

Job sharing

What is job-sharing?

Job-sharing is an arrangement in which two or more people share one full-time job, each working part-time on a regular ongoing basis. It may be viable when ordinary part-time work is not, such as when a job needs to be filled on a full-time basis, though not necessarily by one person.

Job-sharing allows employers to respond to social and demographic changes in society and the labour force; it can lead to better use of human resources by ensuring that experienced and skilled staff are retained, and can help employees to better balance their work and personal responsibilities.

Job-sharing can be adapted to a variety of circumstances, because arrangements are individually designed to suit the needs of the organisation, the job sharers and the nature of the job.

Benefits to employees

A major benefit of job-sharing is that it can help employees achieve a balance between work and other activities, including family responsibilities. For some employees, it may offer the only chance to continue working.

Apart from increased flexibility, job-sharing provides specific benefits such as:

- the possibility of a partnership where one's skills and abilities are complemented by the other partner;
- opportunities to learn from the job-sharing partner; and
- mutual support and encouragement on the job.

Examples of employees who may be helped by job-sharing include:

- workers with child or elder care responsibilities;
- older workers who would prefer a phased retirement;
- workers who wish to undertake studies while continuing in employment; and
- people with disabilities who want to work only part of the day or week.

Benefits to organisations

Potential benefits to organisations include:

- availability of a wider range of skills and experience within the one job;
- peak period coverage — it may be possible for both partners to work during very busy times; and

Benefits to organisations

- continuity of coverage — it may be possible for one partner to cover for another in certain circumstances, such as sickness and holidays.
- staff retention, especially of women and men with family responsibilities;
- reduced staff turnover;
- attracting new staff;
- improved staff morale;
- lower absenteeism; and
- increased productivity.

Implementing job-sharing in the workplace

Successful job-sharing stems from sound planning and policy, good management, and commitment from both job-sharers and management.

Consideration should be given to how employees are informed about the job-share policy, and to how managers who are responsible for administering the job-share policy are informed about its application.

Organisations may also establish a job-share register to help manage the placement of interested staff members into job-share arrangements.

An increasing number of businesses have found that the variety of options available for making agreements, and the processes involved, have enabled them to develop new and innovative initiatives that benefit both employees and the business.

Developing a job-sharing arrangement

With careful planning and innovation, many jobs can be adapted to suit a job-sharing arrangement.

Because each job-sharing arrangement is different, the organisation needs to make decisions about the design of each arrangement. These details should be included in a written agreement between management and the employees concerned.

The agreement should set out procedures for dealing with practical issues including:

- a plan of action for when either of the partners leaves the job and/or organisation, or wishes to revert to full-time employment (eg procedure for selecting a new partner, or offering the remaining partner the whole position);
- workload and duties of the job;
- supervisory responsibilities; and
- performance appraisal — members should be reviewed separately. To avoid problems, the method of appraisal should be worked out before the arrangement starts, and should form part of the agreement.

Job-share Design

There are three basic forms of job-sharing, each with differing characteristics which make them more or less suitable to particular jobs.

Shared responsibility

The two employees share the responsibilities of one full-time job. Together the two individuals perform the full range of tasks within a single position. There is no division of duties. Instead, the partners are interchangeable, with either member of the team able to pick up where the other left off.

This arrangement is most suited to ongoing work, rather than project-based work. It may require the highest level of communication and coordination, but if implemented carefully need not disrupt clients and co-workers. Well matched partners are essential to the success of this type of arrangement.

Divided responsibility

Two people share one full-time position and divide responsibilities between them. Partners may also provide back-up for each other as needed.

This arrangement is useful when work can be easily divided by client group or project, and may be performed when partners do not know each other well.

Unrelated responsibility

Two people perform completely separate tasks, but generally work in the same department. In essence, this is two part-time jobs.

This is most suited to situations where partners do not have similar skill levels. It can also be used when two work groups need extra staff but do not have enough work to employ a full-time person.

Job Share Register

Registers can be a useful tool where interested employees can indicate their preferred hours and organisations can match job-share partners who have complementary hours, skills and other relevant factors.

Best Practice Example - Westpac Banking Corporation An employee of Westpac may access job-sharing arrangements with the approval of their manager. About 50 Westpac employees are currently job-sharing. Successful examples of job-share arrangements include:

- a sales role between two staff members at the Edgecliff banking centre, NSW;
- a Branch Manager's role in Willoughby, NSW;
- a Customer Services Manager's role in Yeppoon, Queensland; and
- a number of roles at the Mortgage Processing Centre, Adelaide.

Article Source: www.workplace.gov.au 2005 Commonwealth of Australia.

Where to find more information
www.workplace.gov.au
www.jobwise.com.au

About Mums@Work

Mums@work is Australia's leading provider of return-to-work planning and training aimed at helping parents plan for parental leave and prepare for their transition back to work following full-time parenting.

Mums@work works in partnership with employers to design practical return-to-work solutions and implement flexible work solutions.

We provide employees with the essential information to better plan and prepare for their impending parental leave and then subsequently return to work with increased confidence.

Mums@Work is proudly partnered with www.careermums.com.au – connecting skilled mums to employers who understand the balance of work and family.

The logo for CareerMums, featuring the word "careermums" in white lowercase letters on a dark red rectangular background with a subtle floral pattern.

Coaching Service

We provide one on one coaching to individual parents; employees and managers who need additional support to review practical return to work solutions. We help employees develop a compelling business case for flexibility in conjunction with their manager.

For more information on our services visit www.mumsatwork.com.au

Tel: 02 9966 1697.

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