

TDMC to take part in 4-day work week pilot project

The concept of shorter work weeks is a desirable offering to attract and retain skilled staff. With this in mind, e-commerce agency The Digital Media Collective (TDMC) will be taking part in the South African pilot project experimenting with the four-day week.



Image: Supplied

The 4 Day Week SA Pioneer Pilot kicks off in February 2023 and will run for six months as part of an international initiative that includes companies in Ireland, the United Kingdom, Canada, USA, Australia and New Zealand. Participating organisations will have access to the guidance of global experts and be given the tools and resources needed to run a smooth and successful trial.

TDMC managing director and co-founder Cheryl Ingram says the agency has always placed an emphasis on promoting a healthy work-life balance for its employees and taking part in this pilot project gives it an opportunity to underscore its agile and innovative approach to business and show leadership in the industry. “I love the idea of leading from the front, and taking part in this four-day week pilot gives us the opportunity to put productivity in the hands of our employees,” says Ingram. “It’s up to them to make it work and in doing so, they take ownership for creating the work environment they want.”

People over profit

Ingram hopes that taking part in the project will lead to the ‘forever implementation’ of a different way of working, which in turn will help it attract and retain staff members. “I believe a four-day week will be a huge drawcard as an employer in an industry where finding skilled and highly experienced staff can be difficult. And it will help with staff retention – offering a shortened work week will provide a differential against our competitors and make us an attractive employer.”

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Ingram already has experience of a four-day week, having been part of a programme during her time at MSN in the UK, and says the upswing in both productivity and staff motivation was significant. She looks forward to seeing this duplicated at TDMC.

“We have always taken a people over profit approach to the team and give everyone the opportunity to benefit from company performance every month. This means the whole team is leaned into the business,” says Ingram. “They care because they benefit directly every month. In addition, team members get a half day off each month to take care of personal affairs, we pay for a gym membership for our entire team, and make sure there is breakfast available in the office every single day. We take an approach to health and wellness that isn’t just ticking a box for the sake of saying we’ve got that covered – a four-day work week would underscore that commitment.”

Challenges

That said, Ingram realises that implementing the pilot will not be without its challenges, especially in South Africa where there is an old-school mindset around work and work expectations and due to the ‘always on’ nature of social media and e-commerce, the agency’s key focus areas. “The reality is that there are never enough hours in the day. Our work is output driven – the e-commerce space is on 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. So yes, it is going to take a huge amount of effort internally and will need to be driven from the top down.”

She says the phenomenal growth in her business over the last two years, mainly off the back of the Covid-19 pandemic, has also allowed TDMC to expand the size of their team considerably, which has also given them the flexibility to trial the programme with their team.



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Ingram says the agency will still operate five days a week and the team will need to be very organised to ensure that the way they work never impacts clients negatively. “It is possible. In fact, anything is possible when you put your mind to it. Team members will need to be really focused when they are in the office and will have the incentive of an extra free day without a drop in pay.”

Research partner

The director of 4 Day Week SA NPC and chairperson of 4 Day Week SA Coalition, Karen Lowe, says TDMC's commitment to doing the things needed to attract top talent is commendable. "We are inspired to see yet another forward thinking and innovative South African company prioritising the well-being of its employees in a highly stressed environment." The data collected from companies and employees during the trial will be compiled into a report by the Stellenbosch Business School who is the local research partner for the pilot.

As Ingram points out, taking part in the pioneering pilot scheme reinforces the company's culture and her own leadership style. "We like to think of ourselves as an agile and innovative business, but this needs to extend beyond the services we offer. The four-day week gives us the opportunity to take that mindset right down to how we work and the impact that has on our team. This changed way of working means we will be able to give more time back to the team so that they can live their best life every week."

For more information about the 4 Day Week SA Pioneer Project, visit 4dayweek.co.za

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