[Sound of Morning Edition playing over a car stereo]

*Jimmy Gutierrez: Hey, there I am. I forgot to plug in my headphones….*

Jimmy Gutierrez: Hey World, this is producer Jimmy Gutierrez. And I recorded myself one early, early morning a few weeks ago on a hunch.

*Jimmy Gutierrez: So I’m here early in the morning, and I want to check out 2 Pillsbury Street, and I wanna see how much energy were wasting... and I want to see how Sam Evans-Brown feels about it.*

Jimmy Gutierrez: How would you describe the office building at 2 Pillsbury Street?

Sam Evans-Brown: It is a new, nondescript rectangle. It’s just a chunk of brick. I mean it’s not like Soviet Russia, but it’s not interesting.

Jimmy Gutierrez: So what do you think goes on in there when nobody’s around?

Sam Evans-Brown: I can only imagine. Parties. Dance Parties?

Jimmy Gutierrez: Dance parties!

*Jimmy Gutierrez: Standing in the parking lot, from the 6th floor it looks like the entire newsroom, all the lights are still on…which is cool because that means they’ve just been chilling like that for the entire night.*

Jimmy Gutierrez: So I went inside our nondescript building and headed up

*Jimmy Gutierrez: Sam isn’t gonna like this either but I’m taking the elevator up. Sorry Sam, no stairs this morning.*

Jimmy Gutierrez: And right as I stepped off the elevator into the lobby…I was blinded

*Jimmy Gutierrez: The entire lobby is like extremely well-lit, like burning my retinas.*

Sam Evans-Brown: I don’t even think you can turn those off…they just don’t have a switch…just on forever.

Jimmy Gutierrez: Another thing that really stood out… was how GD warm it was. Gosh Dern!

Sam Evans-Brown: Gull dern warm.

*Jimmy Gutierrez:* *It’s warmer than my apartment. I could lay down on the floor without a blanket and knock out.*

Sam Evans-Brown: Like a building this size, you could probably turn the heat off and it would probably only drop a couple degrees.

Jimmy Gutierrez: Is that right?

Sam Evans-Brown: Yeah! There’s like a ton of stored, thermal energy in a building this big.

Jimmy Gutierrez: So, I’m guessing that’ you’ve thought about this stuff before.

Sam Evans-Brown: I think about this stuff constantly.

Jimmy Gutierrez: Ok, perfect. So you’re a positive, solutions-based guy, so what can we do?

Sam Evans-Brown: Just get a [expletive deleted] digital thermostat! Jesus Christ, it’s not that hard! This ain’t rocket science people!

[Music swells]

Jimmy Gutierrez: So it’s fair to say that our office wastes like a lot of energy, even when we’re not there.

Sam Evans-Brown: Oh totally,

Jimmy Gutierrez: We could do things differently, right. Like people do at home. Turning off the lights when you leave a room or turning the heat way down. Things that save money and emissions...

Sam Evans-Brown: Yeah, that’s definitely true… energy use is lower on weekends because of all the offices and factories and stuff that are closed, and that’s even with building managers like the ones at NHPR making expensive, wasteful energy decisions, like you observed. So that’s totally something we could do.

Jimmy Gutierrez: Ok. Ok. Ok. I want to take you like one step further than that. So what if — now follow me Sam — what if, we just didn’t come to work on Fridays?

Sam Evans-Brown: Oh. Yeah, that would save some energy.

Jimmy Gutierrez: Right.

Sam Evans-Brown: But this just feels like it’s about you wanting three day weekends?

Jimmy Gutierrez: What? That’s a part of it. But I’m here to make a pitch. After some really basic-ass Google searches, I’m prepared to say that the 32-hour work week can save the world.

Sam Evans-Brown: You are going to have to do some work to convince me of this one, Jimmy Gutierrez.

[O/I theme]

Sam Evans-Brown: Today on Outside/In Jimmy has a proposal — probably one that’s not going anywhere —

Jimmy Gutierrez: Don’t you undermine me before we even get this thing started.

Sam Evans-Brown: … about what to do with all of the wealth and productivity modern technology has brought to us. Maybe instead of buying more stuff, maybe what we should be buying for ourselves is some time off.

[O/I theme out]

*Andrew Barnes: Just give me two ticks I’ll find the right ones*

Jimmy Gutierrez: This is Andrew Barnes...looking for his headphones. He’s the founder and managing director of Perpetual Guardian – New Zealand’s largest corporate trust company. They handle wills, estate planning, rich folk stuff.

Sam Evans-Brown: I have a will.

Jimmy Gutierrez: Do you really?

Sam Evans-Brown: Yeah.

Jimmy Gutierrez: Damn, I ain’t got nothing.

Jimmy Gutierrez: He said he first started rethinking the traditional workweek after reading an article in *The Economist*...

*Andrew Barnes: … which was talking about two surveys. One had been done one had been done in Britain and one had been done in Canada. And the British one said that people were productive 2.5 hours a day, and the Canadian one said 1.5 hours a day.*

Jimmy Gutierrez: That’s within a full 8 hour day, and an-hour-and-a-half of it spent getting work done. During World War one, British munitions factories were supplying shells for the Western Front. Workers worked seven days a week, sometimes in excess of 80 hours. Researchers found out that not only were workers more productive overall with a day off, but their quality of work improved.

*Andrew Barnes: We have a 19th century work construct and because it’s there we automatically assume it’s the solution.*

Jimmy Gutierrez: And so, Barnes thought, “Hey, this has gotta be the case with my workers here too right.” He emailed HR saying he wanted to test run a 32-hour workweek. Thinking he went mad, his HR she deleted the email. The thinking was that there’s no way workers would just give up a day of work and pay.

*Andrew Barnes: Actually it’s paid for five, work for four. So she was a bit stunned.*

Jimmy Gutierrez: The firm ran an incentive-based, test run with the shot that if productivity stayed the same or improved, pay-for-five-days work-for-four might become permanent. And you know this is part of my pitch for a reason. Workers became more productive, marginally overall, producing just as much in four days as they had in five. And with that extra time off, they spent more time with family and friends. They gardened. They exercised. And that’s not all.

*Andrew Barnes: The really interesting thing about this starts to become about the broader social impact…*

Jimmy Gutierrez: …specifically environmental impacts. What happens when you take 20% of cars off the road during rush hour? Or if those big, non-discrete office buildings – like ours at 2 Pillsbury Street – can power off for an extra day?

*Andrew Barnes: It’s thinking about a different solution to how we deal with things like environmental problems. Stop just doing what we’re doing and try something radically different and if you do that there is going to be a material beneficial impact.*

Jimmy Gutierrez: Welcome to your three day weekend.

Sam Evans-Brown: Alright...

[Music swells]

Jimmy Gutierrez: So, so what do you think of some of those findings?

Sam Evans-Brown: I’m intrigued. I will confess I’m intrigued. I like the idea — because sometimes not our best work selves — and I like the idea of working less time and that would just force me to be a better work self. But I do have to say it feels like there are only certain fields that this, sort of, win-win can apply to.

Jimmy Gutierrez: I mean, for now, that feels true. But it is easiest to start with project-based work — like creative work — anything where getting momentarily distracted or off-track translates into getting less done.

Sam Evans-Brown: Which is like… that 100 percent describes us.

Jimmy Gutierrez: We are definitely prime candidates for this.

Sam Evans-Brown: Slack. Never check Slack.

Jimmy Gutierrez: Oh, my goodness. Which is what makes this a pitch. I think this should do here at NHPR and specifically us at Outside/In.

Sam Evans-Brown: Oh.

Jimmy Gutierrez: And Sam, I want that extra day, I want to know if I would be less stressed by the overall state of the world, if I’d have more energy, and I want to prove we’d get just as much done.

Sam Evans-Brown: So what’s your next step here?

Jimmy Gutierrez: Well… I gotta convince the boss.

Sam Evans-Brown: She is… she is a tyrant. She is known for her tyranny.

Jimmy Gutierrez: Don’t mess with Erika.

[Dramatic Western Music]

Jimmy Gutierrez: Could we just start with you introing youself and what you do here?

Erika Janik: I’m Erika Janik and I’m the Executive Producer aka the boss.

Jimmy Gutierrez: Yes. You are my boss.

Erika Janik: I am your boss, and Sam’s boss.

Jimmy Gutierrez: Could you fire both of us?

Erika Janik: I think so.

Jimmy Gutierrez: Wow that’s pretty tight.

Erika Janik: Be careful.

Jimmy Gutierrez: Okay, as you know, I’m working on this story about the possible benefits, environmental and otherwise of working a 32-hour work week.

Erika Janik: This is a thing I’m aware of.

Jimmy Gutierrez: Now, we’re going to make this real. I want to make this a personal experiment. So, can I convince \*YOU\* that \*I\* should be working four days a week

Erika Janik: Jimmy, I’m still not even sure what makes this is an Outside/In Episode.

Jimmy Gutierrez: Can you believe that I was hoping you’d ask that?

*Jimmy Gutierrez: If you had to guess, how many hours do you think you work a week?*

*Juliet Schor: I’m not gonna say in public…not because it’s too high. Let’s just put it this way, I practice what I preach*

Jimmy Gutierrez: This is my personal hero, Juliet Schor – she’s an economist and sociologist at Boston College. Back in 1992 she wrote a book called the Overworked American: The Unexpected Decline of Leisure, and she thinks that it’s time to rethink the way we work.

*Juliet Schor: If you look historically, we’ve had massive automation and mechanization first in agriculture and then industry, manufacturing and through most of the 20th century,, that was met with shorter hours of work. In the U.S. in the last 40-50 years not so much.*

Jimmy Gutierrez: So the length of the work week has [declined steadily](https://www.economist.com/finance-and-economics/2018/12/22/why-americans-and-britons-work-such-long-hours) for decades in most of the developed world, but the U.S. is the clear outlier, here. So we’re still working the same number of hours per year as we were in 1980, even though in Japan, Australia, the UK, France and Germany have all seen shorter work weeks. And Erika, I’m here to tell you it’s not just because of our bosses.

*Juliet Schor: Yeah, but it’s also due to the pressures from the spending side. And so if we ask what are the challenges to this the idea that we have to keep raising our standard of living higher and higher and higher*

Erika Janik: I see… this is how we sneak this onto the environmental show, right?

Jimmy Gutierrez: Exactly. So far, despite our best efforts to get renewables out there, carbon emissions still rose in the US last year, and the big driver was manufacturing… economic growth.

*Juliet Schor: Absolutely. Technology alone is not gonna do it and unless we decelerate the economy, and there’s more to it than that, one really important thing about climate emissions is there very skewed towards the top so the people at the top have much bigger carbon footprints.*

Jimmy Gutierrez: That’s a rock-solid correlation: as incomes increase, so does consumption, and because we haven’t decarbonized the economy, emissions increase.

Erika Janik: So her argument is that one way to reduce emissions is rather than buying more stuff, bigger houses, we should buy some leisure time instead.

Jimmy Gutierrez: Yeah, and this isn’t just about buying less stuff, it’s also about the kinds of stuff people buy when they have more time, too.

*Juliet Schor: Individual households respond to changes in what we might call their time budget. So how much time do you have available and how does that affect the way you live?*

Jimmy Gutierrez: So let’s say I work a 60-hour week, that means that instead of walking or taking public transit to work, I’m gonna drive to work. And instead of… when I go home instead of having energy to cook for myself, I’m just gonna hit fast food.

*Juliet Schor: One of the things that happens is we reduce the less productive time in our day when we work fewer days. So there’s the higher per hour productivity, there’s the other thing that people in the four-day workweek value their jobs more, they’re happier, they’re less likely to quit.*

Erika Janik: You know the thing that it makes me think about is… you know, Jimmy that my husband quit his job so that I could take this job. He works in a really high stress environment, so he’d be working…

Jimmy Gutierrez: He’s a doctor, right?

Erika Janik: He’s a doctor. So he’d been working like 70 — 80 hour weeks.

Jimmy Gutierrez: No

Erika Janik: And that was just our life. And he was getting really burned out. And so, he quit his job and we moved here and I took this job and just listening to her talk, something that it made me realized is you know my husband hasn’t been working in the last few months and when people ask me what he does I feel embarassed to tell them that he’s not working. Even though his value is obviously a lot more than just working a million hours a week and yet I still feel this reflexive need to justify it to people. But actually having him have so much time has made our life so much better. It’s not like thing were really bad or anything at all, but I didn’t even realize what a toll it was taking on us until he wasn’t working 80 hours a week.

Jimmy Gutierrez: Well so it seems like I don’t even really have to hard sell you on this becoming a story about the personal benefits of this — of the 32-hour life-style.

Erika Janik: I am concerned about meeting deadlines. A shortened work week is hard. We’ve got a lot of projects within our unit. But I think you’ve got a pretty compelling case. Alright Jimmy, I think I’m sold.

Jimmy Gutierrez: Hey! Okay okay, now what if. What if, I was thinking bigger. What if we were able to get the whole team down to 32-hours, and we still managed to put out Outside/In and all our other shows?

Erika Janik: That sounds amazing… but also feels… I can’t actually — I don’t have that power. I can’t actually make that decision.

Jimmy Gutierrez: You can! You’re the boss, you can make this —

Erika Janik: I am the boss, but...

Jimmy Gutierrez: You can make this happen right now!

Erika Janik: My boss powers have a ceiling! I think you’ve got to convince our CEO.

Jimmy Gutierrez: I’ve got to go to the corner office?

Erika Janik: And what if he actually wants you to take a pay cut? Have you talked to your wife about this?

Jimmy Gutierrez: Allie? I have not talked to her no.

Erika Janik: Maybe you should talk to Allie

Jimmy Gutierrez: Before giving a lot of money back.

Erika Janik: Yeah just to double-check.

Jimmy Gutierrez: Yeah that seems responsible. I don’t want her to hear this and be mad at me. She’s already got enough reasons.

[Music Swells]

Jimmy Gutierrez: I guess we’ll hear from Allie after a break.

[Break]

*JG: So I got good news, our pizza’s cooked. How are you feeling??*

*AG: Exhausted.*

Jimmy Gutierrez: Ok, we’re back, and this is my lovely wife Allie

*Jimmy Gutierrez: I just want to fantasize for a little bit. What do you think I would do if I were working a four day work week and what effects do you think it would have on me?*

*Allie Gutierrez: You would sleep in longer, because I get you up super-early. And you would take quiet time in the morning to make tea, possibly read, catch up on the news… and then you’d just coast into creative time. A little bit of exercise… I am dreaming right now.*

*Jimmy Gutierrez: I mean you’ve been working. You went into work at 8 and it’s now, past 8 at night and you’re still working, and Juanito is biting my leg. Juanito is our cat. Hi buddy, do you want to come up here? So I’m going to talk with Mark… And we’re gonna really talk about making this 32 happen. When I talk with him… Ideally it would just be… I wouldn’t have to sacrifice any salary. I wouldn’t make any concessions in that way… but you know I’m a public radio producer… I’m doing well, but I’m not making bank… so if I had to give up anywhere from 5, 10… possibly up to 20 percent of my salary is that still something that you think would be a good idea.*

*Allie Gutierrez: Obviously with loans and saving up for a house… like it’d be nice to not let go of that. But for the sake of how I know that you work… and your mind and your health… I see that being worth it, to me. Because you like transform when you have space and I would much rather find ways to make up what we’d be losing in that, financially, if it meant that you were able to have that space than to say no.*

[Music Swells]

*Allie Gutierrez: I know you’d be so much more balanced, you’d be so much more happy. So I have to say that I would give up that 20 percent…*

*Jimmy Gutierrez: Well I just have to go and convince Mark now. So I guess wish me luck.*

*Allie Gutierrez: Good luck.*

*Jimmy Gutierrez: Ok, let’s get you another glass of wine. Are you cool with that can we get you another glass*

*Allie Gutierrez: Yeah, i’d really like that.*

[Music Swells]

*Jimmy Gutierrez: OK it’s 1:30 on a Wednesday this is kind of like the culmination of this episode is me going and talking to our CEO and pitching him about how he would feel if he would buy into this idea…*

[Sound of a knock on the Door and walking into Mark Kaplan’s office]

[Music Swells]

JimmyGutierrez: check check check… okay we’re back.

Sam Evans-Brown: Ok so, did you talk to Mark yet… are we all going to work a 32-hour week?

Jimmy Gutierrez: Yeah, so… I did get him into a studio

*Mark Kaplan: Hi Jimmy, I’m Mark Kaplan the interim-Executive Director at New Hampshire Public Radio.*

Jimmy Gutierrez: And I gave him the hard sell… broke out my strongest arguments.

Jimmy Gutierrez: [fades up] ...it’s called the Productivity Week Policy, have you heard of this?

*Mark Kaplan: I have not.*

*Jimmy Gutierrez: Ok, this is similar to what you’ve probably heard of in other countries with reduced working hours , which I’m sure you’re familiar with, this is like that except you get paid for five days while working four.*

*Mark Kaplan: I love it! Can you get me down from 7 down to 5?*

*Jimmy Gutierrez: We can work on that. [fades down]*

Jimmy Gutierrez: I laid out everything — the potential to save money and emissions on energy use in the building, lower emission lifestyles, the fact that productivity went up and all the work still got done — and I had a couple more cards to play too, things that the CEO of Perpetual Guardian, Andrew Barnes told me. Like the fact we would solve a lot of our recruiting issues...

*Andrew Barnes: I mean let me tell you that trust companies are the dullest business you’ve ever come across but we have people queuing to join us because we are seen to be innovative. Now all of these things add to the bottom line.*

*Jimmy Gutierrez: Barnes also said this policy had a huge positive impact of the folks that had been around for a long time as far as their engagement and overall morale.*

*Andrew Barnes: One of my guys, head of IT, he was able to pick up his daughter after school for the first time ever. Now, you’re not gonna get rid of that guy in a hurry because for him he’s got something that money can’t buy.*

*Mark Kaplan: I think those are very good points. I think there’s a lot of possibility to create environments that people feel more comfortable working in that can provide a better work-life balance. I don’t think accomplishing these things is easy, necessarily. ? So there are hurdles that end up being there that are beyond the internal operation of the organization itself.*

*Jimmy Gutierrez:* Especially if you’re a media organization.

*Mark Kaplan: Right.*

*Jimmy Gutierrez: I think it is organizations… it is professions like ours that need to re-think work and then maybe take a step back and look at the kind of work we are producing and seeing if maybe we are producing better work.*

*Mark Kaplan: By the way, I have three kids, my son who lives out in California works for a company that’s on a 4-day workweek.*

*Jimmy Gutierrez: And how’s he feel about that?*

*Mark Kaplan: It works well for him. He and his wife have a three and a half year old and it gives him a little time for family during the week and there are a lot of good reasons to do it.*

Sam Evans-Brown: wooooooah so he’s seen this up close… So what did he say?

Jimmy Gutierrez: Well, his son actually works four ten-hour days. So it’s a little different. But at the same time, he does know about having that third day off. But, I mean if we’re being real, I think we all know what would happen,

Sam Evans-Brown: He didn’t want to go there.

Jimmy Gutierrez: He didn’t want to go there.

*Mark Kaplan: I think it’s well worth considering further...I’m not ready to commit to it right now...*

Sam Evans-Brown: yeah. Well, I have to say… I understand part of the pushback here.

Jimmy Gutierrez: The CEO pushback? Where’s the class solidarity? What is this?

Sam Evans-Brown: So should I just — we’re gonna have it out here?

Jimmy Gutierrez: Yeah, let’s have it out, let’s have it out.

Sam Evans-Brown: Ok well the first is: I will say that you know there have been… historically there have been a lot of environmentalists who have argued that countries that don’t have a lot of wealth can’t have more wealth because that would worsen climate change, and I’m really… hesitant…

Jimmy Gutierrez: … to go there.. Because who is saying that?

Sam Evans-Brown: Right, the rich countries might be able to solve that. Because maybe we can do both: solve poverty and climate change.

Jimmy Gutierrez: Or maybe we can do neither

Which is maybe more likely, but but then ok, yeah this might be a win-win for us because we stop checking twitter too much, but what about jobs where it’s already all hustle. Servers at restaurants TSA agents…jobs like that.

Jimmy Gutierrez: I do think that for us this would be a win-win. But you’re right that for some folks, this isn’t viable… yet. But that doesn’t mean it shouldn't be. And this all brings me to Charlotte Graham McLay. She’s a journalist who profiled Perpetual Guardian when they were still in their trial-run. And here she is really breaking down work culture.

*Charlotte Graham McLay: I think that the productivity thing can only go so far in the same way that you can say that it’s better economically in our society to not be racist and that might slightly win some people over but at the end of the day you have to honestly believe that being racist is bad to end racism, you know what I mean. So you can say that your workers will be much more productive even if you’re a mean old capitalist that might appeal to you a little bit, but surely an employer has to believe that the culture of work is fundamentally broken and something has to be cracked inside it for us to rethink what work should be.*

Jimmy Gutierrez: Which brings us back to what our CEO told me?

Sam Evans-Brown: Oh. Oh so he gave some ground?

Jimmy Gutierrez: He gave some ground. After our meeting, I talked with Mark off mic, basically so I didn’t get fired. But he wasn’t having any of the 32-hour work week stuff. He basically just humored me, but I was — I’m not playing with this so I kept pushing. He ended up saying I could work 32 if I gave up a fifth of my salary, and that the cost of my benefits would go up as well substantially.

Sam Evans-Brown: Wow. Are you gonna do it? I mean, we’ve come a ways from “I’m going to have three day weekends for the same pay and just prove I can do the same amount of work.”

Jimmy Gutierrez: yeah, I mean… I value my life more than — my life away from work more than I value my work life. And I think that even by doing that my work improves. So yeah, Jimmy’s going forward with 4-days-twenty-percent-less-pay.

Sam Evans-Brown: How does Juanito feel about this?

Jimmy Gutierrez: I think he’s gonna love it. That’s a lot more play-time for him.

Sam Evans-Brown: You know… if when I got hired, there’d been two offers on the table and one was the same except twenty percent less pay and four days a week… I’m actually not sure what I would have picked. Yeah… Good luck Jimmy.

Jimmy Gutierrez: Thanks man.

Sam Evans-Brown: Doesn’t this still get to this question though, of where does this stop? Like you know… how much do we actually have to be at our desks to get our jobs done?

Jimmy Gutierrez: Funny you should say that, Samuel. I just read this report from the New Economics Foundation… and they’re making the case that the ideal work week is actually 21 hours!

Sam Evans-Brown: [laughs] THIS IS WHAT I WAS SAYING!!!!