

Managing job sharing

While job sharing by formal arrangement is not a common practice in New Zealand organisations, those who practice it are positive about the arrangement. They find they benefit from access to a wider range of skills, better job coverage and greater flexibility in getting the work done. Although it is typically used here in task or process focused jobs, such as reception or manufacturing, in other countries it is successfully used in a wide range of roles, including management positions.

Setting it up

Some businesses formally set up job sharing arrangements as an integral part of the employees' employment agreements.

In such a situation the agreement needs to include what will happen when either partner leaves the position. A common arrangement is to initially offer the remaining partner the position on a full-time basis. If they are unable or unwilling to do this, the organisation tries to recruit an appropriate partner. If this is not successful within a set period of time, the remaining partner is deployed elsewhere if possible. If not possible, the employment is terminated.

Others arrangements may include formally setting the job up as two separate part-time jobs, where continued employment is not dependent on the job-share partner, but the work is organised as a job share arrangement.

It is good practice to seek specialist advice when drawing up any agreement and the job-share partners should also seek advice before signing.

Structuring the job share position

It is critical that this works for your company as well as for the employees. You may find it useful to consider:

- Do you need coverage for the full work day, every day of the week or would it be more useful to have partial or total overlap to cover peak work periods and hand-over times?
- Does the job share need to add up to 40 hours a week, or would it be better for it to be more or less than that?
- Do you want to split the job by hours e.g. mornings and afternoons, or by tasks, responsibilities, clients or portfolios?
- Are there particular tasks that you need both partners to be involved in or meetings that you need them both to attend?
- How will you decide how the job is allocated? Do you want to suggest the arrangement or do you want the job share partners to come up with a recommendation that you will consider?



Making it work

There are some simple guidelines that can be put in place to make job sharing a positive experience for all concerned, including the rest of the team.

- Arrange for any initial training to be done together. This saves time and will help the job share partners build a good working relationship.
- Ensure communication systems are established and reviewed regularly e.g. handover processes, client files, project management plans, briefings.
- Make sure that all people in the organisation understand the arrangement, and who they should approach on specific issues.
- Where relevant, make sure that clients or key contacts also know who they should approach on specific issues.
- Regularly check how the arrangement is working.
- If problems occur, discuss them openly and work together to find solutions.
- Agree how and when the arrangement should be reviewed.

If one partner is attending training or on leave (sick leave, bereavement leave or annual holidays) you can't automatically expect the other to cover, but you can discuss their availability to cover their partner's absence.

Most organisations prefer to assess people's performance separately. However you may wish to include how well they are making the job-share work as one of the performance criteria.