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As we slide further into the 21st century, technology continues to progress at impressive rates. Yesterday I saw a meme on Facebook that cleverly showed the technological progress from science fiction to reality. Using images from Star Trek over the past 40 years, it effectively illustrated how fantasized technology has become part of our everyday life. In the 1987 TV show *Star Trek, The Next Generation*, Captain Picard held a thin piece of glass on which he read transmissions from other crew members as well as essential facts and figures needed to command the USS Enterprise. Today, we have the iPad and iPad mini on which we can do everything from read the news to write a news article. We can even produce music and movies, right from a thin piece of glass in our hands. Examples of how technology has changed our lives and fulfilled fanciful imaginings are endless.

Despite the great strides companies like Apple make in the progression of technology each day, the way we work as a nation has changed very little. Or, rather, I should say is changing at a much slower rate than technological advances. Still, it is changing, albeit at the proverbial snail's pace.

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## EUROPEAN STYLE

I spend as much time in Europe as financially possible. I love the lifestyle there. The history. The beauty. The culture. All of it, really. About a decade ago, I produced a documentary that premiered in Paris, and I learned some interesting things about labor practices in the US from my time in France. I was astounded by how the French work day didn't really start until about 10am. They worked until 1pm, and then took a leisurely two-hour lunch before going back to work until about 7pm. If they had to take care of some personal business, like a doctor appt. or a trip to the bank, they did so.

I was shocked! As an entrepreneur, I was used to working from the time I woke up until I dropped from exhaustion 16 hours later, and I still chose that over the stringent, meaningless work I had done at a large corporation that shall not be named (not Apple, but a major computer company).

Every French employee had a full five (5) weeks paid vacation per year starting from their first year. A friend of mine hurt his arm, and he had full paid leave until he was completely healed, which took over two months. I told them that in the US we only got two weeks paid vacation in most places, and that didn't increase to three weeks until you've been with the company for five years. If someone suffered an injury like his, one was not only faced with the fear of being replaced while they were out, but they had exorbitant medical bills to boot. Best case scenario, if the employee worked for a good company, their recovery days were taken out of their vacation days...and virtually no one has two months of vacation days unless they've been accumulating for years.

They were as horrified by our labor practices as I was astounded with theirs.

I was utterly astounded. No gruelling 8 to 5. Paid vacation with enough time to actually travel, relax, and unwind. Full support from the state if unemployed. A wage that enabled them to live and play comfortably, and employers who genuinely cared about their health and well-being, because these employers knew that a holistically healthy employee is a productive employee.



## **FEWER HOURS, MORE PRODUCTIVITY**

Here in the US, we're starting to catch on that it's essential to have a healthy work-life balance. The Portland company Treehouse, which teaches coding and other computer skills through an online interface, has a 32-hour work week. That's right. They only work Mon - Thursday. Every weekend is a three-day weekend. They get paid holidays on top of that. Each employee starts with 5 weeks paid vacation in their first year. They offer a complete benefits package and a generous salary. Treehouse prides themselves in a diverse workforce and celebrate their employee's personal playtime as well as their professional productivity.

Other companies are embracing flexible work schedules that reduce stress and improve performance. Employees are able to care for themselves, their children, and other responsibilities while still putting in a 40-hour work week. Some employers are slowly starting to realize what France has known for over a decade: a holistically healthy employee is a valuable, loyal, and productive employee.

Here at PowerMax, we are blessed with a CEO that embraces this concept and provides a flexible work schedule, a livable wage, sufficient paid time off (5 weeks in the first year), and full support of individual needs for health and lifestyle to create a sustainable work-life balance. For example, when I was hired, I took a risk by telling my boss how I spend a month in London every August to housesit and live in the City of my Soul. I quickly followed that up by asserting that I was willing to give that up for this job if necessary. To my shock and complete delight, he said, "I make it a rule to never let work stop me from doing something awesome in life, and spending a month in London is pretty awesome."

With the continuous improvement (and increasing affordability) of technology, more companies are following suit. They're beginning to see that in many cases fewer hours result in higher productivity. Allowing employees to work remotely not only increases productivity and the quality of work, but it makes for a happier, sustainable workforce. Technology makes this possible.





## REMOTE POSSIBILITIES

Although some positions lend themselves better to working remotely than others, like content writing, computer programming, and medical coding (to name just a few), more and more positions have the potential to go remote each day with advances in technology. Voice-Over IP (VOIP) technology for jobs that require business over the phone, like technical support or sales, gives employees the ability to take calls over an internet connection from anywhere there is a WiFi signal. Here. There. Everywhere! (Even Europe!)

Video conferencing means you never need miss a meeting, and you can even utilise it to work collaboratively on projects with a full team. Like examples of how technology has improved our lives, the examples of how it has also improved our productivity and labor practices are endless.

People can now fulfill their dreams of traveling, living in different areas of the country or the world, and caring for their families, all while working as efficiently (if not moreso) than ever. There is no downside to this. Technology has given us both freedom and security. Companies get loyal, happy, productive employees, and employees get sustainable work, less stress, and the freedom to live. Truly live.

Our CEO at PowerMax values good employees and their valuable contribution to the company, so it is in his (and the company's) best interest to keep them healthy, happy, and productive. For some it's a flexible work schedule for appointments and for childcare. For others it's part time or even full time telecommuting, giving them the ability to work remotely from another city or even another state or country. After all, as long as the work gets done and quality doesn't suffer, it really doesn't matter where it's done.

*C'est magnifique!*

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Christine is a Technical Support Specialist and Content Writer for PowerMax. Follow her articles as she takes you “**Behind the Sasquatch: A Look Inside PowerMax,**” an inside look at the day-to-day operations from the perspective of a Woman in Tech. She'll also post great **Tech Tips**, helping you get the most of your Mac apps as well as write about some common technical issues and how to fix them. Finally, Christine will periodically post some **Tutorials** that teach readers how to do things like make

podcasts and iPhone apps. Find what you're looking for in the categories on the right.

If you have a tech question or issue, please don't hesitate to [contact Christine](#) for help.

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