



Providing job-share solutions for workers and business

Jobs Shared's story

Job-sharing is one example of a flexible work arrangement that employers can use to attract and keep talented staff, and maintain business efficiency.

Simone, from Jobs Shared, believes that job-share arrangements benefit employers and employees equally, and has set up a business to pair up job-share candidates, as well as advising business on how to make job-share work for them.

Why is job-sharing important?

Simone became passionate about job-sharing after the birth of her first child. She loved working in advertising and her work was highly regarded, so she didn't anticipate how difficult it would be to return to work part-time. When it came time for her to return to work, her employer's response was a resounding 'No!'

When she finally found a part-time job, she was given too much work to complete in her allocated hours, which was stressful for her. Simone heard similar stories from other mums, some of whom were also forced to take lower paid jobs to get part-time work. She learnt that people in part-time jobs were often seen to be less productive than full time employees, and realised that job-sharing a full-time role could resolve this.

The idea of a job-share meeting place

While Simone wanted to try a job-share, she didn't know where to start looking. The idea of a job-share meeting place was born and after researching stories about gender equality she decided to do something about it.

In May 2015, the Jobs Shared website was launched, with the goal to make flexible working hours the norm through job-sharing. This would allow more people to enjoy a better work/life balance while still holding a high level position. It was also time to educate companies on the benefits of job-sharing.

How does Jobs Shared work?

For job seekers, Jobs Shared offers a free virtual meeting place to help them find the right person with complementary skills and similar experience for a job-share partnership. It provides tips on finding the right partner to make the arrangement work, and arranges industry-specific 'speed dating'.

For businesses, Jobs Shared maintains a Jobs Board that advertises available job-share positions and gives tips on successful job-sharing. It also runs a consulting service that covers practical aspects of creating job-share opportunities, managing job share teams, and using the specialist software developed by Jobs Shared for internal job-share registers.

Who can job-share?

Job-share arrangements are not only for women returning to the workforce after maternity or parental leave. As shared parenting has become more common, many men also look for flexible work options. Employees transitioning to retirement may also opt for part-time arrangements, and some people just want a break from full-time work to study, or have time with family, or for interests such as sport. Simone wants to help these people go to employers with the solution, rather than a problem.

Benefits to organisations

If employees can't negotiate flexible work they often look for work elsewhere. Simone says that people preparing for retirement often leave a job and take such a wealth of knowledge and experience with them that companies end up rehiring them as contractors. Job-sharing is a great way to retain older workers, as they pass their knowledge and experience on to new employees.

Job-sharing benefits organisations in other ways too:

- * Urgent work need not go unattended if one person in the job-share partnership is on holiday or on sick leave.
- * Two 'brains' in one job-shared role has the potential for creative diversity and innovation.
- * Burn out is reduced when workers enjoy genuine time off, knowing someone is taking care of the work.
- * Mentoring, succession planning, and smooth job transitions are easy to arrange.
- * People work much more efficiently if they want to work part-time and are able to.
- * Access to a largely untapped pool of talented people is possible.

What are the challenges?

Many organisations have tried job-sharing, but have had bad experiences. Simone believes that managers need to learn how to set up, manage, and support job-share teams. They need to give teams time to find their rhythm, know how to split the role appropriately, and make sure that other employees don't play them off against each other. Ideally, there should be handover time, even though it means the role equals a bit more than a full-time position. Simone says that managers often feel they are getting 150% work for 120% time, once they try it.

For employees, the challenge is to find the right job-share partner who will complement them, rather than compete against them. Job-share partners need to communicate well with each other in order to prioritise work, discuss issues that affect their work (personal matters and office politics), and to ensure that information from meetings and emails is shared.

Where to find out more about job-sharing

Queensland Government business and industry portal:
<https://www.business.qld.gov.au/business/employing/employ-ee-rights-awards-entitlements/types-flexible-working-arrangements/job-sharing>

Women Lawyers Association of New South Wales, 'The power of two: job-share resource guide'
<http://www.professionalmums.net/au/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/WLANSW-Job-Share-Guide-Booklet-HIRES-WEB.pdf>

Job-share businesses

Jobs Shared
<https://www.jobsshared.com.au>

JobShare Partner
<http://www.jobsharepartner.com.au>

