

# POINT/COUNTERPOINT:

## Open for business, or closed for the [three-day] weekend?

Remote, in-person, hybrid – that’s been the topic of debate in the work world since Covid-19 reared its ugly head. There’s a newer conversation now, though, and it’s quickly becoming contagious as the next post-pandemic catalyst of real change, and demand.

A four-day workweek. Are employers ready to offer this? Do employees want it? Will productivity be better, or worse? Can this truly achieve a better work-life balance for all?

In fact, according to a survey of business leaders recently conducted by ResumeBuilder.com, 20 percent of employers have already implemented a four-day workweek and another 41 percent plan to test the waters with one in the coming months. Roughly three in 10 U.S. employers plan to offer a four-day workweek by year’s end, according to survey results.

Also of note: A survey conducted by Pew Research Center found that 24 percent of workers who quit their jobs in 2021 reported that “not enough flexibility to choose when to put in hours” was a major reason, and 20 percent quit because they were “working too many hours.”

If it becomes the standard, a four-day workweek in the American workplace would be the most evolutionary change to our nation’s work environment since Henry Ford adopted the current standard five-day workweek almost 100 years ago, in 1926.

And the last real revision to the workweek arrived with the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, which set the standard workweek at 44 hours, a figure adjusted downward to 40 hours in a 1940 amendment.

Studies out of Iceland and New Zealand have indicated that a shorter workweek results in lower burnout and higher productivity among employees. A story published by Leaders further shared that, in 2021, the Japanese government announced a plan to achieve better work-life balance among the nation’s workers. **Panasonic CEO Kusumi Yuki** announced in January that workers may have a third day off, therefore “freeing them up to take side jobs, volunteer or just relax.”

The landscape of tomorrow’s workplace is evolving, with necessity, from what it was yesterday. To stay competitive in the labor market, to draw their best candidates in and keep them, employers will need to decide whether to take this road less traveled.

Here’s a sample of more talk from around the water cooler... or perhaps via the webcam...

**Boston College researcher Juliet Schor:** In a TED podcast, Schor noted that a trial of the four-day workweek in Iceland in the 2010s yielded “phenomenal results, like less stress, lower work-family conflicts, more energy levels.” She added, “Productivity stays the same or gets better. Doesn’t cost anything.”

**Iwan Barankay, Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania associate professor of management:** Barankay pointed out that, historically, it’s not been a simple matter to compress a standard five-day workweek into four. He used Volkswagen’s adoption of a four-day workweek in 1993 as his example. Volkswagen’s shortened workweek

included shorter hours and less pay.

“They [employees] started to take work home with them,” he said. “They were still under pressure to get work done, and they were doing it on their own time,” Barankay told The Hill as a part of the publication’s June 2023 story by Daniel De Visé.

**Robert Yuen, co-founder and CEO of Monograph:** Yuen says that employees need more time, therefore, his company now operates on a four-day schedule. “A four-day workweek gives employees the space to take care of themselves, providing them space for personal development,” he told Forbes in a story interview. “Since this tech startup launched a four-day workweek in 2019, employee satisfaction has reached an all-time high.”

**Tammy Polk, chief human resources officer at Formstack:** Polk told Forbes that, at the end of their firm’s 4.5-day workweek trial period, data showed employees overall saw an increase in flexibility (16%), productivity (13%) and happiness (14%). “It was truly a win-win situation as output increased and employees had more flexibility with their work-life balance,” she said.

Polk further noted some disadvantages witnessed at her firm. She told Forbes contributor Bryan Robinson that, despite the positive feedback, “Employees reported a 27% increase in stress levels during the 4.5-day workweek trial—a surprising outlier when paired with the increases in flexibility, productivity and happiness.”

Forbes reported that many workers believe a four-day work week—already implemented by companies such as

Kickstarter and Microsoft—creates greater structure around work and adds a free weekday to relax and handle life matters.

**Jon Leland, chief strategy officer for Kickstarter:** Leland shared with CNN Business that a four-day workweek schedule was a “true win-win.” He noted in a statement: “The 4-day week has been transformative for our business and our people. Staff are more focused, more engaged and more dedicated, helping us hit our goals better than before.”

A Washington Post-Ipsos poll conducted this spring definitively indicated that workers desire a four-day workweek. And advocates are pushing for four eight-hour days rather than 10-hour days, citing evidence that employees will do the same amount of work in fewer hours. In that same argument, proponents also say workers should earn the same pay for a four-day week as for a five-day week.

However, some firms said they expect employees to work the same number of hours in a four-day week as they would over five days. Labor leaders have objected to that idea, expressing concerns over longer, extended-shift hours. A few employers have also said they would end up reducing the amount paid leave for employees if working a shorter week.

As Bob Dylan wrote and sang back in 1964: “*As the present now... Will later be past... The order is rapidly fadin’... And the first one now... Will later be last... For the times they are a-changin’...*”

How might your workplace respond to Dylan’s insightful words as this evolution continues? ■

## Letters to the Editor

### IPA’s Craven to Marion, Kansas police chief

*Don Craven, president and CEO of the Illinois Press Association, sent this letter to Marion (Kansas) Chief of Police Gideon Cody on Aug. 15, 2023, in response to the department’s raid of the Marion County Record newspaper and the newspaper publisher’s home.*

Dear Chief Cody:

On behalf of the Illinois Press Association, I write to join the chorus of journalism associations around the nation that are outraged by your actions to raid the office of the Marion County Record and the home of its co-owners.

The correspondence from The Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press and others very accurately establishes that the actions of your office are violative of very well-established press freedoms.

Your actions, and the unfortunate death of Mrs. Meyer, caused me to recall the story of Elijah Lovejoy, also a victim of an effort to silence an American newspaper. If you have not yet done so, I urge you to learn this bit of American history. Mr. Lovejoy was murdered by a pro-slavery mob, while defending his anti-slavery newspaper in Alton, Illinois. The mob tossed Lovejoy’s press (actually three of them) into the Mississippi River. One of

those presses sat in the office of the Alton Telegraph as a reminder to all. A monument to Lovejoy was erected in the city.

While the actions of your office leading up to the raid are of grave concern, your inability or unwillingness to explain your actions compounds the aggravation. Obtaining and executing a warrant, without the need for an underlying affidavit, and conducting a search of a newsroom and the publishers’ home should be unthinkable. Overbroad. Chilling. Intrusive into newsgathering. All the descriptors used by the courts over the years are brought to mind.

And to think this was brought

about---as best we can tell ---by the newspaper being advised of a public record of a driving conviction of a local resident. Under what theory is possession of a public court record a crime?

You and your office should apologize to Mr. Meyer and his staff, the newspaper, and to your community for your egregious actions. You can’t fix this, you can’t hide from it. You should own it, apologize, and resign.

Sincerely,

**DONALD M. CRAVEN**  
Springfield (Ill.)

### Prenzler and PTELL

Imagine a husband who applies for a credit card – without telling his wife. In some states and circumstances, she will be liable for the debt, even if she didn’t know.

But she finds out – before he gets the loan – and she notifies the credit card company that she needs a say in the matter.

That’s what just happened between the East Alton-Wood River High School district and its taxpayers.

Last week, petitions with more than 1,100 signatures were submitted to the EA-WR district office, in response to its July 12 “backdoor referendum” that gave citizens 30 days to gather 832 signatures to put a \$2.4 million bond issue on the March 19, 2024 ballot.

Going door to door, I gathered 300 of these signatures myself.

Without the signatures, the district could issue the bonds without voter approval – with taxpayers none the wiser – until their tax bills arrive in the mail.

How many people read the legal notices? It took another week before the citizens saw the legal notice and realized what the district was doing.

To make this sitcom even more interesting, on July 13 the Madison County Board voted against putting PTELL (Property Tax Extension Limitation Law) on the ballot, for voters to adopt or reject.

Among other things, PTELL would effectively get rid of the tricky backdoor referendum.

And at the county board meeting, local school superintendents showed up to speak against PTELL.

That’s why I helped gather signatures. Backdoor referendums are fundamentally unfair. They are tax increases without voter approval.

Four times during my time as Chairman I have asked the county board to put PTELL on the ballot – for voters to decide. And although some have agreed with me, each time a majority has voted to keep PTELL off the ballot.

In a marriage, you shouldn’t have to “catch” your spouse trying to take out a loan.

**KURT PRENZLER, CPA**  
Madison County Chairman

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