4 Day Work Week in Japan

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 of a three-day weekend would have on worker's performance. Company executives said the shorter working week resulted in additional benefits. Productivity rose by 40 percent and 92 percent 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 percent 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.