

6-HOUR WORK DAY INSTEAD OF USUAL 8: FEASIBILITY (OR BENEFITS) OF IMPLEMENTATION FOR UKRAINIAN ENTERPRISES

The theme of my article is “6-hour work day instead of the usual 8: feasibility (or benefits) of implementation for Ukrainian enterprises”. Initially, we will consider countries in which people work the least hours per week, after that - experiments related to the 6-hour working day, and imagine the introduction of this system in Ukraine and around the world.

In the Netherlands, the shortest work week in the world is only 29 hours. Dutch specialists are used to working 4 days a week. For 3 days in a row, working mothers and working fathers take consecutive days. Everyone is guaranteed vacation and medical care. If the employee wants, he can reduce the number of working hours, while wages will remain hourly [1]. So the state takes care of the balance between personal life and work among its citizens.

In second place is Denmark and 33 working hours per week. All Scandinavian countries have adopted flexible working hours and 5 weeks of paid leave per year. It is easy for employers to dismiss and recruit new candidates, but the employees themselves are protected by law. Compensation after the dismissal of the company must pay two years.

In Sweden and Italy, it is also customary to work no more than 36 hours, they pay extra for overtime employees, but if they are regularly delayed at work, the employer may be fined for the incorrect organization of work. Most of all in Europe, the British work – up to 39 hours a week.

And the most important workaholics in the world can be called workers in developing countries - Japan and South Korea. It is customary to work there for 50-55 hours a week, without days off, while still a few hours to get to and from work. That is why the term “karoshi” appeared in Japan - a sudden death in the workplace from overwork.

In Sweden, an experiment was conducted at the state level: for two years, employees of the municipal nursing home in Gothenburg worked six hours a day instead of eight. As a result, they became less likely to go to sick leave, more efficiently fulfill their duties and, on the whole, became happier and healthier.

After almost two years on such a schedule, the staff again switched to the old system: 8 working hours a day.

Research has proven the benefits of shorter working hours in terms of health and productivity, but not money. Bloomberg went deeper into the study to figure out if a shorter working day could translate into real savings for the employer. In the long run, yes.

The experiment in Gothenburg was not extended because the authorities had run out of funding. About 17 million kroons (\$ 1.3 million) were spent on two additional carers who closed the released watch over two years. After which, officials said that spreading the practice to the entire municipality would have been too expensive and closed the project.

However, in the long run, savings would be felt. A shorter working day makes employees happier, said researcher Bengt Lorenzon. “They are less susceptible to stress, less sick, they have more energy and time for different activities”, he explained [2].

In particular, as part of the experiment, nurses were less likely to go on sick leave than with an 8-hour working day. They were also less likely to get sick than their counterparts in the control group. In general, they were sick less often than nurses throughout Gothenburg (Fig. 1).

On average, they took 4.7% less sick days for the experiment period, while nurses with a traditional schedule from the control group took 62.5% more sick days for the same period of time. Nurses who worked less were also less likely to use time off (Fig. 2).

And although the study found the benefits of shorter working hours for the health and productivity of employees, it failed to measure the potential economic benefits of the project in the long term. Although the improvement in health and attitude towards work has led to an increase in the quality of service for sisters on a reduced schedule.

In general, the health status of nurses in Sweden is worse than that of an average citizen of the country. Women in civil service are more likely to suffer, for example, overweight. Although the study does not provide exhaustive figures on the impact of the shortened schedule on health, its improvement in nurses from the test group was noticeable and over time this would have an economic effect.

Shorter Days, Healthier Nurses

Nurses who worked shorter shifts got sick less often

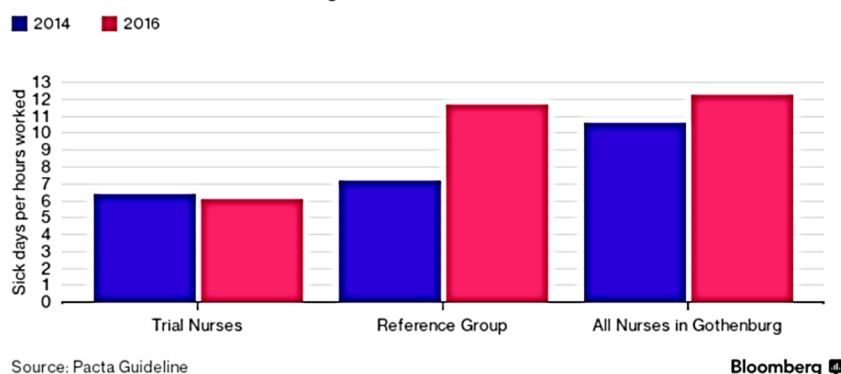


Figure 1

Shorter Hours, Less Time Off

Nurses who worked shorter shifts, took less unexpected time off throughout the year

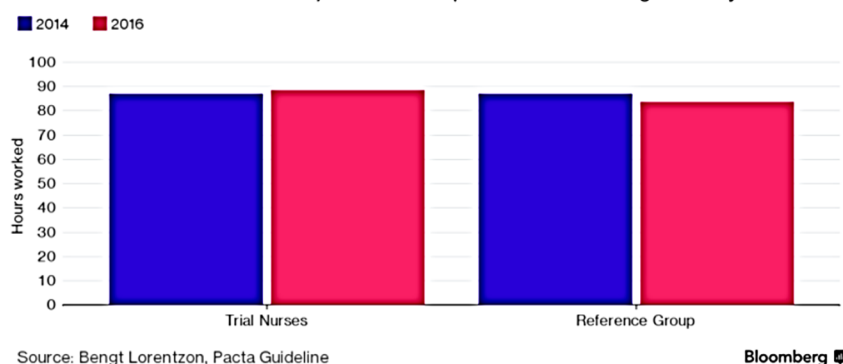


Figure 2

In the nursing home, unfortunately, they did not consider the costs of health care for nurses, not to mention the calculations of savings in the long term. However, they recorded an improvement in blood pressure.

Toyota centers in Gothenburg, Sweden's second largest city, switched to this system 13 years ago. The company claims that this gave a positive result – employees became happier, staff turnover was lower, and profits increased.

Although at the legislative level, a 6-hour working day has not yet been legalized, so far we can only talk about an experiment, the effectiveness of which is evaluated by each enterprise that joined it. Firms make preliminary calculations and determine the consequences of introducing such a working day.

In the US, some companies spend hundreds of dollars per employee on special programs to make their lives happier and healthier, hoping to save money on healthcare in the future and increase productivity in the present. But what if this problem is easier to solve not by fitness and diets, but by simply reducing the number of working hours for them? However, an eight-hour work day in America is still considered a necessary minimum.

From Sweden we will return to Ukraine. Ukrainian legislation provides that the weekly working time may

not exceed 40 hours. For employees, a five-day work week with two days off (a working day can not exceed 8 hours), a six-day work week with one day off (no more than 7 hours a day) can be set, and the final accounting of working time is valid for continuously operating enterprises.

It is necessary to pay attention to the fact that according to Art. 53 of the Code of Labor Laws of Ukraine on the eve of holidays and non-working days, the working hours of workers are reduced by one hour during both a five-day and six-day working week, and on the eve of the weekend, the working time for a six-day working week cannot exceed 5 hours. Thus, if we adopt a legally defined length of the working day, then it turns out that on average with a five-day working week, an employee works out for about 7 hours 10 minutes, and for a six-day one - a little more than 6.5 hours. The problem is that few people know about this law and few employers want to follow these rules [3].

The second is a 2 month notice. In Ukraine, the employer has the right to establish part-time at the enterprise. This means that wages will be paid for hours actually worked, and for hours worked overtime, you will have to pay double the amount as stipulated by the provisions of Article 106 of the Labor Code of Ukraine. The employer must notify employees in advance of the es-

establishment of part-time work in advance – at least two months in advance, and during these two months pay wages as a full-time job. If there is a simple non-fault of the employee during these two months, then you still have to pay at least 2/3 of the "regular" salary.

The third, in practice, situations arise when orders to switch to part-time work were allegedly signed in two months, with which workers were also allegedly acquainted two months ago, although in fact everything happens today. Formally, in this case there are no violations, since the legislation does not yet stipulate the obligation of the employer to warn state bodies about the introduction of part-time work at the enterprise.

At the same time, during the transition to the six-day period, it will be possible to “win” only if the people are actually transferred to part-time jobs – the employer will be able to save part of his wages, but most likely he will lose in labor productivity. A variant is also possible, of a legal transfer to part-time work during the actual performance of work throughout the day, but it must be remembered that with the actual admission of an employee to work without an employment contract, full-time registration if the work is actually performed is complete working time and wage payments without paying a single contribution and taxes may be fined thirty times the minimum wage for each employee in respect of which was committed, and it is today 126000 hryvnia.

So, in Ukraine it will be good for health of nation, have a bigger profit for a firm, decrease an unemployment in country, that take away 3% of GDP and people can find another job and work less. And this all only because we decrease the working hours down to 6. But

also we will have the bad sides of this program and they are: losses of the firm, big fine, if we don't have the law about it, this program works only in long-term perspective.

Literature

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