

Moving to a four-day workweek: How do administrative assistants convince the boss to include them too?

Question: "Our boss is contemplating moving to a four-day workweek to combat the higher gas prices. However, she doesn't plan to include the administrative staff in this move. We have a total staff of only six, two being administrative staff, so we could shift our schedules to have an administrative person in the office all five days. Any advice on what I could say to her?" — *Lyndsey Bell*

Comments

Just like you asked this question, give her resonable options and see if she agrees that might work, you may want to throw in a "if it isn't working we all agree to work it out even if that means working 5 days again". Makes her feel she has that option, adding confidence to even try.

Posted by: | June 13, 2008 at 01:21 PM

I might say, "Have you ever considered adding "Ann's" and my schedule to the four-day-week plan? We were talking and think this schedule would work for both the department and us. What do you think?"

Posted by: MariaelenaB | June 13, 2008 at 01:36 PM

Things that you need to find solutions to before approaching the boss about you and the other admin having a four day work week are: What happens if the other admin calls in sick on a day you are scheduled off? How will vacations be handled on a four day workweek with admin staff with only two of you? What happens if the unexpected happens such as a car breaking down? Another solution for admin staff, since there are only two of you may be that every other week an admin would work a nine hour day for four days and then on Friday/Monday or day that would work for the admins they would have a half day off and then rotate to the other admin the next week. Personally, the secretary and I rotate leaving early one day since someone must cover the phones at all times, even during lunch, which on days one of us is out we eat at our desk and have OT. I understand its about saving gas for the four day week but the boss will want to know the solutions before granting the request.

Posted by: jo | June 13, 2008 at 01:37 PM

I don't think it's a good idea because as Jo mentioned what if something occurred preventing the one who should be in from getting there. The admins here take 2 early outs a month and that works good for us: someone is always here to cover. It doesn't seem like it, but a good admin is the HEART of the operation and needed at all times.:-)

Posted by: AEW | June 13, 2008 at 01:57 PM

This must be especially frustrating for you. I am making the assumption that you and the other admin are two of the lower paid ones in your office and could use the gas expense break more than some of the others. I suggest asking your boss what her reasons are for not including you in this change. Once you find the reasons, you can address each issue. Discuss all the possibilities first with the other admin to get a game plan together for all the "what ifs". It may not be ideal, but you may have to opt for a mid-week day off (rather than Monday/Friday) if work flow demands it.

Posted by: Karen | June 13, 2008 at 03:11 PM

Before you decide to ask for this change think of why the request may not be granted, i.e., coverage that only certain employees can perform due to confidentiality, or special duties.

Also reasons why this change would be good.

In which case this should be a well thought out proposal that outlines the following:

1. reason for your request to include Admin Support Staff in the 4 day work week.
2. Names and departments of those who want to work 4 day week.
3. Schedule as to who will fill in for whom.
4. Savings realized on working 4 day week vs. the traditional 5 day week; for the employees and the company.
5. What hours will the 4 days/week staff work: 7AM-6PM, 9AM-8PM (1 hr lunch)... etc.

Posted by: Eliza Walls | June 13, 2008 at 07:29 PM

I work for a Law Firm of over 350 people and we are also looking into this for our staff. We have done some research of other companies and made a list of the pro's and con's and presented it to the Committee. Some departments it will work for and some others we would have to try it to see. We will see what happens..

Here are some sites where I found some information:

<http://www.groovygreen.com/groove/?p=2223>

<http://news.yahoo.com/s/afp/energytransportlaborlifestyleus>

<http://www.al.com/business/birminghamnews/index.ssf?/base/business/121204897874310.xml&coll=2>

<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,363546,00.html>

<http://www1.wsvn.com/news/articles/local/MI87771/>

Posted by: Sue | June 16, 2008 at 09:12 AM

These are all good suggestions. My question remains...

WHY ARE ADMINS CONSIDERED TO BE "LOWER LIFE-FORMS" and not included in office-wide plans?

Managers and co-workers need to get over the idea that we are "just the admin" and start looking at us as people too!

Posted by: Admins are people too! | June 16, 2008 at 10:20 AM

I do think that everybody should be included in the 4 day workweek. Is the office to be closed on the 5th day? what's the point of having admins in the office if everybody else is gone? Have your bosses never heard of voice mail? Admins are exactly that; admin support. who can't and shouldn't be doing managerial work. Are the managers going to have some people working Monday thru Thursday and some working Tuesday through Friday? If the work week is being split in that fashion, then 1 admin should work Monday-Thursday and the other Tuesday-Friday.

Posted by: Anon | June 16, 2008 at 12:28 PM

I agree with Anon. If the office is closed, and there aren't any managers in the office, why does an admin need to be there? I can only think one is needed if it's a split work week, then each one should work a different end of the week.

A similar situation is currently underway at a former City I worked for; they are currently closed every other Friday, but will be closed every Friday beginning in July. One department thinks they still need to be open that Friday - it was always difficult for the public to remember which Friday the City was open; it's easier to just be closed every Friday. It's going to be even more confusing that certain departments are open, while the rest of the City is closed. In order to avoid confusion, all of staff should be on the same schedule. Unless managers are going to answer and return calls on those off days that Admin Support puts through to them, there isn't a point to you being there alone.

Posted by: Jenn | June 18, 2008 at 04:38 PM

This wouldn't work for my office, since it's required to have phone support from 8-5 Monday through Fridays. If no one else is there, the admin staff can still serve the client by contacting those working from home or salaried management on urgent issues. Our clients would absolutely not accept getting voicemail during regular business hours.

Posted by: Anne | June 20, 2008 at 01:35 PM

We are going through the same thing at our company. They are allowing everyone BUT the admins to take part. Management's response is-- if you don't like it, then you should Go for a JOB that would let you work only four days a week. The other people get a car allowance, and supposedly they are 'working from home' on the 5th day. I would have thought Management could have found a more creative solution..guess the feudal times are alive and well.

Posted by: L Formick | June 20, 2008 at 06:51 PM

I think that is is very sad that in 2008, Admins are still treated as "underlings". The managers are the ones responsible for the outcome of the business. That's why they make a higher salary and should put in more hours. It speaks volumes if a company is willing to give the management staff a break for gas/driving and not the staff that is less responsible for the work and thus makes a lower salary as well. I would look for another job.

Posted by: Freda | June 24, 2008 at 01:31 PM