

The 4-Hour Workweek Summary

By Tim Ferriss

You might be thinking that a shorter work week sounds great, but then, how is it possible to support yourself? Well, it turns out, there's a way to work fewer hours while still putting food on the table.

The 4-Hour Workweek argues that the current workweek model is archaic. We can redesign our lives to work fewer hours, and possibly earn more in the process. Optimizing work, play, and earning a living, should all form part of the "deal" of a balanced life.

In short, we don't have to wait for retirement to enjoy free time. None of us want our lives to pass us by while we work away our precious time. We shouldn't have to work long torturous hours, live for vacations, and daydream about the day when we no longer have to work.

However, before we all get too excited and quit our jobs - of course there's a catch. To reduce the 40-hour workweek to just 4 hours, you have to accept that there's absolutely no room for inefficiency. Everyone who commits to this change, has to adopt a life of hyper-efficiency.

This summary takes us briefly through the four key steps, as defined by Ferris, for redesigning your work-life and optimizing your time. You can remember these steps using the simple acronym... DEAL. This acronym stands for: define, eliminate, automate, and liberate.

The D in DEAL is for Define

To define our own work-life rules, we need to rethink, income, and retirement. Many of us suffer from time famine because of the typical 9 to 5 routine. We may only find relief in a relaxing weekend and the occasional vacation. Ultimately, for many of us, we're simply biding our time until we finally get to the promised land—retirement.

Ask yourself, how do you feel about your financial future? You may think that you have a sound financial roadmap, but there are often unforeseen bumps in the road. There are many things that are outside of our control, such as market fluctuations, and getting retrenched. These surprise hiccoughs could cause pension funds to evaporate, or, sound financial investments to fail us. Furthermore, should we get to retirement age with our finances intact, we may find that we don't have the health or energy to do those exciting things that we put on hold.

The author's solution is that we replace the classic idea of retirement, with several mini-retirements throughout our lifetimes. The idea is that intense phases of work are punctuated by brief vacations of weeks, months, or even years, to relax or pursue hobbies. For example, one of Ferriss' mini-retirements was dedicated to learning and becoming a competitive tango dancer in Brazil. While tango might not be your thing, Ferriss recommends that we use these mini-retirements to figure out and pursue what really matters to us. And yes, we do need money to fund these mini-retirements and pursue our passions, but Ferriss argues that we don't need to be a millionaire, in order to live like one.

Let's consider the following example that looks at the income and lifestyle of two friends: Steve, and John.

Steve earns \$150,000 per year, while John earns \$60,000. You might

think that Steve has more financial freedom, but let's look at the bigger picture. John works just 10 hours per week and he can work from anywhere in the world. Steve works 80 hours per week and lives in New York City, where the cost of living is high.

John actually earns more per hour than Steve and he can choose his working hours and location. So, while Steve may have a higher income, John has a richer life that offers freedom and flexibility. The key idea here isn't to earn as much as possible, but rather to design a life around financial freedom.

So while we all need money, it isn't the only factor. Let's look at how we can work fewer hours and earn more.

The E in DEAL is for Elimination

A key step is the elimination of unnecessary tasks and distractions, in order to free up time. Mastering the art of productivity is the best way to condense a 40-hour workweek, into 4 hours.

Many of us make the mistake of confusing activity with productivity. Just because you're working, doesn't mean that you're being productive. Ferriss suggests that we eliminate busyness and non-essential activities from our workdays, because busyness is akin to laziness. He says that being busy is just 'lazy thinking, and indiscriminate action', and that we shouldn't just work for work's sake. The message is that efficiency is about doing the right things, the right way.

To begin, eliminate any activities that are not getting you to where you want to go. An easy way to get started on this is to be strict about digital

minimalism. For example, only check email once or twice per day, to avoid going down the rabbit hole of irrelevant communications.

When it comes to productivity there are two universal laws—Pareto's law and Parkinson's law. Pareto's law, also known as the 80/20 rule, is something that Ferriss followed when he managed his sports nutrition company. To stay on top of things, he believed that he had to work 12 hours a day, 7 days a week. Knowing this wasn't sustainable, Ferriss conducted an experiment. He stopped reaching out to 95% of low-income producing clients.

Additionally, he dropped the 2% of clients who were responsible for angry emails and late-night phone calls. Instead, he focused his energy on building relationships with the top 3% of clients—as well as finding new clients who matched their profiles. He went from chasing and appeasing 120 customers, to receiving large orders from only 8. His monthly income doubled, and his weekly hours dropped from 80 to 15 hours a week. Importantly, Ferriss was happy, and he felt liberated for the first time in over two years.

The second law of productivity is Parkinson's law. The governing principle for this law is that; work increases or decreases based on the time you give to it. A task will grow in perceived importance and in complexity, in proportion to how much time you allow for its completion. It's all about deadlines. So the advice is to cultivate the habits of setting short deadlines, and tearing down large tasks into smaller pieces with strict cut off times. So when it comes to productivity, less is more.

But how else can we take hours off the work clock? It's simple. We need to learn to automate tasks.

The A in DEAL is for Automation

After figuring out what's essential, it's time to go a step further by delegating the tasks that you don't need to be doing yourself. This may be difficult, but the results are worth it. Calculate how much your time is worth, and learn to spend it on the important tasks that only you can do. The trick is to delegate or automate the tasks that others can easily perform for you. This will reserve your mental energy for the things that cater to your expertise.

There are numerous reliable and inexpensive platforms where you can hire freelancers to ease the workload. Using platforms such as Upwork and Fiverr, you can hire someone to do just about any task for you. Everything from marketing and writing, to coding and development - if the task does not require an on-site presence, a freelancer can do it for you.

For example, if content writing is more your thing, why not hire freelancers to do the web design, marketing, and even product development? This will allow you to be able to focus on the work you enjoy doing.

The L in DEAL is for Liberation

Liberation is all about unrestricted mobility. If you're an entrepreneur, the country in which you work, can give you the advantage of currency exchange. You can earn in dollars but live in a place with a favorable exchange rate. So, your quality of life goes up, as your cost of living goes down.

If you're an employee, then your DEAL is slightly different. The first suggestion is to make yourself indispensable to your company. Become indispensable by upskilling yourself, so that your company needs you, more than you need them. At the same time, show an increased output. Once you've done this - request time for remote work. Make sure to use this period to prove your productivity and value while working from home.

Liberation from the constraints of time and place, is what frees you to devote time to things that matter. The message is quite clear, and that is that doing nothing isn't the end goal. Idle time makes us depressed. So rather do things that bring you joy. As the adage goes, "to live, is to learn." So, use your liberated time to find out what challenges and excites you, and then go do it.

Creating Your Muse

Now that you know the DEAL, it's time to create your muse.

The idea of a muse, from a business context, is anything that provides an automated income. As we know, technology has made businesses much easier to start, run, and analyze. There's no better time to create a business that gives us income, time, and location independence. But remember, the goal here isn't just to *run* a business, the goal is to *own* one. We often get fixated on the idea of trying to create the next billion-

dollar business, or create something that will 'change the world.' But a business muse is different in aim; its purpose is to generate money, without demanding too much of our time.

So how do we find our muse?

To generate an automated income, we need a product to sell, either physical or digital. But bear in mind, it must be cheap to test, lend itself to automation, and require little maintenance. Begin by looking at markets that are familiar to you, and then find the gaps. What could you add to something that's already selling successfully in that market? Think of specifics. Or ask what skills people in your market want to learn? Learn the skill and build a product that teaches it. Bear in mind that selling products tends to be easier than services. This is because services often have more of a manual component at some level, as well as customer support issues.

Our muse needs to be something that people actually want; it shouldn't be something that only we, want. So, after brainstorming, the crucial step is to test and assess. Once you've figured out what product you'd like to sell, start by doing small batch tests. Whatever you do, don't manufacture before you test. You don't want to end up with an entire warehouse of stuff that you can't sell. You need to adopt the lean startup approach. I.e., the first thing you do is test, in order to gauge if there's a demand for your product, and then, if there is one, that's when you scale. The overall aim is to spend less than \$500 to test your product. This initial step helps determine whether or not there's a market to sell to, as well as looking at the cost per customer acquisition. Once you know this, then you can refine the product design. Remember, the currency we're striving for here, is time, so your idea must allow for automation. We should be able to step away from our muse within a month of starting.

And, once the business is running, we shouldn't have to spend any more than a single day a week, managing it.

So what's your target monthly income number? The amount that will financially secure living expenses and support the life you want to live. And how can you create a business to support that, then minimize the number of moving pieces, and finally, automate it?

In Conclusion

We all need to think about how we spend our time. When you look back on your life, think about how you want to remember it? There's nothing wrong with working hard and enjoying your career. However, when it comes to measuring a life well-lived, the real currency is time, and not money. *The 4-Hour Workweek* will help you optimize your time, without losing any of your work output. So, if you're looking to find the perfect work-life balance, the key is to work smarter, not harder.