

The “4-day work week” change project

As the first larger Danish company IIH Nordic have initiated a 30 hour and 4 day work week for all full time employees in the organization.

The underlying principle is that a digital transformation based on changed work processes and implementation of new technology makes it is possible to create an organization which can produce better results in 30 hours that traditional organizations can in 40.

The new work processes have affected the entire organization and have received extensive attention and interest from companies, media and people internationally.

Some background

IIH Nordic is a digital consultancy specializing in executing data driven digital marketing initiatives with a focus on return on investment and has helped some of the largest companies in Denmark. Established in 2005 by Henrik Stenmann and Steen Rasmussen the agency today consists of more than 50 specialists across 4 countries. For the last 5 year, the company have been honored with the title of best Danish Digital Analytics house and was in 2016 nominated as global agency of the year by the Digital Analytics Association.

In connection with our corporate vision “**Improve the quality of life as much as possible through technology**” we at the end of 2014 began discussing the extend of the potential from new technology and how it provided an opportunity to change the way people worked during an ordinary day and what it would take to leverage this potential to the full extend.

Going deeper

The initial planning for the 4DWW change project started in January 2015 and the first full beta-version was finally rolled out in full extend in February 2017 for all employees.

The implementation of the 4DWW has been a result of working on and applying the newest and innovative technology along with pioneering concepts of collaboration and teamwork. The process has been led by the CEO Henrik Stenmann and the entire management team, but it has been a key point to involve the full range of employees in the entire process to ensure it was a shared and collective project for the entire organization.

The focus on the last 2 years of work has been on preparing the organization and researching the best framework to enable the new ways of working, so during the last 2 years more than 300 major or minor changes have been implemented in the organization. One of the key challenges have been that not all initiatives provided the expected value and had to be rolled back to ensure other initiatives could be taken.

Of these around 200 turned out to have persistent value to support the objective and they among other things include:

- Principles of the workday
- Work processes
- Meeting culture
- Learning processes
- Role of management
- Digital transformation

The price of time

One of the first things identified in the project was the key KPI of time and productivity. How do you take an organization who is used to delivering services and main product is selling time and enables it to deliver the same services and products but 20 % fast across the entire range of activities?

The answer was an exploration of the 3 cornerstones – People, processes and technology. And there are many examples of the changes made in the organization.

The opportunity to focus

One of the most important aspects and key factors for this project to succeed, has been the organization itself. Every employee has been involved in the process of finding technologies to use, tools, apps, websites

and so on, as well as participate in brainstorming on ideas and concepts. Almost every concept used as part of the new IIH Nordic way of working, is built on research and science.

Research reveals that our brain needs 15 minutes to go in to “focus mode”. Doing those 15 minutes you shouldn't be interrupt by colleagues, emails or your phone. Using the Pomodoro work methodology (25-minute work sprints), each employ registers the work they are doing under the ‘Pomodoro’ which then appears on an online leaderboard, where they are marked as “working”. Ones the employee starts the Pomodoro, a 25 minute’ countdown starts. Doing this 25 minutes, the employee is not to be disturbed. Most off the time, people are listening to special music which helps concentrating. Once the 25 minutes is completed, everyone can see it, and can now go talk to the person. This has instilled a gamification effect in the office where employees compete to complete Pomodoros.

From a managerial perspective, we see more relaxed employees, who suddenly have a possibility to go “in the zone”, without being disturbed, and they can focus on their work. After the 25 minutes of a Pomodoro, people have a 5-minute break.

New roles of meetings

A second example is the principles around meetings. When in a meeting, we have implementing some new rules. The concept of 1 hour or 30 minute meetings, is a paradigm defined by the calendar systems like Outlook, but in reality, there is no practical reason for these lengths of meetings. If structured correctly, the same results can be achieved in meetings that are 20 or 45 minutes. Also by scheduling meetings in the afternoon, everyone is using their “best hours” working on their tasks in the morning. This creates ones again, more focus and efficiency.

Also in all meeting rooms an egg timer have been placed and is supposed to be set for 5-10 minutes before the meeting to ensure that some clear follow up actions on the meeting are defined.

Focus on happiness

The mood of the staff is measured on a weekly basis using the Officevibe platform. This makes it possible for management to keep track on the mood and overall atmosphere of the organization. This is very important to an organization which is often introducing new technologies to the employees, keeping management informed when things are not working out too well. In the Officevibe platform, all employees answer five questions each week about things like, stress level, happiness, acknowledge etc.

Help from new technology

How technology has been applied in the workplace has been the key criteria for success. By shortening the working week, there is less time to achieve the same results. This means that automation where possible is important to implement, as employees should not use time on tasks that could be automated. By implementing programs like Asana (Project management tool), Pomodoro, Officevibe, Outlook, much of the daily work, has been automated.

The outcome

Both from a business, social and individual perspective this change project has radical implications and has attracted much attention from the Danish media, interest from other businesses, NGO's and government representatives.

On a practical level, we can right now identify the following positive outcomes of the change project.

Key benefit and objective

- Improved productivity

Other benefits of the Change project

- Less stress
- Shorter learning time
- Improved openness to change
- Improved work satisfaction
- Staff open to improvements
- Better retention
- Improved recruitment
- More energy

So far the we have shared the knowledge ranging from company boards of directors, event sessions, groups at DI and VL just to mention a few. At the same time TV2, DR, P1 and most of the major Danish media have written stories about the change project.

In the cards

The 4DWW change project is just the first step on the road toward a full digital transformation, but with this first project we have created a culture of change. We still have many new initiatives and changes ready for test over the coming years.

From our perspective, the main value of the change project has been the benefit of creating an entire organization with a heart for change. At the end of the day our mission remains to “Create value through the latest digital knowledge and continuous skill development of intelligent people”