The Four-Day Week: Necessity or Luxury?

Speakers: Moderator Adam Grant, Saul P. Steinberg Professor of Management and Psychology, The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania; Ohood Bint Khalfan Al Roumi, Minister of State for Government Development and the Future, United Arab Emirates Government; Jonas Prising, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, ManpowerGroup; Hilary Cottam, Social Entrepreneur, Centre for the Fifth Social Revolution; and Anne-Marie Slaughter, Chief Executive Officer, New America.

Research indicates that moving to a four-day working week can increase productivity, reduce overheads, boost well-being and attract and retain talent, as well as spur job creation. Has the 40-hour working week had its day?

Transcribed by: Jennifer Paldano Goonewardane.

Adam Grant (Moderator) – I am thrilled to welcome all of you to the four-day work week discussion, which I am very glad we are having on a Wednesday instead of a Friday, then maybe no one would have shown up. I am Adam Grant, organizational psychologist, and author. I've been fascinated by the question of why we work the amount that we do for a long time. I study work for a living. But I don't think it should necessarily define us. It was about a century ago that Henry Ford, not exactly known for his enlightened views on management and taking care of humans reduced the work week from six days to five because he found the people more productive, their morale went up, and there was more loyalty, and there was a lower turnover. He said it was good for business. And then we could start to wonder why are we now stuck on five days? Was that ordained from on high or is this a human invention that deserves to be rethought? A lot of organizations around the world are rethinking the work week right now. You've seen the trials by the Icelandic government, by Microsoft Japan. There's been a New Zealand insurance company that has been doing it for years and the data has been encouraging so far. It's still early but for the most part, performance has either gone up or stayed the same and people end up having more time to live their own lives, and if there is a silver line of COVID it is to rethink our priorities. We may decide that we don't want our jobs to be the center of our lives and that we want to plan work around life as opposed to vice versa, which too many of us in the west have been doing for too long. So, the purpose of the panel today is to talk about whether the four-day work week is viable. If so, what should it look like, and how can we make it happen? I have met some people in Davos who do not think that we should even work as few as six days. So, I think we have some minds to change.

Adam Grant, organizational psychologist, and author.

Let me start with social entrepreneur Hilary Cottam. Hilary, can you give us some history and walk us through how we got to five days a week and where should we be going?

Hilary Cottam – So let me say to start off the question was necessity or luxury and I think this is a complete necessity for environmental reasons, for human wellbeing and flourishing reasons, and also for economic reasons. What is interesting is that when you asked about history, we think that time is mutual but if we look at the history of work it changes. So, we used to live by prayer times, as some societies still do. Then we moved to an agrarian time where a lot of us in the west still have school timetables that are stuck on the old-fashioned agrarian time, which is problematic. Then we moved to industrial time, which was complicated and the reason to have big clocks in western Europe and the US town squares was that the biggest problem that industrial leaders had was getting people to work on time because working to a clock was such an alien idea. Now, of course, we have internalized the clock.

> **What we need to do is rethink the boundaries of time between work and care and between learning and rethinking linear life.**

But it doesn’t mean just the work-study kind of being in blocks, maybe we need some new boundaries so that we have time to play and so on. A four-day working week is a necessity and a start, but I think not the picture.

When industrial time started people thought that there would be radical experiments. One of the most interesting is Kellogg’s in the 1930s. Kellogg’s is one of the biggest factories for breakfast cereal and he offered his workers six-hour shifts from eight hours for the same pay. What happened was that people flocked to Kellogg’s. Journalists, Hoover administrators, and social scientists doing household studies about what happened because everybody thought industrialization would lead to less work. Keynes was writing about how his grandchildren would have fifteen-hour days. What’s interesting is that at Kellogg’s productivity went up dramatically, accidents went down, the economics of the company changed and people’s lives improved. In the household studies, people said they had more life. What was amazing was what they could fit in taking care of people. They had time to make things. They made their own culture. They ran their own sports teams. Things fit into their lives. What we know now is that was not the kind of experiment that stuck. Even before the pandemic the ILO and the WHO said work was killing us. For the last two years I’ve been running workshops with workers in kind of post-industrial places and what they ask for is not a four-day week. What they ask for is a rethinking of the linear life with less work. I think it is a necessity but it doesn’t go far enough. Because four-day, may I say, is a male solution to this problem because basically, it doesn’t think about care. As we all know caring for our children or parents or just being with friends doesn’t happen in four days, it happens around the day. So, what we need to do is rethink the boundaries of time between work and care and between learning and rethinking linear life. But it doesn’t mean just the work-study kind of being in blocks, maybe we need some new boundaries so that we have time to play and so on. A four-day working week is a necessity and a start, but I think not the picture.

Hilary Cottam, Social Entrepreneur, Centre for the Fifth Social Revolution.

Adam Grant – I think we can get on board with that. I do want to be clear. How many days do you think we should be working in total? Are you advocating for a two-day week or a one-day week? How much work do you think is ideal?

Hilary Cottam – Well, that's a really difficult question. But I think the starting point would be that we work the equivalent of four days over seven. We're not talking about adding more hours. We're talking about more time to be. One of the things that we should be talking about is the climate agenda. There is very good research that shows that if we work less and if we don't travel so much and we make less intensive consumer choices, you know because we're not time poor and we all know that the wealthy people are the ones using more carbon, and so we're not using so much more carbon, but people want to work different amounts. So, what we need is to regulate a flow as some people love their work and may want to do more but for most people in the world work is back-breaking, so we need to think about that as starting point.

Adam Grant – Excellent. I'm going to go down the line for the first round of questions. Jonas Prising you run a manpower group. You've been piloting a lot of different ways to shorten the work week, at least giving the people a little more flexible opportunity. Tell us about that.

Jonas Prising – What's nice about a session like this is that I get to play the role of an enlightened forward-looking leader. Since we're in a close session like this we can all be clear that you're being carried into this kicking and screaming by all my colleagues, led by Michelle who is the head of people and culture and has been talking about implementing a 'work my way' strategy, which is responding to the desires of the workers and our employees, which is to have more time for their life. That's been a really good evolution, I would say unusual at first, but I can see this is what our employees are looking for with more control and more choice. I'd have to say though that the four-day work week discussion I see as part of a desire so clearly expressed during the pandemic and will continue to be expressed, and will be one of the lasting legacies of the pandemic that workers in general desire more flexibility so that they have more choice. This is one of the lasting legacies of the pandemic.

I would say though that as soon as knowledge workers get involved, we talk about these revolutions in the workplace – a four-day work week or flexibility. There are many professionals such as nurses, airline crew, doctors, and truck drivers that are already working in compressed work schedules without reducing the output that is requested but in different regimented schedules that are not the traditional five-day forty-hour work week. I should add working from home where you can know the notion of remote working and flexibility. Sixty percent of the workforce in the most developed countries don't have the luxury of that experience. They have been working way more during the pandemic because we needed them as essential workers to keep the economy going. So, on the one hand, I'm delighted with the discussion. I'm absolutely in favor. We have a great scheme at ManpowerGroup that we are working towards and I think that's the way we are going to be doing business going forward giving people different choices and trusting their judgment.

It's not necessarily an individual choice though because being in a company is a team sport. So, teams will have to decide how best to engage and when to be together and when not to, and for what purpose. There is no point in coming into the office for a zoom call but you have to have time to collaborate at the same time. I would argue that this needs to be equitably distributed across many categories of workers and not only knowledge workers, not only those that can work from home, but also people who are in production lines, who are driving trucks, who are in warehouses, and who are in manufacturing. Otherwise, we will have a bifurcation of the workforce and an inequitable distribution of this very valuable benefit that is truly something that all workers are looking for.

Jonas Prising, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, ManpowerGroup.

> **This may be part of the impact of the COVID pandemic where people went through a rollercoaster of changes. They worked from home. The line between personal and professional life blurred. And when they started going back to the organizations or reboarding in that organization there was tension. There was more demand for flexibility, well-being…**

Adam Grant – I want to reinforce something that you just said which is, that we have had a lot of debates about remote and hybrid work over the last couple of years. But if we look at the data in the Wall Street Journal survey earlier this year that shows that the flexibility that the people want most at work is not choices about where they work, it's choices about when and how much they work. More than a chance to work from home or anywhere people want flexible hours, which I think is what we're here to discuss.

Anne-Marie Slaughter, you have been at New America, at Princeton, and the State Department in the US. You have had a lot of policy roles. Can you help us look at this from a macro perspective because it's easy for me as a psychologist to say that from a micro standpoint I will get better work out of people from six focused hours than from eight unfocused hours? But how will this change society? How will the world look different if we go

with four days a week?

Anne-Marie Slaughter – Let me start by saying that I think of it as 32 hours distributed as necessary. I think that there's a lot of experimentation. I know places that do two eight-hour days and four-hour days and those that do five and six-hour days. The larger question points to Jonas' point that different categories of workers have very different needs. So, when I first started writing about flexible work what I heard from lots of people who were working minimum wage and didn't have defined hours, they were on just-in-time schedules, which meant that they often didn't have enough work. So, the first thing I want to say from a societal point of view is that for knowledge workers it's fine but for many other workers this is a nightmare. What they want is predictability. They want to know when they are going to have childcare, and they need to know that they are going to have enough hours to make it. And unless we address that this simply increases the inequity we already see so dramatically. We have to start with that and whatever we do we must also recognize that we've got to make sure that everyone can work enough hours to have a living wage. Beyond that, though I think there is a revolution in urgency and that is good for society. I'll use the example of an academic. As a professor at Princeton, I had to be in the classroom maximum of five hours a week. Now for each of those hours, I had a lot of preparation but that was on my own time. I also had to show up at faculty meetings and I had office hours. The total was not more than eight hours. It was up to me how I work to get that done. I also had to produce research. It was up to me. Most academics work hard but we work on our own time. If you need to be somewhere for your children or if you want to work out every morning, whatever it might be, the focus there is much more on task than on time and that to me was the larger social revolution and it is the management revolution. Thinking about tasks means we have to prioritize what needs to get done and what half of my inbox, maybe two-thirds of my inbox, should be burned. It is not productive work. It gives the illusion of productivity. Productivity is me sending things out where I've decided this is really important work or doing the work that takes more time. So, I do think that it would be far better for society to give us time to be whole human beings. Hilary and I have written a lot about Sapiens Integra – so there's Homo Economicus, this mythical human being that is rational all the time and driven by a set of utilities, and then there are whole human beings who also have care and connection and other good things. I think it will be good for all of society but I also think this increase in the agency of 'here's what we need done – now you figure out how best to do it'.

In the UAE, I think we are creating the government of the future. We always push boundaries and we are not afraid of experimenting with new things.

Adam Grant – This reminds me of one of my deans who used to complain that I didn't go to enough faculty meetings and I needed to put in more facetime and so I face-timed him. I would like to know the physics of how to burn email, but that's for another day.

Ohood Roumi as a minister you have embarked on a bolder test of a shorter work week. Can you tell us about your four-and-half work plan?

Ohood Bint Khalfan Al Roumi – Some have opted for four-and-half and some others for four. Before I start, Adam if you allow me, this concept of a shorter work week I have kept my eye on it for many years given my previous role as minister of happiness and wellbeing in my government and I saw that there were many trials around the world since 2008. But something shifted in the past two years and I think as Jonas said this may be part of the impact of the COVID pandemic where people went through a rollercoaster of changes. They worked from home. The line between personal and professional life blurred. And when they started going back to the organizations or reboarding in that organization there was tension. There was more demand for flexibility, well-being, discussion about mental health, and also more tension between the remote and the physical work. I see more of the implementation around the world in the private sector rather than the governments and I can understand that because governments are usually slow. They have rigid systems. In the UAE, I think we are creating the government of the future. We always push boundaries and we are not afraid of experimenting with new things. Maybe we are the first country in the world to institute a shorter work week government-wide and employees are given the flexibility to work remotely or manage their hours on Flexi times.

This decision was triggered by four reasons. First, enhancing well-being. Second, strengthening the family bonds and community relations because people will have more time to take care of their families whether men or women, and they will have more time for recreational activities. The third is economic because when people have a long weekend they will spend more and this will benefit the local economic sectors and also to better align with the global markets. But also, we were supported to move ahead. I can mention some of the factors that supported us in

this implementation. First, the discussion on well-being is advanced in the UAE. We started in 2016 developing a National Wellbeing Strategy that was even before the pandemic and I had the honor to work on that agenda. The main pillar of that agenda was well-being at the workplace. We developed the tools and the guides for that. Second as Anne-Marie mentioned we focus on results and not on the clock in and clock out. Productivity is at the heart of what we do. We have systems to measure the performance of entities and individuals. Third, we had the right digital infrastructure, which allowed us to provide services twenty-four/seven regardless of the hours or the working days, which is essential for governments because some of the early trials around the world failed because of the complaints from the citizens because of the disruptions in the service delivery. The fourth is that we had agility in our system and we were able to move fast. We were supported by the leadership. Maybe I can share with you some of the early data that we gathered from this implementation and what we learned from this experience.

> **Productivity needs to continue to grow. I think the great example of how quickly you can switch to stuff that we never thought we could is remote working and technologies.**

Adam Grant – We would love to hear about this data now especially because there are other governments here in Davos that can benefit from your expertise.

Ohood Bint Khalfan Al Roumi – Thank you, Adam. We started implementation in January 2022. We planned it very well because government entities are sensitive to change. So, we had to do a lot of coordination to ensure that schools, hospitals, and government entities are on board. Some of the early data that we gathered are promising. Seventy percent of employees reported that they are working more efficiently, prioritizing and managing their time during the week. Fifty-five percent reduction in absenteeism, which is wonderful. Seventy-one percent of the employees reported that they are spending more time with their families.

Let me share a funny story with you about this and how people adapt to change because this too might benefit some of the organizations thinking of implementation. When I went to the office on Monday morning after the first long weekend, I was so excited and happy to ask my colleagues how their weekend was. I was shocked. Some of them were lost. Some of them were angry. They said we

don’t know what to do with the extra time we have at hand. So, they needed some time to adjust to the extra time that they had. And now they are spending more time with their families and also ninety-five percent of the students reported that they had enrolled in more extracurricular activities during the long weekend to support their talents or hobbies. The results are promising, but we are still monitoring the implementation to make sure the objectives are met and we can adjust the policy as we go forward.

Adam Grant – It reminds me of something that happened in Brazil in Semco where they started a Retire-a-Little early program where you could buy back one day a week. They expected people in their fifties to do it. But it was most popular with people in their twenties and thirties. We have heard a very strong case for the well-being, family, climate, and economic benefits of shortening the work week. I would like to get a sense of the room and the panel. Let’s start with one question. Can you hold up the number of days per week that you currently work? Let’s ask the panel to do that and also those of you who are physically in the room with us.

I’m seeing a lot of six and sevens out there. Two hands would be the clue. And how many days would you ideally be working moving forward? The majority in the panel and the room is working a lot and wants to be working less even if they love their work. What are the obstacles to moving towards that world and how do we overcome the resistance? Where do we go next?

Hilary Cottam – What you said is interesting that we do have to relearn how to use disposable time and we saw that in the pandemic. We saw people beginning to take up knitting or baking and we began to use our leisure time in different ways. I want to come back to a point that both of you made. I read an analysis recently, which is that Keynes was right that over our lifetime we do work a 15-hour work week. One of the most interesting experiments on the four-day week that I’ve seen is in Scotland. The State can be a mover of these examples. The state is asking people with very difficult work, like a gravedigger or rubbish collectors. In those states, you can apply for those jobs only when you’re young and when you’re older you do slightly easier work and at the end, you become kind of a community worker cum janitor where you can spread the load, which I think is interesting.

Adam Grant – It would be amazing if work and family didn’t peak at the same time in our lives.

Hilary Cottam – Well exactly. But we are our worst enemies, aren't we?

Jonas Prising – But isn't the source of happiness the ability to work in new and different ways? The ability to choose how you want to work that works with your life. Different people have different circumstances. For some people getting the extra day, a formal extra day, you work only four days as opposed to five may give them a lot of disposable time where they can do other stuff and I'd be delighted with that. Whereas other people may say dropping off kids at the bus and picking up kids at the bus is priority number one and if I can work around that and fix that I'll be delighted to work on a Saturday to catch up with stuff I didn't have time to do before. I saw some interesting research. In the US we don't have a lot of vacation but there are some companies as part of their new employee offering offer unlimited vacation, expecting people to be delighted. You know what the outcome is when you give unlimited vacation in organizations that treasure a lot of work, people take less vacation because the organizational culture is not seen as rewarding or being rewarded. So, I think it's the notion of choice that gives the benefit and the delight, at least from my perspective. I enjoy working when I can and when I'm interested in different topics. But it can happen all the time at different times and I have time to do other things as well.

Adam Grant – **I feel the same and I feel I should disclose that I work part of a sixth day because nobody else is working then and I want everyone else to go for four so that the fifth day will be like that.**

Anne-Marie Slaughter – In New America you get six weeks of paid time off and you can roll over only two of those weeks. So, if you don't take four weeks, you're just leaving money on the table. You will not cash it out when you leave. That's how strongly I believe that fundamentally I can do twelve months of work in eleven months but not in twelve months. You give me that one month off, I'll do the kinds of things I never have the time to do. But I don't do email and the standard stuff and that recharges you. You need that for activity and creativity. I think in the United States we desperately need to change but this question comes down to what we value in how people spend their time. In the Atlantic article I wrote a decade ago I pointed out that if you had a man in your office who got up at four to train for a marathon and then came into the office and worked a regular day we would be like wow, look at that discipline. Something very much to be impressed. The woman who does that and I know many who get up at four to make sure the lunches are packed, all the stuff is organized, getting kids ready, and then comes in is regarded as less than if she's spending time on care. So, the question is what do we value.

The United States thinks how hard you work is the measure of your moral worth and in fact, I would argue that caring for your family and of course work supports a family, we're all aware of that, but the time you spend on emotional caregiving is more a measure of moral worth but the very least that's equal. Before we think about time off, we have to not undercut it by thinking only some things or sneaking that work over the weekend is what defines a human being we admire as opposed to a well-rounded human being, a human being who has many hobbies or spends that time on community or family care.

Anne-Marie Slaughter, Chief Executive Officer, New America.

Adam Grant – Being a hard worker doesn't make you a good person. You heard it in Davos.

Anne-Marie Slaughter – I work hard and expect people to work hard but that doesn't mean all the time. It's far from it.

Adam Grant – I want to make time for lots of audience questions. So, let's begin. I want to remind everyone that questions do end with a question mark.

Question from the audience – I run an organization that reports about conflicts and disasters around the world. So, I'm very busy and work a lot. I appreciate all the thinking. I think you can switch down to four hours or four days a week but if everything around you is still moving at the same pace then it's impossible. You need the whole society to slow down and that's so much a bigger challenge than telling your employees that you can work four days a week. So, how do you tackle

that?

Ohood Bint Khalfan Al Roumi – In the UAE the shorter work week was implemented for the government institutions. We did not impose it on the private sector. What happened interestingly was that fifty percent of the private companies followed the decision and even some of the global companies that have offices in the UAE took that practice and applied it to their offices across the world. I agree with you that there should be a coordinated effort from the private and public sectors to make it easy for people to adapt whether it's children's schooling or whether they are working in the private sector or the public sector. This was a lesson learned from the UAE.

Ohood Bint Khalfan Al Roumi, Minister of State for Government Development and the Future, United Arab Emirates Government.

> **We have to think about how we change the norms, which is why your work is so interesting as you have been doing it at a state-level to kind of say 'you don't have to do this, but this is the new norm' and I think that's very interesting.**

Adam Grant – I understand that it's the reverse where if a bunch of private companies started the governments follow.

Question from the audience – I think we have all learned the benefits of flexible working and we have all enjoyed it and there's a lot to learn from it. If you ask people if they would like to work fewer hours it's pretty easy to say yes, but I have to ask you when you work in a western economy that is in deep debt, most western economies certainly are, the UK and US are can we do it. Another question is where you say that you can work four hours a week less but there will not be so much money for education, not so much money for healthcare, or spend any money on climate change. Or you could work four hours more and maybe you have the chance of fixing climate change and all of the other things. I wonder what the thoughts are of the panel on this question.

Anne-Marie Slaughter – Can I ask a clarifying question? So, you are assuming that you get paid less.

Audience member – No you get paid the same.

Anne-Marie Slaughter – So, the tax revenues would be the same?

Audience member – No the taxes would be up because by and large the GDP is a function of how many hours we all work, which is an oversimplification. So, people are working more hours, there's great GDP, and there's tax taken for more money that can be spent by the state to provide benefits to people. This is a controversial point because we all like the idea of working fewer hours and being more flexible but there's an economic cost to it. If you just ask people, would you like to work less, they'd say sure I would. But would you like to pay the consequence of that and then a more controversial question is if we asked you to work more hours but you get these benefits what would be the answer? That's the question I'm asking the panel's views on. I realize it's a bit counterintuitive in an environment where we all are talking about the idea of working fewer hours and working more flexibly.

Jonas Prising – I think what you're getting at is the drive for productivity. Assumed in all of this is like Anne-Marie said twelve months of work done in eleven or ten months because by the same token if you think back a hundred years, we were working seventy to eighty hours a week. Productivity then took off because we were applying new technologies and our output increased. So, we created prosperity through growth but not by working more hours. We reduced the hours by almost half and if you think about this from an agrarian move to the industrial era our capacity to produce wealth doubled or more than doubled many times over. I think the premise of this discussion is with the help of technology and different ways of

working we are going to be able to create prosperity, not by working more hours but by increasing productivity by interacting with innovation and technology. I think everyone agrees that you cannot lower productivity. Productivity needs to continue to grow. I think the great example of how quickly you can switch to stuff that we never thought we could is remote working and technologies. It's not as if all the companies suddenly bought zoom in one week. We all had the technology, but we used it infrequently and poorly, working the normal way, and then suddenly we couldn't go to the office and the very same technology suddenly was the lifeline that saved all of our businesses and we could continue operating in a new way. The shift when forced can get dramatic and can be quick as well.

Hilary Cottam – All the experiments indeed show within reason that if you work less then you are more productive. We do reject the premise of your question. The other important thing is how expensive overwork is. This is why the ILO and the WHO data show that work is killing us because if you work too much you have societies dealing with massive mental health crises, they are dealing with all kinds of chronic disease crises because we are not out and about and walking and so we're suffering from chronic conditions. So, there's a huge amount of particularly state expenditure that is addressing too much work. Unfortunately, the kind of work that is too much is not represented in this room because we are all different kinds of knowledge workers and leaders, but for most people, this is a kind of a huge issue.

Anne-Marie issued the important point on equality. One of the biggest differentiators is what happens to our children. Does anybody have time to help them with their homework if two parents are working? All the families I work with and in the kind of work I do long hours, they don't have that. And that's a real mark of inequality that marks the next generation. Then we have to think about whether this is sustainable over generations.

Adam Grant – We have a question in the front and while the microphone is on the way this is a good time to say that WEF has a framework on what good work looks like and if you take a look, I would highlight a couple of things here. Flexibility is huge, but we're also talking about health and well-being being part of the responsibility of an employer and I think that has come on the radar in a big way in the last few years and the cost of burnout for cardiovascular diseases, for depression and anxiety and a whole host of other psychological and physical conditions I would estimate far outweighs the benefit of the extra hours we are putting in.

Question from the audience – I am the editor-in-chief of a newspaper called the National. It's a twenty-four-hour media outlet. This is wonderful but we have to cover the shifts. Two questions. One, we could give people four-day work weeks and reduce their hours of working but we have to find people who are equally skilled because it would have to be a shift system. And at a time when we are looking at a real search for recharge but also the fact that there's a hundred percent employment rate in the number of countries how are we going to find that given the crunch that we are in and the expectations post-COVID. In addition to that not working will include not reading email and is that possible for the majority of people who are not leaders who can delegate down. Can you switch off and is reading your email and keeping an eye on work still considered work because even what standard of work means changes from person to person. If you think of doctors, you don't have enough doctors to do drastic surgeries if they start taking more time off. That has a real impact.

Hilary Cottam – I challenge your doctor's point. In the British health service, we don't have enough professionals. It's like pouring water on a leaky bucket because the working conditions are so stressful and so long that everybody is leaving. So, we can't train or steal enough people from other countries to keep our health systems. What I think is interesting is that you see big worker gains in technology revolutions but they have to fit with the technology. So, one big gain was the weekend. If you tell people that you're going to have a paid weekend people also would have said 'hang on a minute, the production lines need to run seven days. How is it possible to pay people for two days off? This is never going to happen' and yet it has happened and it's being rolled back. What's interesting about digital technology is that it is asynchronous, so we should be able to think about how we dovetail in new ways and I don't think we have imagined it enough. When I run my workshops, if they are lawyers or they have design clients or journalists they'd say 'hang on a minute this person always expects to always see the same person.' Part of it is normative maybe in some professions, which is why we need to think about the nonlinear life. You may do your job for ten years and then maybe you think of doing something else because it's simply unsustainable to be brilliant in this way for that long. I think this is not an individual thing. It is a social thing. We need societies that give people time to rest, to retrain. So, it's not about rewarding the individual. We have to think about how we change the norms, which is why your work is so interesting as you have been doing it at a state-level to kind of say 'you don't have to do this, but this is the new norm' and I think that's very interesting.

Adam Grant – I'll just add one quick point to this, which is I also wonder whether we need models for shift work since a lot of people in this room are thinking about that. I invested in a startup recently called A-Team that's trying to reimagine how we organize our work lives and we have taken the builder economy and said look 'If you're a software engineer or designer you can team up with the people you most want to work with and then you can work on projects together and when these projects come out you can rent your skills to the highest bidder or the noblest purpose as opposed to working for one company.' I wonder why we aren't doing that in more kinds of work. This is what uber drivers do. They don't have assigned shifts. You have tasks that need to be done and then there's a pool of people available to take those. What if all of our jobs were organized like that. We won't have jobs I guess, but we will have projects and we will have a lot of flexibility around them.

Anne-Marie Slaughter – I would push even further job shares. I remember at the National Security Council at one point two young mothers with very young children would have been very happy to share the jobs so that somebody was on the job as it was the National Security Council. No, but we can't do that they said. They would have taken half money. There are all sorts of ways to think creatively about how to cover what needs to be covered.

I just bought a book titled 'A World Without Email.' Email is killing us. There is just no way we need to know what is happening all the time and respond all the time. So, I think that it's a separate conversation and a separate reform we need to be going through.

Adam Grant – I may email you about it later.

Question from the audience – I'm based in Manila. I run an education company there. I am also half French. We did implement a thirty-five-hour working week. I am curious what your thoughts are on that experiment and the role of government legislation because the theory at the time in France was if you wait for people to come up with it and if you wait for companies to legislate it will take too long. There was backlash but it was pushed through. Very curious to know what your thoughts are on legislation in general and on the French example if you have any thoughts.

Jonas Prising – That's a great example of the question asked by the gentleman about change that was not being driven by productivity improvements but a

societal desire to work less with the theory that if you take forty weeks down to thirty-five lots more jobs will be created and the eight percent unemployment rate at the time in France was going to come down because more jobs were going to be created. But none of that happened. What happened was that everybody continued to work the same number of hours because all Frenchmen have eight weeks of vacation. So, not more people got into the workforce, and no more jobs were created but people had difficulty in France managing schedules that are overlapping. We have a lot of frontline people in the office who have to coordinate between who is on vacation and who is not, so as not to break the thirty-five-hour work rule and give everybody the legislated time off. As far as the intention was concerned it is considered to be an abject failure.

Adam Grant – Ohood tell us how we can make this a success? Can you fix France for us?

Ohood Bint Khalfan Al Roumi – I'll talk about the UAE. I see the four-day work week as part of a bigger fundamental change that we are witnessing in the workplace and this change is unavoidable, fast-paced, and continuous. And I think that governments can play a role in being the role model and championing the changes in the workplace. I think the pandemic and the disruption caused by the pandemic are giving us a golden opportunity to reimagine the legislation, redesign work that was invented one hundred years ago, and have more agile and flexible systems. In the UAE we mandated on the government, not mandated it on the private sector but then the private sector when they saw the government leading, they opted to implement it in the private sector and not just in the UAE but in the world. I think the government can play a role by showing the way. I think entities need data. They need numbers. So, we need to do a lot of assessment and publish numbers to convince leaders in the public and private sectors to adopt the new norm. I think there's no U-turn. It's just going forward and many entities will adopt the shorter work week.

Adam Grant – Perfect sanguine to my closing question. We didn't really answer the question of how we are going to get more people on board with a shorter work week. Can I ask each of you to give a sentence if you have one piece of advice for the room on how we can make work a slightly smaller part of our lives? What would you suggest? I'll just start by saying don't count it out until you run the experiment. Pilot it and let's see what happens.

Jonas Prising – In labor markets that are constrained in terms of workers, workers are making the choices for us. They are joining organizations that will provide flexibility and choice. And working their way or working my way is the way to attract and retain talent. So, I think it's a little bit of an academic question because I think it's going to be a reality. This is how the world is going because workers want this to happen. We've proven that it can be done and it's moving in that direction.

Anne-Marie Slaughter – I would say for the managers who are worried about it because I find that this much more the managers than the workers to manage the task, identify what needs to be done, this is when it needs to be done and this is the quality I need and then just see.

Hilary Cottam – I'm a social entrepreneur and I find that the pushback often comes from small businesses. What I've done is use an organization called Timewise UK for my hiring. Timewise has women who want to work predictable flexibility. I hire from them. Immediately I have a fantastic workforce that shares their norms. It's not like one person dropping off their kids and then everybody else needs to adjust. Other younger workers might not have children but they certainly want to see their friends. It can't be just about whether they have children or not. This immediately begins to shift the norms.

Ohood Bint Khalfan Al Roumi – Let's focus on the purpose. What are we trying to achieve here? I think it's the well-being and flexibility. This can be achieved through a shorter work week or by other tools that can be the answer for the purpose. For governments, I think the non-negotiable service delivery to the public is essential. We cannot jeopardize the service delivery. As long as we provide the services to our people, we can adopt any solution.

Adam Grant – **We have a range of views on the idea of the amount of work. But I think we're all aligned on the idea that we want to make choices about how much we work and that ultimately people should be evaluated not on the time they put in but on the contributions they make. Thank you all.**