



EXECUTIVE VITALITY™: SURVIVING A LIGHTER WORK SCHEDULE

There are a lot of reasons that your work schedule, now or in the future, may be lighter than it was in the past. You may have reached the stage in your life when you want to cut back your hours and ease into retirement. You may have childcare or elder care responsibilities. You may have just decided that you want to work less and divert your energies elsewhere. Or perhaps your organization has done some re-organizing and your job sphere has contracted as a result.

Whatever the reason, if you are now working six hours rather than eight, or four days rather than five, it is a change for you and requires you to make an adjustment. Let's just say, as an example, that you are not working Fridays and are working shorter hours on the remaining four days. You routinely have a three-day weekend, and you are loving it, getting a lot of things done in your personal life that were not possible before. Now along comes Labor Day and you have a four-day weekend. Heaven, right? Not so fast!

First of all, are you able to get everything you are supposed to do done in a quality way in the shortened work week? Secondly, do you even remember what you are supposed to be doing when you return after a fun-filled weekend? And lastly, are you getting stressed out worrying about the foregoing two questions?

A study conducted in Sweden ([Washingtonpost/Will a six-hour workday help you live longer?](#)) on shortened work hours would imply that you might just live a longer, happier life, be more productive, and do a better job at work if you work six hours a day rather than eight.

So, it may be worth figuring out how to survive the "stresses" of a shorter work week. How do you enjoy the increase in personal time, and continue to excel at work? For our purposes, we are ignoring any economic impacts and focusing only on quality of work and quality of life.

1. Track the status of your responsibilities, projects, and plans meticulously. Don't come to work Monday morning wondering what needs your attention.
2. Delegate anything that needs to be done in your absence and request a status update be available for you when you return. Don't let it pile up.
3. Separate the urgent from the important. Decide what "urgent" things can be done by someone else (or not at all!). Don't get stuck in minutiae – you don't have time.
4. Plan blocks of time. What has to be done by the end of the quarter, month, week, or day. Don't get a surprise "wake-up call," as in, "OMG, the board materials were due yesterday!"
5. Enroll your team's support in keeping all of you on track.
6. Follow a similar process on the personal side. Set plans and goals for the things you really want to do and those that you really need to do. Get help from supporters. Don't waste this valuable new time in your life.

Have changing job schedules caught you unawares? What have you found that keeps you at peak performance? How can you derive the benefit of shorter hours while not sacrificing quality work?