

Calling all media & marketers: would you cope with a six-hour working day?

 By [Adam Hunter](#), issued by [Hook, Line & Sinker](#)

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As efficient as we strive to be, I'm pretty sure we often hear ourselves wishing for more hours in the day. And as we already know, the media and marketing world is not for the faint-hearted - or those dependent on eight hours of sleep a night. From new business, budget reviews, events and product launches, tight deadlines and client demands - it can be extremely exhausting.

For those who don't know, Sweden has just converted to a six-hour working day, with businesses across the country having already implemented the change and embarking on experiments to compare the costs and benefits of working less hours. To have fewer meetings, be more focused - and then go home early sounds like an absolute dream, but can it really work?



I recently bumped into an ex work colleague who started a sports-sponsorship agency at the beginning of 2015. And although he has not implemented the six-hour work day approach, he tells me that they have no working hours and there are no sick or annual leave days at his practice. Here, staff know their deadlines and what is expected of them, they know when is appropriate to take leave, and best of all, they are in the office extra early every morning and he has seen a significant boost in productivity.

The benefits - the early bird catches less sleep

A study published in *The Lancet* last month analysed data from 25 studies that monitored health of over 600,000 people from the US, Europe, and Australia for up to 8.5 years found that people who worked 55 hours a week had a 33 percent greater risk of having a stroke than people who worked a 35 - 40 hour week, and a 13 percent increased risk of developing coronary heart disease.

Linus Feldt, CEO of Stockholm-based app developer Filimundus, told *Fast Company* this month that they switched to a six-hour work day last year and have never looked back. To cope, staff are asked to stay away from social media and other distractions while at work and meetings are kept to a minimum. Feldt says that it is easier to focus more intensely on the work that needs to be done and employees have the stamina to do it and still have energy left when leaving the office.

Toyota service centres in Gothenburg switched to a six-hour day 13 years ago, they report happier staff, a lower turnover

rate, and ease in enticing new employees to come on board, says the managing director with *The Guardian Newspaper*, while adding that profits have increased by 25 percent.

Looking forward

We live in an era where time is becoming more and more treasured, even more so than money. Sadly, many of us are still under the opinion that the longer we can get staff to work, the more productive they are, and the better this is for the company. Of course this is not true and instead of a six-hour day, perhaps we should start look at increasing mobility and flexibility. I don't know about the rest of us, but I'm far more efficient and productive on activities such as strategy compilation and new business proposals when working from my dining room table at home.



Generally speaking, from my experience and what I've seen within the agency world, we struggle to attract and retain talent in spite of competitive salary offerings, good benefits and great brands. My observation is that great talent, especially senior, is now moving to corporate as an attempt to solving the working hour's issue. I can't imagine the six-hour approach taking-off locally, particularly within our media and marketing world, but perhaps a solution would be the introduction of flexi-hours, which many of us have already started to follow.

While we provide staff with more options and flexibility, which of course is great as it should enhance the work/life balance; a local South African research and intelligence company has found that staff are actually working longer hours as they feel guilty from working from home. The trick is to ensure staff are working effectively and efficiently (their physical environment plays a massive role here) while keeping them informed about new practices and freedoms.

Would you be motivated and achieve more in a shorter period of time? Share your thoughts and comments.

ABOUT ADAM HUNTER

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