

2.4 Motivation and demotivation

The big picture

Japan's business culture is known to be very demanding; employees are expected to work extremely long hours and often face excessive pressure. Workers in Japan are often employed for life-time careers, and loyalty to the business is expected in return. Though employees are entitled by law to 20 days of holiday, many take no more than three or four. Late nights and weekend work is common. The situation is particularly difficult for female employees who are often not able to maintain the long hours because of the additional care-giving burdens placed upon them. There is even a word in Japan, 'karoshi', which means death from overwork. Things are, however, changing.



Figure 1. Japanese work culture can be intense, and workers can often feel exhausted.

Credit: RUNSTUDIO, Getty Images

In 2021, the Japanese government recommended that businesses allow workers to opt for a 4-day working week. This was the latest in a series of steps by the Japanese government to change workplace practices in order to improve worker wellbeing. This particular recommendation was made after an increasing number of research studies showed that moving to a 4-day week can increase productivity of workers significantly. The shortened week also makes more room for leisure and family. Panasonic, a major electronics conglomerate in Japan, announced in 2022 that it would give workers the option of a 4-day week. More businesses are sure to follow.

Businesses around the world are increasingly considering the wellbeing of a wider range of stakeholders in their activities. The wellbeing of workers is a major concern, and worker motivation is a key part of wellbeing. Motivated workers are happier, healthier, more productive and more collaborative. Finding the key to motivation is a win-win for both employers and employees.



Figure 2. Changing workplace practices can result in more motivated workers.

Credit: Yoshiyoshi Hirokawa, Getty Images

Concept

Sustainability (social)

Workers are a key stakeholder for any business. Positive human resource management (HRM) practices support employee creativity and resilience. Worker wellbeing, which is closely tied to motivation, helps improve a business's social sustainability by supporting the social foundation of the Doughnut Economics Model ([Section 1.1.2 \(/study/app/y12-business-management-a-sl-may-2024/sid-352-cid-174703/book/the-doughnut-economics-model-id-36830\)](https://study/app/y12-business-management-a-sl-may-2024/sid-352-cid-174703/book/the-doughnut-economics-model-id-36830)).