

READING COMPREHENSION

B2 | Adults / Teens | Reading + Vocabulary | 45-60 minutes

Topic: Workplace | Skills: Reading, Vocabulary, Speaking

Read the text carefully. Then answer the questions on Page 2.

The Four-Day Experiment

When the small design company Lineworks announced a four-day working week, its manager emphasised that this was a **trial**, not a permanent benefit. Staff would receive the same pay, and the office would close on Fridays. In return, the team had to maintain the quality of its work and meet existing deadlines. Everyone welcomed the proposal, although not everyone expected it to last.

During the first month, meetings became shorter. Updates that had previously required an hour around a table were shared in brief written notes. Several employees said they could concentrate better because they had to protect their working time. By the end of the month, the number of completed projects had not fallen.

Yet that figure **concealed** an uneven experience. Experienced designers knew which tasks could be simplified, while two recent **recruits** relied on informal conversations to learn. They hesitated to interrupt colleagues who now seemed constantly focused. Meanwhile, the person responsible for customer support was still checking messages on Fridays, despite the officially closed office.

The manager initially described the results as a success. After an anonymous survey, she revised that judgment. Finishing the same number of projects did not show whether everyone had completed them within four days, nor whether the arrangement would remain **workable** after the pressure of the trial faded.

The company kept the shorter week but introduced a rotating customer-support day off and scheduled time for questions and training. Some meetings returned, with a clearer purpose. The final arrangement was less simple than the original announcement. Its strength was that it treated free time as something to organise fairly, rather than a reward employees could obtain only by hiding unfinished work. The trial had not proved that every business could copy the model; it had shown what this particular team needed to change.

Key vocabulary

trial - a limited test before a final decision

concealed - hid or kept something from being noticed

recruits - people who have recently joined an organisation

workable - practical enough to operate successfully

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

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Answer in complete sentences. Support interpretations with evidence from the text.

1. What conditions were attached to the shorter working week?

2. How did the team initially reduce time spent in meetings?

3. Why were new recruits disadvantaged?

4. Why was the project count an incomplete measure of success?

5. What adjustments followed the survey?

6. What is the writer's attitude towards the final arrangement?

Discuss with a partner

- How could an employer detect work being done outside paid hours?
- Which meetings are worth protecting when working time is reduced?

ANSWER KEY

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Suggested full-sentence answers. Accept other supported interpretations where appropriate.

1. What conditions were attached to the shorter working week?

Staff had to maintain work quality and meet existing deadlines while receiving the same pay.

2. How did the team initially reduce time spent in meetings?

The team replaced some hour-long meetings with brief written updates.

3. Why were new recruits disadvantaged?

They depended on informal help but felt reluctant to interrupt colleagues who appeared constantly busy.

4. Why was the project count an incomplete measure of success?

It did not reveal hidden Friday work, unequal pressure or whether the arrangement was sustainable.

5. What adjustments followed the survey?

The company introduced a rotating support day off and scheduled time for questions and training.

6. What is the writer's attitude towards the final arrangement?

The writer is cautiously positive because the revised arrangement addresses fairness without claiming the model will suit every business.

Teaching notes

Read once for the main idea, then reread for evidence. Compare answers before discussing the two open questions. Interpretive answers may vary; ask learners to justify their reading.

Language and reading focus: Evaluating evidence; contrast and cautious generalisation.

Text: Original commentary using a fictional scenario. Discussion questions have no fixed answers.