together associated support programs.

Aligning the family life support program with the cross-cultural/cross-industry experience initiatives with the self-growth and learning programs will certainly work wonders for the Japanese workforce. It should also be considered that cross-industry experience needs to instill cultural and industrial awareness of the reinforcing attributes of shorter working hours. This is where group discussions with employees on the tour site and observation of operations will be ultimately put to good use as a component of informal learning. In which case, additional interventions to offer possibilities for virtual modalities of self-learning activities will be most welcome once Microsoft Japan decides to forget about *karoshi* and concentrate on doing tasks within shorter hours while learning well and taking enough rest. The company-wide summer challenge, therefore, should become the way of life for the Microsoft Japanese workforce. Following Lokkesmoe et al. (2016), the adoption of a culturally-aware cognitive frame of mind among the workforce takes time and needs to be instituted at the earliest opportunity.

Another implication of the gains from the summer WLCC initiative springs from the intricacies of actually shutting down operations for three consecutive days. If all employees are mandated to take a mandatory three-days-off every week within a predetermined three-day period, flexibility arrangements will suffer. If rest days were to be staggered, the savings

benefit from a four-day workweek scheme will likely be lost or diminished. This constraint entails further study before shorter working hours can be established as a norm in Microsoft Japan.

LESSONS LEARNED

There are gains and benefits to a four-day workweek based on the Microsoft Japan experience. This section summarizes the lessons learned from the four-day workweek experiments:
1. Preparations appear well planned and implementation very successful. However, as previously mentioned, a total company shut-down for three-straight days does not appear practical and is a big hindrance to the working flexibility strategy being introduced by the company.
2. Microsoft Japan offered paid special vacation leave for days off in line with the WLCC experiment. However, the non-regular employees were mandated to take the day off without remuneration. In the long run, non-regular employees may become agitated as a result of the unpaid days off experienced.
3. The WLCC experiment was likely very successful because the employees were highly motivated to make the experiment work in anticipation of shorter working hours. However, in case, Microsoft Japan, decides to adopt the four-day wok week, the 40% increase in productivity may not be realized for at least two reasons: (a) Employees may not be as highly motivated because the shorter working hours had already been adopted, thus the honeymoon period would be over, and (2) It is unclear whether Microsoft Japan will continue to compensate regular employees during their third day off or charge against paid vacation leave.
4. More issues must be considered and arranged before the four-day workweek can be implemented in Microsoft Japan. After new preparations have been laid out, implementation cannot be readily made. Thus, another experiment may not be as successful because some employees by nature may not be as patient as the others.
5. A total shutdown of the firm for three-days may be good for customers and clients because business needs may be left paralyzed.
6. Cultural competence is easier to teach because culture can be integrated. However, cross-industry takeaways may not be as easy to pick up because of the contextual differences and cognitive processes that need to be considered so that informal learning can translate to innovative insights.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1. Trial run of a four-day workweek: After the lessons and issues cited in the preceding section have been addressed, a new experiment may be launched. However, it may be self-defeating to call it an experiment again. Calling the new experiment, a trial run may be more motivating for employees because everyone knows that after the trial run is the real thing.
2. A skeleton force during one of the three-days off: The skeleton force during the third day-off will serve two purposes. First, it will offer a semblance of the status quo to the customers like nothing has changed because their needs are being served despite the company's shortened working hours. Second, if Microsoft Japan decides to continue with the payment scheme during the WLCC experiment, the non-regular employees can report as the skeleton force to mitigate agitation and loss wages.

3. Transparency in compensation and expected productivity: Before the trial run is launched, it should be imperative to convene the entire workforce on the changes that will be taking place in the four-day workweek to clarify the grey areas observed during the WLCC challenge. Compensation must be explained, along with the expected output during the four-day workweek.
4. Consider cross-industry tours to a firm where a four-day workweek or shortened working hours are in place so that Microsoft Japan employees can have a preview of what to expect.
5. Guidance groups and buddy system: Instead of one-on-one professional shadowing, a guidance group may be formed once the trial run is launched. A buddy system will relieve one of the stigmas of being the less-capable employee when professional shadowing is in play.
6. A parallel run of the four-day and five-day workweek Done simultaneously, comparisons and troubleshooting of procedural bottlenecks can be made to prepare for a smoother four-day workweek translation.

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