
5 Steps for Setting up an Alternative Work Week Pilot

AWW Introduction

When ReadySet first began to develop what would become our **Alternative Workweek (AWW)** pilot program in early spring 2022, we had more questions than answers. Would staff be negatively impacted by a 32-hour work week? (*Not really.*) Would clients? (*Not so far.*) Would meeting culture need to change? (*Yes, but less than you think.*)

As a culture that values data-driven and creative solutioning, we wanted practical but thoughtful answers to our questions. To do that, the most important thing for us was to set up a pilot program to test out an AWW approach and track the process.

After a year of experimentation, we are ready to share our journey and results! If you're an organization considering taking the leap into an alternative work schedule week as we did, here are **five steps** on how to set up an AWW program and pilot.

Step 1

Building Buy-In

An AWW pilot cannot happen if your leadership team is not on board. In order to gain buy-in, it's paramount to share data from programs that have already been successfully implemented. Statistics show that 4-day workweeks improve burnout, employee well-being, organizational effectiveness, work-life balance, productivity, innovation, and more. Below are a few resources that we used to make a case for implementing a 4-day workweek.

Resources

- [4-day Work Week](#)
- [Would a 4 Day Work Week Boost Productivity? \(BBC\)](#)
- [Four Better or Four Worse](#)
- [Two Major Companies Announced Four-Day Workweeks—This May Be The Tipping Point For Businesses To Join The Growing Movement](#)

Step 2

Alternative Work Week Logistics

In the beginning stages of developing and pitching an AWW program, it's important to map out the logistics in detail. Below are a few questions to consider when building out your approach to an alternative workweek.

- 1. What are the intended goals of implementing an alternative workweek program?**
 - *At ReadySet, we sought to craft objectives that would not only impact our business and operational goals, but, more importantly, improve the wellness of our staff. More information on objective in Step 4.*
- 2. How long will the 4-day workweek program be piloted for?**
 - *Our team piloted the program for 6 months (and is now moving to a permanent AWW set-up!).*
- 3. What is the frequency of the 4-day or alternative workweek?**
 - *For us, each month, staff have two designated AWW Fridays. One Friday is for complete closure, the other is an internal day for innovation, strategy, or other non-client work.*

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- 4. Will there be a transition period for staff to commit to the new schedule?**
 - *At ReadySet, we used the first month as a transition period. Our staff and clients were not expected to immediately adapt to the new schedule.*

 - 5. Are there recurring org-wide meetings that take place on the potential closure days? Does your organization have clients or customers who will be impacted by any scheduling changes?**
 - *As a high-touch consulting firm, we had to make a range of scheduling changes in preparation for the AWW pilot. We also set clear boundaries with our clients to protect our time off and ensure folks knew who to contact in case of an emergency.*

 - 6. How will program impact be measured?**
 - *Our People Science team conducted an impact assessment to measure the efficacy of the AWW program at ReadySet. Read more about measuring impact in Step Four.*

 - 7. What will the program be called?**
 - We have fondly settled on the AWW acronym.

 - 8. What existing documents should program information be added to? (i.e. employee handbook, employee policies, etc.)**
 - *In addition to creating an internal Program Details document, we also added AWW language to our Scope of Work template to ensure potential clients are aware of our alternative schedule.*

 - 9. How will the program be communicated externally?**
 - *At ReadySet, we started [a blog series](#) on the AWW Pilot. Staff had the option to link the blog post in their email signature. We also created an email template to advise current clients of upcoming scheduling changes.*

 - 10. Will the program include all employees? Only full-time employees?**
 - *At ReadySet, we distributed the survey to all employees regardless of part/full time hours. However, in the demographics section of a survey, there should be an option to select “full-time” or “Part-time”, so you’ll be able to review that data separately, if the experience is different among those employee groups.*
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Step 3

Identify and Align Around Purpose and Priorities

Before you can measure impact, it's important to determine and then align with leadership on the key objectives of the program. Specifically, what do the organization and its staff members seek to gain from launching the program? At ReadySet, we were looking to increase employee resilience and health by offering additional shared company closures. We also wanted to set aside one day a month where our team could step back from direct professional service work and focus on team building, creativity, or innovation opportunities that can get deprioritized without high-touch approach to client work. By articulating these goals, you can then align on what success looks like.

Step 4

Measuring Success and Impact

Now that your organization has surfaced objectives and desired outcomes, you should decide how you will be measuring the program's success. An impact assessment is a key aspect to the success of an alternative work week. At ReadySet, we conducted a survey before and after the pilot program that assessed employee's satisfaction with their roles and with their newly designed work schedules (*sample survey attached below*). This is important to map out *before* the launch of the pilot program.

- **Measuring Success - What to consider in your assessment:**
 - How do people feel supported in navigating this program's challenges?
 - Do employees feel supported by their managers navigating program challenges?
 - How are employees feeling their team supports them in navigating work week challenges?
 - How are employees feeling connected to navigating the program's schedule?
 - How has the program supported employees' workload? Has it created challenges?
 - How do people feel about staying at the organization?
 - Are employees happy with their job?
 - Are you satisfied with your current work-life balance?

- **Program Results - How to survey the results of the program:**
 - However you surveyed employees prior to the program launch, you will need to re-survey after ~6 months (or however long you've agreed upon a pilot timeline).

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- **Communicating Feedback - It is important to communicate back the results so that employees can trust the program and communicate whether it is working for their satisfaction:**
 - Reporting the Results - Create a communications plan on when and how you're delivering the results of the program to employees.
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Step 5

Accountability and Transparency (for the Long Term)

After you close out your pilot and start looking ahead at future sustainability, you will need to iron out the details of a long term plan for adoption. This plan will need to incorporate any impact assessment data collected and feedback given during the initial phases of roll out. It is always easy to launch something exciting. It is an entirely different thing to ensure ongoing engagement.

First, your organization will want to establish dedicated checkpoints in leadership and all staff meetings to report back on insights or updates to the program and give staff members an opportunity to share feedback or ask questions as the program evolves over time. The organization should continue to survey year-to-year to catch areas of improvement (focus on low lift, high impact wins to address feedback early and often) and to give you the ability to report back on key metrics. Also consider opportunities to share this journey with the public – as we did here at ReadySet, a blog series following along with our journey supports transparency and accountability on the larger stage and gives the chance for others to learn from our wins and challenges!

Conclusion

As we approach the end of our alternative work week pilot program at ReadySet, here are a few of our statistics on how the program was improving the employee experience overall:

- **92%** of employees were able to get their work done with the alternative work week schedule.
- **88%** of individual contributors and **100%** of our Learning and Development team agreed that they have more time to collaborate with colleagues outside of direct client work because of the AWW schedule.
- The majority of respondents reported having sufficient time on internal days.
- Across levels, folks felt supported in navigating AWW challenges.

Looking for additional tools and support in setting up your pilot, [contact us](#) and let us know your AWW goals!
