JOB SHARING AT SENIOR LEVEL: MAKING IT WORK

A summary of findings from the job share study; an investigation into the feasibility of job sharing in senior roles and recommendations for best practices for its implementation within global corporations.

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Literature Review by Pam Walton with Dr Caroline Gatrell and Dr Jennifer Tomlinson

A copy of the full research study is available to download at www.thejobshareproject.com
FOREWORDS

FOREWORD BY THE JOB SHARE PROJECT STEERING GROUP

In these challenging economic times, it is more important than ever for companies to draw on the best possible talent to compete and grow. Recruitment, retention and advancement of women is a business imperative and we are committed to creating an environment that enables both men and women to thrive and succeed.

We understand that, for some, the ability to work part-time can mean the difference between remaining and progressing in their career or leaving. This project has explored the feasibility of job sharing as a commercially viable solution to enable part-time working in business-critical roles whilst maintaining an excellent level of customer service. The project brings together both research and comprehensive guidelines, and provides both individuals and organisations with some very practical steps.

We are all delighted to be supporting The Job Share Project and encourage others to follow suit.

FOREWORD BY WORKING FAMILIES

In 2007 the Working Families report ‘Hours to Suit’ emphasised the advantage of having two heads over one as well as other benefits such as greater diversity in teams, enhanced productivity, people management innovation and process improvement.

This year our flexible working benchmark found that job sharing still remains a relatively little used way of working, despite the obvious benefits it brings. We would therefore encourage businesses to fully absorb the findings of this research, especially in the current economic climate. With working hours on the increase, the need to consider the design and shape of work is paramount. Job sharing provides a unique opportunity to think about the design of roles and about creating really effective ways of working.

We believe that this report dispels some of the old myths that surround job sharing, and we anticipate that forward thinking organisations will embrace the opportunities that this way of working can offer.

Sarah Jackson OBE
Chief Executive
Working Families
www.workingfamilies.org
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SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

THE JOB SHARE LANDSCAPE
• Job sharing has moved up the pay scale but adoption remains low
• Job sharing can work in senior roles in global, fast-paced organisations
• People choose to job share for many different reasons – it is not just for working mothers
• Job sharing is not limited to support functions and can work in most role types
• Job sharing does not have to be a ‘pure’ share - there are many ways to design and implement a job share

SETTING UP THE JOB SHARE
• Job share proposals were most likely to be accepted by managers when there was a clear business case
• Job share partners do not have to know each other or to have worked together before to be successful
• Job shares can be successful even if one or both employees come from outside the organisation
• Job design is an important consideration
• Successful job share partners do not have to be an exact match, in fact it is often better when they are not
• A job share agreement can set the parameters for the relationship and help manage performance
• Job sharing does not mean taking your foot off the gas - successful job sharers are ‘high performers’ who go the extra mile to ensure success
• Be warned: job sharing is not for everyone.

MAKING IT WORK
• Job sharers often work long hours on ‘work’ days and give their own time on ‘non-work’ days to ensure seamless handover and communications
• Job sharing can work in client facing roles
• Job sharers can effectively manage teams
• Job sharing enables career progression while working part-time, but you will have to push a lot harder
• Job sharing will increase management overhead but is deemed a worthwhile investment

• If it’s not working, you are not stuck with it

• Success of the partnership depends on a supportive manager and committed individuals

• Developing your career whilst job sharing requires motivation and determination

**PROS AND CONS FOR INDIVIDUALS**

• There are several key benefits to job sharing for individuals:
  o It can facilitate part-time work in a big role
  o While often demanding, it can offer huge job satisfaction
  o Job sharing provides opportunities for career progression
  o The ability to switch off, knowing someone else is at the helm

• There are also a number of barriers to its success, including:
  o Lack of management engagement
  o Mismatched capabilities and values
  o Job sharing being imposed
  o Job sharers who lack the flexibility required of the job
  o Unwillingness to go the extra mile
  o The triangle principle, where others play one job sharer off against the other

**EMPLOYERS: RESOURCES AND ENABLERS**

• Organisations are investing in online portals and practical toolkits to support, educate and raise awareness

• Role models and increased visibility of case studies helps to close the gap between perception and reality

• Where senior management is visibly supportive of new ways of working, individuals and managers are encouraged to consider the option

• Breaking down the manager perception barrier - allowing managers to work through the feasibility of job sharing for each role has proven to increase understanding and buy-in

• Organisations making progress are measuring and holding leaders accountable for progress
POSITIONING THE COSTS AND BENEFITS: EMPLOYERS

• Job sharing will cost the business more, but the talent retention business case is compelling...
  
  o The appetite for job sharing - 61% of women surveyed said they would like the opportunity to job share
  
  o Talent retention - for 87% of respondents, job sharing meant the difference between staying with a company or leaving
  
  o Greater business continuity
  
  o Enhanced productivity
  
  o The extra factor: two heads are better than one
  
  o More engaged employees
INTRODUCTION

THE REALITY OF TODAY’S WORLD OF WORK

For organisations to operate and compete on a global level, there is an increasing expectation for 24/7 availability and responsiveness. The result: a longer hours culture as organisations are driven to squeeze the maximum out of their resources.

When long hours become the norm, they place a heavy demand on individuals. This is especially so when employees have heavy workloads to manage alongside family care or other lifestyle commitments.

Despite awareness and concern about the pressures that can arise, employers often struggle to find practical solutions for reduced hours working that are both sustainable and commercially competitive.

THE FEMALE BRAIN DRAIN

Attracting, retaining and developing the right talent is critical to success when organisations are striving harder than ever to compete on a global stage. In particular, despite concerted efforts, businesses are still losing high performing female talent at an alarming rate. This was highlighted in the recent Davies report on (the lack of) Women on Boards.¹ This was also highlighted in the book ‘Your Loss: How to Win Back your Female Talent’² which effectively illustrates the talent gap.

Davies suggests that the high level of female attrition is due in part to the lack of flexible working arrangements. However, reduced working hours is not always ideal from an organisational perspective, while for individuals it can be frustrating and hamper career prospects.

©Christina Ioannidis and Nicola Walther, 2010

¹ Women on Boards, Davies, 2011
² Your Loss: How to Win Back your Female Talent, Christina Ioannidis and Nicola Walther, 2010
JOB SHARING: A Viable Solution?

Job sharing is seen by some leading organisations as an alternative solution. It offers the best of both worlds, enabling the desired reduced hours’ working week, while providing the round-the-clock cover that is so vital in today’s global marketplace.

Is this the right time for job sharing to become mainstream, as the form of flexibility arguably best fitted to opening up senior roles to a wider talent pool?

This report summarises the findings of a research project exploring job sharing, with a particular focus on transactional, client facing and leadership roles. It is the largest study on this subject to have been conducted in the UK.

BRIEF BACKGROUND TO JOB SHARING

The notion of ‘job share’ has been part of the flexibility debate in the UK for around 30 years. Since the 1980s, according to our literature review, a number of studies have been carried out in the UK, USA, Australia and New Zealand to examine how job shares are working in practice. Most of these have focused on public and health sector roles. With one or two exceptions, studies on private sector job shares, especially at senior levels, have been more limited.

Where senior job shares have been investigated, the feedback is positive. For example, in an article examining the advantages and disadvantages of job sharing³, senior job sharers said they had found it a creative and sustainable way of working. Although it can be hard to be prescriptive as to what makes for success, according to the people interviewed for this article, there were a few pre-requisites. The first, and most obvious, is the ability to collaborate. Job sharers cannot be competitive with one another, as they have to operate as one person.

Most studies point to the fact that the employer gets ‘two heads for the price of one’. This was emphasised in a study of job sharers in the UK exactly a decade ago⁴. This major report pointed out other benefits such as greater diversity in teams, enhanced productivity as well as helping to trigger wider cultural change, people management innovations and process improvements.

Another major benefit of job sharing for employers, often cited in research, is the retention of two highly skilled and experienced individuals, who otherwise might resign. For instance, in early 2007 two Ford Motor Company engineers were allowed to share the job of program manager for the redesigned 2011 Explorer crossover car. It is the highest-ranking shared job at Ford – a move that enabled the business to retain two top engineers.

Despite evidence of job sharing being a creative and effective alternative to full time working, the actual take-up of job sharing has turned out to be far slower than might have been anticipated. This was highlighted in a 2007 report from the Institute of Employment Studies which showed that only 6% of employees on a flexible working contract worked on a job share basis⁵.

For a more detailed understanding of the history of job sharing, please see Appendix 1: Job Sharing – Literature Review

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³ ‘Job Sharing at the Top’ Diversity at Work, 2006
⁴ ‘Desperately Seeking Flexibility…Is Job Sharing the Answer?’ Industrial Society, The Resource Connection, SHL 2001
⁵ The Third Work-Life Balance Employee Survey, Institute for Employment Studies, 2007
ABOUT THE RESEARCH

CONTRIBUTORS
The Job Share Project is a collaborative venture between Capability Jane and the following seven global organisations: Centrica, Deloitte, DHL, Freshfields, Herbert Smith, KPMG and RBS.

In addition, a number of acknowledged individual experts and academic institutions contributed their time and energy. Their guidance and support helped to assure the high quality of the research methodology and findings. These include:

Lucy Daniels
Lead Researcher, author of the Job Share Study, work-life specialist and Vice Patron of Working Families

Pam Walton
Lead Researcher, author of ‘Job Sharing: A Practical Guide’ and ‘Hours to Suit: Working Flexibly in Senior Roles,’ Visiting Fellow, Sheffield Hallam University Business School

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Leeds University Business School

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OBJECTIVES
The objectives of the project were to:

1. Assess the feasibility of job sharing in senior client-facing leadership roles within global corporations and identify best practice

2. Understand the principles for job share design and how job sharing works in senior client-facing leadership roles

3. Obtain a sufficient understanding of success to develop practical, content-rich toolkits for prospective job sharers and employers wishing to understand and implement job sharing at senior levels
METHODOLOGY
To support the project, research utilising both quantitative and qualitative data collection was undertaken at the start of 2011. People were invited to participate via a confidential internet link. In all there were 303 responses, comprising:

- 86 job sharers
- 45 managers of job sharers
- 63 people who work with job sharers
- 53 people who know about job sharing
- 55 people who would like to job share

The survey explored views on the effectiveness of job sharing as a work option in more senior roles; its impact on clients and productivity; the attitude of organisations and managers; the practicalities and pros and cons. It also considered the impact on career progression and what people’s views were on job sharing at the top.

This was followed up by 32 in-depth telephone interviews with job sharers and managers of job sharers working at senior levels. As well as tips from success stories, we were interested to hear of negative experiences and what lessons could be learnt from these. Finally, we asked what else organisations might do differently to ensure that job sharing works well for both the business and for individuals.

OUR DEFINITION OF JOB SHARING
We have defined job sharing as a way of working where two (or more) people share a ‘whole’ or ‘full time’ position. Job sharing allows for full week cover and enables jobs which are not suitable to be carried out on a part-time basis. Our findings showed that there are a number of variations for the design of jobs shares at senior levels. This is explored later on in this document.

For an executive summary report, and other job sharing resources, please go to www.thejobshareproject.com.
RESEARCH FINDINGS

JOB SHARING HAS MOVED UP THE PAYSCALE

Over the past decade job sharing has moved up the pay scale, with an increasing groundswell of individuals asking to job share in senior roles.

A survey carried out in 2008 found that 46% of organisations said job sharing was available as a flexible working option6.

Our research, conducted in 2011, uncovered many instances of job sharing happening at senior level within large corporates and of people being interested in being able to job share.

Nearly half (49%) of the respondents to our survey categorised themselves at manager, consultant, team leader or associate level in their organisations. A further third (30%) put themselves at a more senior level – as senior associates, directors, heads, partners and, in one case, a job sharing CEO post.

The majority (70%) of job sharers completing the survey indicated they were either currently in their first job sharing role or had one previous experience of this way of working. However almost a third had experienced two or more job shares, in some instances spanning several years.

In addition, of the survey respondents:

- 80% held job share roles at director, senior manager or manager level
- 78% had over 10 years of professional experience

“Job Sharing in a senior role is slightly easier – hard to generalise but, at senior level what you are working on is less short sharp stuff, less immediate deliverables and more strategic. That is easier to hand over to people, whereas when we first started job sharing there was a lot of project work involved which meant a lot of communication between us which was quite demanding.”

6 Caring and Flexible Working, Department of Work and Pensions, 2008
JOB SHARING CAN WORK IN SENIOR ROLES IN GLOBAL, FAST-PACED ORGANISATIONS

The job sharers we surveyed came from fast-paced, big-brand organisations including: Accenture, Barclays, Centrica, DHL, Deloitte, Citi Group, Freshfields, KPMG, M&S and RBS. Over 80% held positions of responsibility (managers, team leaders, senior associates, directors and in one case a CEO).

- 80% of respondents were from the private sector
- Most respondents came from global ‘big brand’ organisations, in high profile external and internal ‘client’ facing roles
- 20% of respondents were in senior leadership roles in the public sector

Organisations and roles represented in the survey included:

**EXAMPLE RESPONDENT**

**ORGANISATIONS**
- Deloitte
- KPMG
- Centrica
- DHL
- RBS
- British Gas
- Barclays
- Citi Group
- Marks and Spencer
- Kelloggs
- B&Q

**EXAMPLE RESPONDENT**

**ROLES**
- Director Insolvency Team
- Sales / Relationship Director
- Senior Auditor
- Senior Project Manager
- Equity Sales
- Assistant Director (Transactional Lawyer)
- Production Manager
- Portfolio Manager
- Strategy & Planning Manager
- Customer Service Manager
PEOPLE CHOOSE TO JOB SHARE FOR MANY DIFFERENT REASONS

The research identified that the most common drivers for job sharing included family changes (births, marriages, ageing parents), organisational restructuring, reduced working hours before retiring, and accommodating other dimensions of life. Although 87% of our survey respondents were women, 13% were men.

“I was looking to do reduced hours in a senior role and already worked closely with the person I ended up job sharing with. I had two school-age children and he wanted greater flexibility so he could make extended weekend visits to his elderly parents living at a distance.”

Other reasons included improved wellbeing and fitness or relocation due to a spouse’s work. Some, having reached a senior level, wanted, as one person described it, to adopt a more ‘holistic lifestyle.’ A career was still important to them but they wanted to reduce the heavy workload associated with full time jobs and create a more rounded and sustainable existence.

“The first job share was when there was some restructuring of a project team I was in. A new big project was coming up and they suggested that the two of us who had known each other working part time would job share in the newly formed team. We had complementary skills and we negotiated with the manager that we could do the role as a job share three days each with one day overlap.”

Sometimes an individual manager might suggest job sharing as a better business solution than having someone working part time, as in this example from a job sharer managing a team in a transport company:

“Job sharing is the best thing that ever happened to me, but it happened by chance. It was because my boss at the time (for whom I previously worked full time before children) said he wanted me to do it when I asked if I could come back part time. I had no idea what job sharing was but just said yes so I could have a job!”

All the job sharers emphasised that job sharing was not an easy ‘opt out’ but one that required considerable commitment to make it work effectively for both sides.

JOB SHARING IS NOT LIMITED TO SUPPORT FUNCTIONS AND CAN WORK IN MOST ROLE TYPES

Contrary to common belief, job sharing is not limited to support functions. We found examples of successful job sharing in most role-types, including sales and client-facing roles, leadership and team management roles, strategic and knowledge-based roles and fast-paced or highly transactional roles.

JOB SHARING DOES NOT HAVE TO BE A ‘PURE’ SHARE - THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO DESIGN AND IMPLEMENT A JOB SHARE
What was evident from the interviews was that, as far as job design is concerned, there is no ‘one size fits all’ pattern. What seemed to matter most was that the job sharers had compatible characteristics, a very positive attitude to making the job share work and a manager or senior champion with an open mind. Job sharers might bring different strengths and experience to the job, but needed to be in tune with each other’s work styles, have similar values and be willing to trust one another. One particularly important characteristic was that of being willing to share – not just the successes but also to support each other when things occasionally went wrong.

“We couldn’t do a traditional job share in this role, it wouldn’t work. It is about opening up the opportunities on how you can have a flexible job share.”

THE PURE-HYBRID-SPLIT MODEL

Our analysis showed that the design of the job share fell into three core categories: ‘pure’, ‘hybrid’ and ‘split’.

A pure job share is where one job is done by two (or more) individuals. Business objectives, job descriptions and responsibilities are shared, although one person may take the lead in a specific account or management relationship.

A split job share is where two individuals share common business objectives; however, the roles and responsibilities are different. In a hybrid role, some responsibilities are split and others shared. In both of these, the design of the job share should ideally play to the strengths of each individual.

The following example of ‘pure’ job sharing came from a male interviewee job sharing in a chief executive role.

“We were both responsible for the entire job. The only thing we split was chairing two different networks, because of the number of relationships we needed to retain. We worked three days a week each and we were both in on Tuesdays, which is the day we had the team meeting, the board and corporate meetings.”

“The way we split our work is to categorise our roles, engagement, recognition and leadership, and we are individually measured and reviewed in terms of tasks and deliverables. Even though we have split much of our work, we can take over from each other when necessary.” Manager, professional services firm

“We looked at what the job involved and decided what had to be shared and what one of us could have a lead responsibility for. We both dealt with anything to do with strategy and the business plan, with finance and to do with staffing issues. We take different lead responsibilities with different subject areas.”
## Different Ways to Design a Job Share

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<th><strong>Hybrid Job Share</strong></th>
<th><strong>Pure Job Share</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Independent Liability</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Divided responsibility. Role is divided by e.g. seniority, capability, activity, client, project etc.&lt;br&gt;• In effect, two part time roles.</td>
<td><strong>Joint &amp; Several Liability</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Sharing a role with some shared responsibility and some divided responsibility. Role is divided to play to each other’s strengths</td>
<td><strong>Joint Liability</strong>&lt;br&gt;• One job that happens to be done by two (or more) interchangeable jobholders</td>
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<td><strong>Shared</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Business objectives</td>
<td><strong>Shared</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Business objectives&lt;br&gt;• One job description&lt;br&gt;• Single set of accountabilities&lt;br&gt;• Same level of seniority / expertise</td>
<td><strong>Shared</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Business objectives&lt;br&gt;• One job description&lt;br&gt;• Single set of accountabilities&lt;br&gt;• Same level of seniority / expertise&lt;br&gt;• Same capabilities &amp; expertise&lt;br&gt;• Same responsibilities&lt;br&gt;• Single set of performance measures&lt;br&gt;• Shared client and stakeholder ownership and management (with lead contact)</td>
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<td><strong>Divided</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Two separate job descriptions&lt;br&gt;• Differentiated accountabilities&lt;br&gt;• Responsibilities&lt;br&gt;• Seniority / Capability / Activity / Client / Project / Work-stream&lt;br&gt;• But related performance measures&lt;br&gt;• Different but related and complementary capabilities&lt;br&gt;• Different but related and complementary expertise</td>
<td><strong>Divided</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Complementary capabilities &amp; expertise&lt;br&gt;• Divided responsibilities by capability / expertise&lt;br&gt;• Divided but overlapping performance measures&lt;br&gt;• Divided client ownership and management with shared back-up&lt;br&gt;• Divided team ownership and management with shared back-up</td>
<td><strong>Time - Hours / Day(s) / Week(s) / Month(s)</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Geography / time-zone</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Role Types</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Project / case based roles&lt;br&gt;• Role that can be divided by project, activity, client or staff&lt;br&gt;• No line management responsibilities&lt;br&gt;• Client / stakeholder facing roles</td>
<td><strong>Wide mix of roles</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Senior &amp; executive management roles&lt;br&gt;• Line management responsibilities&lt;br&gt;• Client / stakeholder facing roles&lt;br&gt;• Role that can be divided by capability</td>
<td><strong>Wide mix of roles</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Roles with global covering requirement&lt;br&gt;• Line management responsibilities&lt;br&gt;• Client / stakeholder facing roles&lt;br&gt;• Project / case based&lt;br&gt;• Processed based roles</td>
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SETTING UP THE JOB SHARE

JOB SHARE PROPOSALS WERE ACCEPTED BY MANAGERS WHEN THERE WAS A CLEAR BUSINESS CASE

Our research showed that job share proposals were accepted by managers when the individual(s) clearly presented the business benefits, explained the logistics of how it would work and addressed any practical concerns of the people doing the role.

“The secret was having a robust business case. We were able to show what other benchmarking organisations were doing. We identified the considerations — accountability, how to manage and divide up clients, efficiencies and communications strategies. We gave options for how to implement it. All this laid any concerns to rest as we showed we’d really thought how we were going to do it and what our operating principles and practices were.”

Successful business cases included:

1. Consideration for and understanding of the nature and design of the role
2. The logistics of how it will work, addressing any practical concerns of the people doing the role
3. How internal/external clients will be divided/managed and communicated to
4. How deadlines would be met and burning issues addressed
5. How handover and communications will work (between partners)
6. Understanding of and solutions to address the impact and perceived barriers
7. Ideas on partner sourcing and matching (what/where/how)
8. Options for implementation and suggestions for a pilot if resistance is met
9. Identified efficiencies and added value with new way of working
10. Examples of where it has been done before (internally or externally)

“It is about the job share people doing their homework up front and investing time in preparing their case, anticipating all the objections and countering them with a proposal that is well researched and that is fairly seamless and joined up as a duo. There also needs to be an air of flexibility and willingness to be in touch when needed.”
JOB SHARE PARTNERS DO NOT HAVE TO KNOW EACH OTHER OR TO HAVE WORKED TOGETHER BEFORE TO BE SUCCESSFUL

Our research findings dispelled a common myth that job sharers needed to know each other before becoming job share partners. Our findings show that 54% knew their partner before-hand and 46% did not, clearly demonstrating that job shares can be successful even if the partners have not worked together before.

Most job shares came about as a result of networking within the employees’ existing organisation, identifying a potential partner and putting in a successful joint application. Ultimately, this depended on being able to clearly present the business benefits of the job share and helping to allay concerns about how it would work.

In a very few instances, people had moved into a new role to fill a vacant part of an existing job share or had been recruited from the outside because of their skills.

Where this happened, people emphasised the importance of making sure potential job sharers got to know each other during or ideally before the interview, to make sure that they shared similar values and were equally matched.

“We had worked together previously as colleagues. We saw a job advertised and applied for it. We submitted a single CV - which included both our careers to date. We put in a joint statement saying how each of us separately met the person specification, a statement of what we thought the job share would bring in terms of added value and a statement about how we would see the logistics working.”

More often than not, job sharing is discounted by individuals wanting to reduce their hours because they do not know a potential compatible partner within their organisation.

**Job Shares can be successful even if the partners have not worked together before. 54% knew their partner before hand. 46% did not.**
JOB SHARES CAN BE SUCCESSFUL EVEN IF ONE OR BOTH EMPLOYEES COME FROM OUTSIDE THE ORGANISATION

While 75% of our surveyed job shares came about as a result of networking within the employees’ existing organisation, 25% of partners were sourced from outside the organisation. This dispels yet another myth and demonstrates that job share partnerships can be successful even if one or both individuals come from outside the organisation.

JOB DESIGN IS AN IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION

Job design was an important consideration which successful senior job sharers automatically took into account when considering the feasibility of a role and how it could best be shared. In many cases they were able to suggest enhancements to existing patterns of working with resulting benefits to the organisation.

“People with job shares have responsibility to make it work but if the role is identified correctly that takes the stress out of it all. You want a seamless transition and for people not to even have to think about it.”

Individuals who were successful in their request to job share demonstrated consideration for the nature and design of the role when explaining how the role could be carried out as a job share:

- Areas of responsibility and core activities
- Outputs, reporting, critical deadlines & KPIs
- Meetings, communications & key stakeholders
- Possible unexpected emergencies / perceived issues

SUCCESSFUL JOB SHARE PARTNERS DO NOT HAVE TO BE AN EXACT MATCH, IN FACT IT IS OFTEN BETTER WHEN THEY ARE NOT

Successful job share partnerships depend on chemistry, compatibility, capability, communication. Our research showed that the most successful partnerships were those where both job share partners had shared values, career ambitions and were evenly matched in terms of capability.

In more senior roles however, an exact match of experience was not essential and was often a benefit where both specialised on the basis of their key strengths and expertise.

What seemed to matter most was that the job sharers had compatible characteristics, a very positive attitude to making the job share work and a manager or senior champion with an open mind. Job sharers might bring different strengths and experience to the job, but needed to be in tune with each other’s work styles, have similar values, and be willing to trust one another. One particularly important characteristic was that of being willing to share – not just the successes but also to support each other when things occasionally went wrong.
“It is so important that you get the right people with the same attitudes but with complementary skills, and you can’t have someone who is overly ambitious.”

Interviewees recommended that this sort of role would not work for someone who is less collaborative, who might feel threatened or not trust their partner, or for whom shining in their own right is more important than good teamwork.

“If you are very ambitious it doesn’t give as much scope for personal ‘visibility.’ You have to work together. For me that isn’t a big problem. The risk is that you don’t shine yourself.”

 “[In my job share role now] - we split work evenly, I can shine in my own right, it feels like a proper share. I think probably because we are similar and we cover for each other rather than competing.”

“At a leadership level you really need to be sure that you are absolutely together in your values about why you come to work, in what you look for when you are hiring and firing and what would you resign over. You have a shared bottom line. You have to be as honest with each other as you are with yourself. When you do that there is real power in it.”

“You have to have two people with a shared vision at senior level – not leadership style but shared leadership values because while your opinion won’t be exactly the same, the vision will be coming from a shared philosophy. Even individuals will not make entirely consistent decisions over weeks or months but overall it is a similar value.”

To work well together and communicate effectively, job sharers need to find a partner with similar values and work ethic who they can trust. This is especially important in senior jobs in fast moving organisations; they need to relate to one another in such a way that they can both share and lead as the occasion requires. This versatility requires maturity.

“It is like a marriage. Absolute trust that there was never going to be any undermining - that even if she didn’t agree with my decision she wasn’t going to unpick it, undermine me, make me look silly. Take joint responsibility if things went wrong even if it had nothing to do with us as an individual. We were both conscientious people – never a sense that one of us was leaving a difficult bit of work to slip into the other person’s half of the week.”
A JOB SHARE AGREEMENT CAN SET THE PARAMETERS FOR THE RELATIONSHIP AND HELP MANAGE PERFORMANCE

Our research found that establishing clear objectives and parameters for the job share partnership was a critical component to its success. Many partnerships formed a job share agreement on commencement of the working arrangement that included:

1. Job description, roles and responsibilities
2. Reporting and communications between partnership and externally to stakeholders
3. What is shared, who leads what, how to divide projects, accountabilities, budgets and targets
4. Conflict resolution between partners and externally
5. Managing relationships with the team, senior management and key stakeholders
6. Sick leave and vacation time
7. Managing work and home
8. Duration of and exiting from the partnership
9. Reviewing and assessing the partnership
10. Career planning and individual performance

“We wrote our job share agreement and before we stepped into the role we went through it with our manager. It is something to refer back to and if the job share arrangement isn’t working, you need to be able to go back and tweak it. Every role and every manager is going to be different so you need a tailored agreement.”

JOB SHARING DOES NOT MEAN TAKING YOUR FOOT OFF THE GAS - SUCCESSFUL JOB SHARERS ARE ‘HIGH PERFORMERS’ WHO GO THE EXTRA MILE TO ENSURE SUCCESS

Opting to job share does not mean taking the foot off the gas. It is hard work. Successful job sharers go the extra mile to ensure high performance.

Job shares are expected to mirror the behaviour of the organisation on their working days and most job sharers surveyed worked long hours on their ‘on’ days, organising care arrangements to enable early morning starts and late nights. It was also important that job sharers were able to be flexible and to be available for consultation with their partner on non-working days and in some cases being flexible enough to occasionally switch days.

“We do a lot more than [our contracted] 2.5 days.”

“You have to be flexible. Just because you are in a job share doesn’t mean you have to do 9-5. It should protect you a bit on the days you are not working but the days you are, you’ll be doing long hours.”

“We were both very conscious of the job share, both always adjusting, tweaking and checking – trying to set a good example...”
BE WARNED: JOB SHARING IS NOT FOR EVERYONE

Our findings clearly demonstrated that it is the *individual*, not the role or design of the job, that is a critical factor influencing the success of the job share partnership.

Job sharing does not suit everyone and it is definitely not an easy option. Our research identified common characteristics and behaviours demonstrated by successful high performing job share partners:

- High performing (75% accepted for promotion)
- Proactive and job motivated
- Well organised with a good eye for detail
- Self-assured and a good communicator
- Flexible and willing attitude
- Collaborative not competitive, good team player
- A solver, not a blamer, trustworthy and trusting
- Strong decision-making and focus

“I loved working three days a week overall. I would potentially do it again. I do think it is possible to do it, but it is extremely hard work.”

“I am happy here but I feel we had to fight for the job share and we have had to prove ourselves - it wasn’t just tick an option box. We have been trail-blazers.”
MAKING IT WORK

There is without doubt a great deal of scepticism about the effectiveness of job sharing at senior level. In particular, this applies to job sharing in roles that are client facing, involve team management, or are highly transactional in nature.

The research set out specifically to identify whether and how job sharing could be made to work successfully in such roles, and to identify best practices.

Overall, whilst being realistic about the need for flexibility and to put in extra time as in any senior role, the job sharers were hugely positive about their experience of job sharing. In the online survey, 96% considered it to have been a success and 80% preferred job sharing to a traditional full time role.

“I would hold this up as being the most fantastic opportunity to have it all.”

Our job sharers were surveyed as to what they saw as the keys to success.

Successful job share partnerships depend on chemistry, compatibility, capability, communication and no competition

Q13: What would you say makes for a successful job share at senior level?

Key to successful job sharing is:
1. Trust
2. Communication strategy
3. Handover execution
4. Complementary skills
5. Shared vision and values
6. Flexibility

“We share our targets equally so that the job share is entirely seamless. People in a job share have to be proactive to make it work. Communication is the biggest issue and could be the biggest problem if not done well. We make it very clear that it is you and your partner’s responsibility to pass on information to each other.”

Job share partnerships are set up to fail if there is poor communication, lack of trust and competitiveness within the partnership.

The findings indicated that job sharing will be most successful when each partner appreciates the other’s strengths and weaknesses, and complements these as much as possible.
JOB SHARERS OFTEN WORK LONG HOURS ON ‘WORK’ DAYS AND GIVE THEIR OWN TIME ON ‘NON-WORK’ DAYS TO ENSURE SEAMLESS HANDOVER AND COMMUNICATIONS

Our research found that successful job sharers take full responsibility to ensure everything is seamless, and to ensure that the people they interact with don’t have to repeat themselves. The job sharers will both put in extra (unpaid) hours to ensure a smooth handover and are always available for each other on ‘non-work’ days.

“[The Organisation has made] it very clear that it is you and your partner’s responsibility to pass on information to each other.”

“I probably spend a couple of hours on average in my own time on a Friday night or Saturday finalising my handover but will also have done some as I go along and also work outside work hours. You have to expect to do that in a senior role anyway. That is part and parcel of the privilege of having a job share and you should cherish it and also you can’t have a nine to five mentality.”

The most frequent handover period is a half to one full working day. Successful job sharers typically schedule team and key stakeholder meetings on these days (where possible).

Findings show that a regular overlap where both parties are in the office is recommended. If this is not possible, then a face-to-face overlap at least every two weeks is desirable.

For some, formal handover is done by phone or email. Most write an email summary and will have a night-before call to debrief and re-prioritise tasks.

“We utilised our skills and one would take the lead on a stream, but the other was well enough briefed to pick up if necessary.”

All of the job share partnerships surveyed communicated outside their working hours, with the majority committing up to three hours to their job share partnership outside their non-work days.

“This job share wouldn’t work if you said ‘I am contracted to work x hours and these are my days off’.”

“The job is incredibly deadline-led. If we are not sure of something we will give each other a quick call.”

“Job share partners need to be exceptionally well briefed on individual projects to be able to pick up or accept that they may occasionally need to speak with their line manager/team outside of office hours.”

A challenge for job sharers can be when people try to play one off against the other. This is where having a good communications strategy and being able to share information effectively is very important.

JOB SHARING CAN WORK IN CLIENT FACING ROLES
Far from being detrimental to client relationships, the research identified that in fact job sharing was perceived in a positive light by those who managed job sharers who held client-facing roles.

Provided the job share was managed properly 67% of all managers surveyed agreed that clients are positively impacted by job sharing. 94% of job sharers agreed with this too. Several interviewees pointed out that clients and other stakeholders saw job sharing as something very positive.

The research highlighted that at senior levels, building and maintaining relationships is critical so most divided up the ownership of key relationships. Typically each client would have a ‘primary’ point of contact for each stakeholder but they share and communicate so either can take over at any one time.

Job sharers we interviewed recommended clarifying the arrangement and how it will work upfront with the client.

“You have so much knowledge that it doesn’t make sense for us to share [clients], so we have our own [clients]. In the business case we said we will have our own [clients], but effectively they will have full time cover. So I will say to X if a client phones when I am not here, can you take the call and if you need to phone me do. We do interrupt each other quite a lot on our own days off”

“It might need to be explained carefully to the client that we are doing it for good reasons and that there is going to be no extra cost passed onto them and that there is always going to be someone available for them.”

“People liked it being a little bit different. We demonstrated performance and we achieved financial turnaround - also significant improvement in organisational functioning.”

One would take the lead ...but the other was well enough briefed to pick up if necessary”

**JOB SHARERS CAN EFFECTIVELY MANAGE TEAMS**

91% of job sharers thought it was possible to job share and manage other people. Of the job sharers who replied to the survey who said they already managed people, 7%
managed more than 50 (the highest number being 490), 10% managed 50 or less. The majority (83%) managed 20 or less direct reports.

The majority of senior Job Share Partnerships surveyed successfully manage teams. 67% of respondents managed people. 83% managed up to 20 people.

The research found that there is no “one-size-fits-all” model to managing staff while in a job share partnership. However, critical to all is consistent approach and water-tight communications.

“At a leadership level you really need to be sure that you are absolutely together in your values about why you come to work, in what you look for when you are hiring and firing and what would you resign over. You have a shared bottom line. You have to be as honest with each other as you are with yourself. When you do that there is real power in it.”

The majority said they shared responsibility for their staff team and for appraisals, as in this example from job sharing CEO’s:

“You have to have two people with a shared vision at senior level – not leadership style but shared leadership values because while your opinion won’t be exactly the same, the vision will be coming from a shared philosophy. Even individuals will not make entirely consistent decisions over weeks or months but overall it is a similar value.”

“We were responsible for 8 directors. We had one to one mapping in terms of lead responsibility for day to day line management. We were both available to talk to any of the staff who reported to us. We were both there for appointment interviews and appraisals.”

While most people shared responsibility for appraisals, other solutions were adopted too. Some job sharers divided reports between them, split responsibilities or sometimes swapped round either to get a better match or to tackle a difficult situation from a fresh perspective.

“Some people get on with one better than another. In discussions about performance if you have a slightly different approach or relationship with the person it can be useful to objectively discuss this. We felt that by having an on-going
discussion we probably come out with a better ability to deal with tricky issues in handling someone.”

Whichever method of appraisal was chosen, our job sharing interviewees emphasised the importance of clarifying the arrangement from the beginning, managing staff expectations and allaying any concerns about how it would work for them. Provided you showed consistency, there could be real benefits.

“It’s good for the direct reports, as long as you are consistent in how you deal with them - if you act as one person. If you have different skill sets and personalities it is helpful and good for them to have two people they can try things out on - two heads are better than one.”

JOB SHARING ENABLES CAREER PROGRESSION WHILE WORKING PART-TIME, BUT YOU WILL HAVE TO PUSH A LOT HARDER

All our respondents, both job sharers and non job sharers, were positive about the possibility of job sharing at senior levels. While job sharing might slow down promotion, 45% of job share respondents said they had applied for promotion and of these, 71% were successful.

A wider issue for further investigation is that only 45% of our respondents applied for promotion. Job share partnerships who successfully got promoted recommended persistence and finding a senior sponsor to fight your corner.

Job sharing had often been the key to moving up the career ladder and appeared to present very real benefits over working part-time, where people can often stagnate or end up working proportionately large amounts of overtime.

“I was able to continue in my career and progress as a result of doing job shares because if I'd had to work full time I might have left or looked for something less demanding or part time. I was clear I didn’t want to do four days as you end up doing a five day a week job in four days.”
Some of our job sharers had reached the top of their profession as co-chief executives, co-directors and co-heads. Far from holding them back, many of these found job sharing gave them an extra boost.

**JOB SHARING WILL INCREASE MANAGEMENT OVERHEAD BUT IS DEEMED A WORTHWHILE INVESTMENT**

The managers we spoke to acknowledged that job sharing could take longer to set up and takes additional overhead to manage. Most felt that this was a worthwhile investment. This is explored in more detail in the Costs and Benefits section of the report.

**IF IT’S NOT WORKING, YOU ARE NOT STUCK WITH IT**

The average lifetime of a job share partnership within the study is two years. Job sharing is often a stepping stone to larger roles for high performers. Robust competency and capability frameworks will keep high performers on track and manage-out under-performers.

**SUCCESS OF THE PARTNERSHIP DEPENDS ON A SUPPORTIVE MANAGER AND COMMITTED INDIVIDUALS**

The evidence clearly pointed to a need for managers to be supportive of the arrangement but of equal if not greater importance was the need for the individuals to take full ownership and responsibility for performance and success of the partnership.

**DEVELOPING YOUR CAREER WHILST JOB SHARING REQUIRES MOTIVATION AND DETERMINATION**

The practicalities of taking up training and development opportunities are much harder. The reality is that for job sharers to pursue these opportunities flexibility and personal investment will be required.

“We can miss out on training that falls on the days that we are not in the office. The attitude to part time workers of any kind tends to be quite negative (the assumption being that if you cannot devote a full week to work you are not a committed member of staff) and so you are often overlooked when training and development opportunities arise.”

For some, slowing down the career acceleration is a compromise they chose to make in order to get a better balance in the short term. However, individuals need to be mindful of the organisational culture and whether this attitude may hinder long term prospects.

Developing your career as a job sharer can be a challenge. However, it’s important to note that it is a role share not a career share – each job sharer is an independent individual with individual aspirations.
When it comes to promotion, one consideration for job sharers is how they are appraised for their individual work when it comes to promotion opportunities. Depending on how the job share is appraised, one person could end up losing out.

“In terms of our workload we are treated as one individual. However, when it came to promotion, we were treated as two individuals which I felt was rather unfair. He ticked sufficient boxes to be promoted but on my own I did not have sufficient ‘ticks’. However, had the two ‘scores’ been added together we would have both qualified for promotion.”

“There was an opening for a more senior position and we decided to apply for it as a job share. We were managed both in terms of the job share and in our individual relationship with the company – so we were performance managed both as to how we had performed as a team as well as individually. I got the more senior role and my colleague wasn’t offered the same role.”

The issue of promotion to top jobs when considering strengths and weaknesses of individuals within the job share was also raised by one of the managers interviewed, who said:

“Both individuals in the job share were very competent but one had more potential than the other. They were very senior and at that level it occasionally became problematic when it came to career decisions with them. The whole arrangement was cosy from a domestic point of view but it meant we were not able to exploit the stronger candidate’s potential. This is a hugely important piece of managing senior job sharers and potentially a pressure.”

For the survey respondents, the average length of job share role was two years. Job sharing was often seen as a stepping stone for high performers.

In order to manage expectations and differences in career aspirations and abilities, job shares should be set up based on an agreement and a timeframe. This agreement should be reviewed regularly, both to ensure that the partnership is working effectively, and to monitor differences in career aspirations and abilities that may determine if it is time to bring it to a close.
PROS AND CONS FOR INDIVIDUALS

BENEFITS TO INDIVIDUALS

JOB SHARING IS THE WAY TO WORK PART-TIME IN A BIG ROLE

For the job sharers who responded to our survey, the main benefit was gaining more time to balance the different dimensions of life without giving up a stimulating career.

“The benefits to me were being able to do a big job without having to work full time – a lot of part time jobs are not so interesting. For the organisation – it got the benefit of two people in a big job from two people who they hung on to who might have gone elsewhere.”

JOB SHARING OFFERS JOB SATISFACTION

Several interviewees, like the one below, mentioned the added value of a job share role in terms of their own sense of engagement and job satisfaction compared to working part time. Most put in extra hours to ensure a seamless handover and many were flexible about changing days round to fit business needs.

“I felt a more cohesive part of the team when I was job sharing, than I did as a stand-alone part timer. When in the job share I didn’t have a sense of missing so much. It wasn’t only the formal team meetings - the incidental comments that happen in the week got handed over as a job sharer. You don’t know how much you don’t know.”

JOB SHARING PROVIDES OPPORTUNITIES FOR CAREER PROGRESSION

Not only did they have a greater sense of commitment, they were also able to go for bigger roles further up the chain, without necessarily having to work full time. Several of them thought it was harder to do this as a part timer on your own.

THE ABILITY TO SWITCH OFF

Unlike people in senior solo roles working part time, job sharers can also switch off most of the time on non-work days, knowing their partner is covering the role. The following quotes from two of the job sharers interviewed were typical:

“I’d rather job share so on my last day I can clap my hands and know I’m not on duty the other part of the week, rather than glancing at my blackberry all the time. You can switch off more with your job share.”

“I feel more connected to the organisation. I am probably more tied into the company than if I worked full time. Because of the seniority of our role, people do work over and above their hours. We need to invest our personal time to make it work. I worked part time in my previous company but it was three compressed days and you are conscious that you are not providing a whole service.”

Some would also cover for each other’s holidays and even for sickness absence.
WHAT CAN GO WRONG?

Job sharing can, and sometimes does, go wrong. When it does it can be problematic.

Sometimes, a negative experience of job sharing can put both managers and potential job sharers off giving it another go.

Unfortunately, negative impressions of job sharing have a habit of proliferating around an organisation, and can affect the prospects of future job sharers.

Many of these problems are avoidable if the job share is set up correctly, and if the individuals and managers concerned have the right expectations and attitudes.

The main contributing factors to job share failure, identified by the respondents were:

1. Poor communication between job sharers
2. Lack of trust
3. Manager attitude
4. Competitiveness
5. Poor communication with other team members

The qualitative research also identified a number of other contributing factors.

LACK OF FLEXIBILITY WILL HAMPER SUCCESS

To make job sharing work at senior level requires flexibility and often more than a 9-5 commitment.

“Having a team with only limited availability was unsatisfactory from the manager position and the client position.”

“(The job sharers) needed to keep to fixed hours because they had to get home to pick up children from nursery. Clients didn’t like finding their contact was not there and it fell to me (their manager) to pick up the pieces...”

UNWILLINGNESS TO GO THE EXTRA MILE

Job sharing is hard work and definitely not for those who want an easy option.

“[I found that the] job sharers didn’t want to do the hours. They are happy to do their lot and not more. When we have issues and I need someone to stay late – it is very rare that the job sharers will do more hours than they are contracted to do. The other full time staff stay instead.”

MISMATCHED CAPABILITIES AND VALUES

Our findings showed that job sharing can fail where there is a mismatch in terms of capabilities, skill levels and career ambitions. This is emphasised where one job sharer is significantly stronger than the other.
JOB SHARING BEING IMPOSED

People had also had negative experiences in situations where the job share had been imposed on them, rather than it being a choice. Examples included candidates for full time posts being offered the alternative of a job share with someone they didn’t know.

LACK OF MANAGEMENT ENGAGEMENT

Problems can also occur if the manager is not engaged and supportive, for example if they are coerced to accommodate a job share by HR without full consideration of the role or extra cost considerations.

THE TRIANGLE PRINCIPLE

A challenge for job sharers can be when people try to play one off against another or burden the manager with issues about the job share arrangement.

“Don’t let triangles develop within the organisation, so if people are coming to you [the manager] about challenges with the job share make sure that they are going to the job sharers directly. Make sure it is a direct communication.”

“The person you need to address performance with is your sharer. Job sharers need to be held jointly accountable so if one is weaker, the other must help mitigate that situation and jointly address it – don’t go complaining about your job share partner to your manager.”

THE MANAGER’S PERSPECTIVE

Among the non-job sharers who responded to our survey were 45 managers of job sharers (70% female, 30% male). Half of these described themselves as being at senior levels as managers, consultants or associates. Almost one third were in top jobs, at CEO, director, headship or partner level. A further one fifth described themselves as managers, team leaders, consultants or associates. The vast majority worked in private sector organisations with over 1000 employees.

PERCEPTION

Without doubt one of the biggest challenges we found was managers’ perception and preconceived ideas on the suitability of job sharing in their business area. Only 28% of our survey respondents felt that managers, in general, viewed job sharing positively and the majority felt that manager attitudes hindered the increased adoption of job sharing.

The ‘fear factor’ for managers was largely about lack of direct experience or concerns around complexity and accountability in a job share arrangement.

“I’ve no direct problems with job sharers themselves, but my experience is that other managers have looked at job sharers negatively. They think nobody will take ultimate responsibility for the job – it will be more hindrance than help, sharers will be unreliable or there will be gaps.”
REALITY

People with direct experience of managing job sharers were likely to be more positive about job sharing than any other group in the survey of non-job sharers (i.e. those working alongside job sharers, people who know about job sharing or who would like to job share). A recurring theme from the manager interviews was the importance of keeping things in perspective and focusing on the benefits, rather than the threats of new ways of working.

“For managers, it’s all about engaging brain before mouth and looking at requests with a cup half full, not half empty and seeing therefore the benefits before the downside.”

98% of people with direct managerial experience thought job sharers could be just as productive as full timers, 86% thought it was possible for a job share partnership to manage people, 84% thought it was possible to job share at senior levels, 67% thought clients were positively impacted by job sharing.

There was a consensus among the managers that people tend to come round to job sharing once they have had an opportunity of some direct experience.

ADDITIONAL OVERHEAD

Managing job sharers brings certain overheads. As well as managing the job share as a unit, supporting and promoting it, potentially in the face of some scepticism, effective job share managers need to recognise the needs of the individuals involved.

The managers we spoke to acknowledged that job sharing could take longer to set up and takes additional overhead to manage. Most felt that this was a worthwhile investment.

“Overall my experience of job sharing was positive. The only disadvantage was occasionally not being able to contact the person you’d been dealing with on something. The only other practical disadvantage was occasionally I had examples where staff or direct reports to the job share were very frustrated if the message was contradictory or confusing or when one half of the job share would be played off against the other by staff.”

ALL ABOUT THE INDIVIDUALS

Without doubt, findings show that the success of the job share comes down to the job sharers themselves. Managers stated that the best job shares are where people take full responsibility for making it work.

“They were very effective at making it happen between them and at managing people in their team. They remained in the post for over five years. It was a very positive experience for me and for the people who worked for them.”
EMPLOYERS: BARRIERS AND ENABLERS

ORGANISATIONS ARE INVESTING IN ONLINE PORTALS AND PRACTICAL TOOLKITS TO SUPPORT, EDUCATE AND RAISE AWARENESS

Our research found that the depth of policies and guidelines varied depending on the nature of the organisation and the industry sector. While the majority of organisations had a policy on job sharing, only 27% of non-job sharer respondents thought that their organisation had a formal written job share policy and only 18% thought that information on job sharing was easy to find.

It is noteworthy that those who had experienced job sharing or managed job sharers first hand, were consistently more positive than other respondents. This may indicate that there is a gap between people’s attitudes when they have only secondary knowledge around job sharing versus the reality for those who have given it a try.

Our research uncovered some pockets of leading practices that included:

- Job sharing is a policy option with a detailed description of what it is and how it can work and is a recommended flexible working option for those considering part-time working
- Information, guidelines and policies are easily accessible on an online portal specifically dedicated to flexible working
- All roles are considered suitable for job sharing, and managers are required to show the business case for why a role cannot be worked on this basis
- There are clear policies and guidelines (and in some cases an independent panel) for assessing job share requests and applications from job share partners

WHERE SENIOR MANAGEMENT IS VISIBLY SUPPORTIVE OF NEW WAYS OF WORKING, INDIVIDUALS AND MANAGERS ARE ENCOURAGED TO CONSIDER THE OPTION

According to survey respondents, the top two barriers to job share requests being made or approved are leadership attitude and organisational culture. These barriers are especially prevalent in business environments with a firmly hierarchical tradition.

“If management style is in the red zone, more directing than collaborative, it can be very difficult and that is more prevalent the further up you go.”

Both job sharers and managers said that where senior management is visibly supportive of new ways of working, this encourages people to consider the option. It is not enough just to say supportive things about job sharing; an expectation needs to be set that other managers would give it a go and that job sharers should be as accountable as anyone else at senior levels.
“My mind-set, passion and commitment to diversity and to flexible working was critical in making the whole thing work. I pushed down accountability to my direct reports and the expectation was that job sharers would be as accountable as anyone else in a senior role.”

Some example practices found to overcome this included:

- Clear promotion and endorsement of the business case from senior leaders
- Vocal and influential leaders to champion as feasible and commercially viable

BREAKING DOWN THE MANAGER PERCEPTION BARRIER - ALLOWING MANAGERS TO WORK THROUGH THE FEASIBILITY OF JOB SHARING FOR EACH ROLE HAS PROVEN TO INCREASE UNDERSTANDING AND BUY-IN

One of the biggest challenges we found to the adoption of job sharing was overcoming manager perception and preconceived ideas on the suitability of job sharing in their business area. Consistency in approach was a big issue, with an overwhelming 65% believing that requests to job share were not considered fairly or consistently by managers.

The majority view was that requests were tolerated but not encouraged as a positive business benefit for the organisation. Two of the managers interviewed were candid about the realities where they worked.

“Some firms like to kid themselves they’ve got policies but it’s not something that we go out there shouting about. It should be so that it’s good for your business, to make your business work better for your customers. Rather than ‘oh god she’s going to ask for a job share’.”

“It would be nice to see more chaps job sharing - it would be nice to see everyone being able to do it. It would be nice if there were total equality but unfortunately life isn’t like that.”

Some example practices found to overcome this included:

- Education sessions on the viability and feasibility of job sharing (raising visibility / bringing it closer to home)
- Practical assessment with managers to explore the feasibility, identify fears and concerns and explore commercially viable working options for their specific business area and roles
- Provide managers and HR with tools to easily assess and set up job share applications
- Encourage managers to test out with a pilot or trial period
ORGANISATIONS MAKING PROGRESS ARE MEASURING AND HOLDING LEADERS ACCOUNTABLE FOR PROGRESS

The research found that the take up of job sharing was dependent on the attitude of the manager and the strength of the HR business support. Organisation-wide practices that encouraged the adoption of job sharing included:

- Measure the appetite, take up and perception of job sharing across the organisation and hold leaders accountable for results
- Evaluate all roles for the feasibility to job share to gain management buy in and accountability
- Managers are required to show the business case for why a role cannot be worked as a job share
- All (suitable) roles advertised internally and externally to state that they ‘will consider applications from job sharers’

ROLE MODELS AND INCREASED VISIBILITY OF CASE STUDIES HELPS TO CLOSE THE GAP BETWEEN PERCEPTION AND REALITY

Many respondents cited the poor visibility of job sharing as an option available to them. A lack of role models or acknowledgement of job sharing as an option was the next most frequently mentioned barrier.

Our findings indicated that when people had direct experience of working with or heard about successful job share partnerships, they were much more likely to be positive about job sharing than those who did not.

The consensus among the managers interviewed was that people tend to come round to job sharing once they have had direct experience.

Publicising examples and getting people to share their experiences of how to make job sharing work in different scenarios can help to address people’s concerns.

“I suspect a company like mine has a diversity manager who will send out a load of packs. But is there genuine change? We could have some champions here – mentors – I’d be willing to talk it through – it’s like teaching – saying these are the benefits – it’s not an exclusive club and you need to be prepared to put the time into making new ways of working work.”

We found a number of practices in place to increase awareness, viability and engagement around job sharing, such as:

- Showcasing job sharing roles models and case studies on information portals and internal communication vehicles
- Widening the discussion about job sharing via forums, newsletters, workshops, mentoring, flexible working ‘panels’
• Engaging senior leaders and champions to endorse job sharing as a viable way of working for the business

“The only way employers are ever going to change is if they get the experience of having job sharers – if they have that positive experience that will change their perception.”

ORGANISATIONS NEED TO MAKE JOB SHARING INFORMATION AVAILABLE

Our research found that men are more likely than women to think there are systems in place to support job sharing and that information is easy to find. This suggests that there is a possible perception gap by gender where men (who are less likely to want to consider job sharing) think it is easier to get access to the right support than women (who are more likely to want to job share).

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<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>All women</th>
<th>All men</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Information about job sharing is easy to find</td>
<td>Agree 26%</td>
<td>A 52%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disagree 74%</td>
<td>D 48%</td>
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<td>2. Requests to job share are considered fairly and consistently by managers</td>
<td>A 42%</td>
<td>A 71%</td>
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<td>3. We have a system for helping match and support job sharers effectively</td>
<td>A 9%</td>
<td>A 19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D 91%</td>
<td>D 81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Our career management system (appraisals, career progression etc) works well for job sharers</td>
<td>A 34%</td>
<td>A 38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D 66%</td>
<td>D 62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. We have a system for helping to match and support job sharers</td>
<td>A 9%</td>
<td>A 19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D 91%</td>
<td>D 81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. We have a formal written job share policy</td>
<td>A 31%</td>
<td>A 56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D 69%</td>
<td>D 44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Job sharing hinders career progression</td>
<td>A 31%</td>
<td>A 56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D 69%</td>
<td>D 44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I prefer a job share arrangement over traditional ‘single occupancy jobs’</td>
<td>A 71%</td>
<td>A 41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D 29%</td>
<td>D 59%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
JOB SHARING CAN HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT ON CLIENTS

67% of managers with direct experience of job sharing in senior roles believe it has a positive impact

Although the majority of survey respondents thought that clients were positively impacted by job sharing, there is still concern about how client work will be affected, as this commentary reveals.

“Our group works in a transaction environment. Whilst I would like to see job sharing as a possibility... I cannot see how a senior manager or director could effectively manage information at a client level in the changing environment of a transaction without losing efficiency and profitability of the engagement.”

However, other respondents thought it was less about clients and more about internal customers – in particular senior leaders:

“The real reason ... is that the [senior leaders] and senior executives like the security of having full time employees around five days a week.”

Our findings show that where people had direct experience they were much more positive - 67% of all managers surveyed agreed that clients are positively impacted by job sharing.

“In professional services firms ‘the client’s expectations’ is often used as an excuse not to explore job share or part time roles. In reality clients are more open minded and receptive to flexible working than the Big Four make them out to be.”

“It might need to be explained carefully to the client that we are doing it for good reasons and that there is going to be no extra cost passed on to them and that there is always going to be someone available for them.”

“It is an easy option to think clients won’t like working with job shares. In my previous role I used to dip in and out of different clients all the time. It’s a harder conversation but this is something our clients are faced with too.”

Feedback in the research suggests that clients can benefit from job shares and that they are more open to it than senior management may imagine, especially where it
can be shown to offer them greater continuity. What matters to clients is that they do not have to repeat themselves, that they receive a seamless service, that they do not suffer delays or incur extra cost as a result of a job shared service.

“The premise is that no one has to repeat themselves - so if they start a conversation with X, I will know about it - in the main that has worked. When we moved business units we had a new client base from September. We made a conscious effort to separately build relationships with individuals. We are constantly called each other’s names. The feedback has been fantastic and they don’t notice there are two people.”

Some example practices to address client impact were:

- Engage clients in the discussion and implementation
- Proactively position the use of job sharing with clients in pitches
- Guarantee clients a professional and seamless service whether a job role is shared or single occupancy

THERE IS A NEED FOR PROCESSES AND TALENT MANAGEMENT

The absence of internal systems to promote or help match job sharers was frequently mentioned. At an organisational level, headcount measures were big blocks to the job share business case, whilst at a recruitment level, examples given included the lack of online job application forms that could accommodate information from two candidates.

Organisations who had overcome these had some of the following in place:

- Measure by FTE not headcount, to eliminate ‘penalty’ for job sharers
- Adapted systems and HR processes to enable job sharing
- Allow for job share in utilisation measures (for professional service firms)
- Have a robust competency and performance framework that accommodates job sharers
- Make allowances on recruitment portals and applications for two sets of details

THERE IS A NEED FOR SOURCING AND MATCHING SYSTEMS

Very few people surveyed (15%) thought their organisation had a system to help match and support job sharers effectively.

We found some leading practice examples in sourcing and matching.

- Internal job share notice board - while the Civil Service enables people to identify other interested job sharers via their dedicated notice board, this is not common. One concern is around ‘anonymity’ – many senior individuals did not want to expose their desire to job share before fully exploring the options
• Have a robust selection and matching framework for job share partners
• Engage specialist suppliers to source and match external job share partners for internal candidates, and external job share applicants for full time roles recruited externally

“We have a job share register on our intranet so people wanting to take up a job share can find partners. The intranet site has guidance on how to go about job sharing, so it was easy for me to access relevant information and fill the application in. My current job share partner contacted me, saying she’d be keen to work with me. We agreed to apply together for the job and she was interviewed at the office while I was interviewed by phone.”

LEADING EMPLOYERS ARE PROVIDING SUPPORT AND TRAINING TO INDIVIDUALS AND MANAGERS

While not common, we did find some excellent examples of organisations providing support for both individuals and managers:

• Provide employees access to confidential expert support to evaluate feasibility of job sharing option and help build business case
• Provide managers and HR with clear guidelines and protocols on managing and assessing job share requests
• Educate managers on how to effectively manage job shares
POSITIONING THE COSTS AND BENEFITS: EMPLOYERS

JOB SHARING WILL COST THE BUSINESS MORE

COSTS

Job sharing will cost more. For managers, overhead costs such as paid overlap time, doubling up of training and the deployment of two people on an assignment were all cost considerations of having job sharers. While these costs were undeniable, the majority of the manager interviewees thought they needed to be kept in perspective as this example from a lawyer illustrates.

“Putting two people like me on a deal is very expensive. Having an overlap is very costly. But there are efficiencies in having two people.”

Additional cost considerations include:

- Handover/communication day (who absorbs this - the business unit, central fund, clients?)
- Per person systems cost
- NI/tax, benefits and other costs where allocated by head
- Desk & computer
- Management overhead & HR effort
- Training and development
- Possible delays

CONTRACTS

Our research showed that there are elements of the employment contract that will need to be adapted along with specific employment factors that will need consideration such as:

- The nature of the contract, duration and hours of work
- Rewards, benefits, holidays and sick leave
- Maternity leave, career break or unexpected long term absence
- Review and assessment, and termination

Best practice examples were templates for job share contracts with an explanation of the elements that needed to be considered.
However, the research identified that there is a clear business case to promote job sharing in senior roles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EMPLOYERS</th>
<th>CONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PROS</strong></td>
<td><strong>CONS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Retaining and progressing talent</td>
<td>• Additional salary and benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Continuity – cover for holiday, sickness and leave</td>
<td>• Systems, desk and computer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Two heads and wider range of skills and experience</td>
<td>• Additional training and development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increased energy and productivity</td>
<td>• Management overhead and possible delays</td>
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<tr>
<td>• No text here? Delete bullet?</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDIVIDUALS</th>
<th>CONS</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PROS</strong></td>
<td><strong>CONS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The ability to work in a big role on a part-time basis</td>
<td>• Flexibility and long hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Job satisfaction and continuity</td>
<td>• Not for everyone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Maintaining and progressing career</td>
<td>• Push harder to overcome perceptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ability to switch off and handover accountability</td>
<td>• Pro-rated salary and benefits</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**BUT THE TALENT RETENTION BUSINESS CASE IS COMPELLING...**

**THE APPETITE FOR JOB SHARING**

The appetite for job sharing amongst senior women was very clear. Our survey found that 61% of women would like the opportunity to job share to enable them to work part-time.

The use of job sharing as a retention tool was also very clear - of the job sharers surveyed, 87% of respondents said that the ability to job share meant the difference between staying with a company or leaving.

“*The benefits to me were being able to do a big job without having to work full time – a lot of part time jobs are not so interesting. For the organisation – it got the benefit of two people in a big job, from two people who they had hung on to who might have gone elsewhere.*”

“I was able to continue in my career and progress as a result of doing job shares because if I’d had to work full time I might have left or looked for something less
demanding or part time. I was clear I didn’t want to do four days as you end up doing a five day a week job in four days.”

We also found examples of job sharing where individuals wanted to cut down their hours as they eased into retirement and the organisation was keen to retain their leadership and experience.

A couple of managers interviewed summed up the views of many when they remarked:

“There may be people (not only women) who prefer to - not have less commitment to the job - but spend less time doing the job. If those people might have gone to another firm where there is less pressure, if you lose those people you are losing an investment and the talent where you might be able to retain them - albeit on a job share basis. It may be a temporary thing. It might just be for a year – whereas they might have felt they had to leave.”

RECRUITMENT - ATTRACTING NEW TALENT

Contrary to common belief, finding an appropriately matched job share partner externally is not difficult. In our survey, 60% of senior women looking for flexible roles were interested in the opportunity to job share.

Findings clearly show that a job share arrangement does not need to have people with exactly the same skill sets and technical experience. In fact it can be more beneficial when there is a hybrid of complementary skills.

For managers, the top benefit to job sharing was being able to attract different people to join the organisation. While this might well be people with specialist skills who also had family care commitments, it could also be about the changing expectations among younger employees:

“From an employer perspective, the pool of talented people we might have picked from ten years ago is arguably much smaller now, so to artificially close that talent pool doesn’t make sense. Generation Y have a totally different outlook on life, not jobs for life but challenging the status quo and wanting a life that is balanced and all those sort of things. Why would one reduce that pool by being more closed?”

FULL TIME - BUSINESS CONTINUITY

For an organisation, job sharing offers clear advantages. In contrast to part time working, with job shares there is always someone there, focused on the job and able to respond when needed.

Job sharers often cover for each other’s absence, due to annual leave, sickness or parental leave. This has the additional benefit to the organisation of maintaining productivity and momentum during traditional slow periods.

ENHANCED PRODUCTIVITY

The findings show that a job share partnership brings enhanced productivity, concentrated energy and focus. It identified:

• an increase of up to 30% productivity can be gained through two people job sharing
• up to 50% annual productivity is lost during the process of losing one employee to recruiting the next

“When I come in on Monday I’m firing, I’m running for my three days. In terms of productivity we are both more focused. So mathematically the increased output is greater.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Costs</th>
<th>Replacement Cost</th>
<th>Job Share</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annual Salary</td>
<td>£100,000*</td>
<td>£120,000 (3 days each) (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment Fee (25%)</td>
<td>£25,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Cost (Year 1)</td>
<td>£125,000</td>
<td>£120,000 (internal match)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Productivity Cost</td>
<td>50% decrease in year (2)</td>
<td>+50% increase in year (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Investment</td>
<td>Less of investment: £25,000 up to £400,000</td>
<td>Retained investment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intangible Costs/Benefits</td>
<td>Less of talent</td>
<td>Retained business relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Loss of business know how</td>
<td>Retained talent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Loss of productivity</td>
<td>Retained business know-how</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cost of on-boarding</td>
<td>On the job training of new recruit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disrupted business relationships</td>
<td>Business continuity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Loss of business continuity</td>
<td>Positive impact on the team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Negative impact on the team</td>
<td>Additional management overhead</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Assumes can pay same salary level

1 Based on two people working three days each
2 Research shows that up to 56% annual productivity is lost during the process of losing one employee to recruiting the next
3 Research shows an increase of up to 30% productivity can be gained through two people job sharing

THE XTRA FACTOR: TWO HEADS ARE BETTER THAN ONE

There are significant benefits for the business in having different styles and perspectives.

“They get more from us than they would from one individual. Breadth of skills and competence.”

“It’s good for the direct reports. If you act as one person. If you have different skill sets and personalities it is helpful and good for them to have two people they can try things out on - two heads are better than one.”

CLIENTS

For male managers who responded to our survey, a big benefit was an improved service to clients. Provided the job share was managed properly 67% of all managers surveyed agreed that clients are positively impacted by job sharing. 94% of job sharers agreed with this too. Several interviewees pointed out that clients and other stakeholders saw job sharing as something very positive.

“People liked it being a little bit different. We demonstrated performance and we achieved financial turnaround - also significant improvement in organisational functioning.”

MORE ENGAGED EMPLOYEES

For the job sharers who responded to our survey, the main benefit was gaining more time to balance the different dimensions of life without giving up a stimulating career.

“I felt a more cohesive part of the team when I was job sharing than I did as a stand-alone part timer. When in the job share I didn’t have a sense of missing so much. It
wasn’t only the formal team meetings - the incidental comments that happen in the week got handed over as a job sharer. You don’t know how much you don’t know.”
RESOURCES AND SUPPORT AVAILABLE

THE JOB SHARE PROJECT:
www.thefjobshareproject.com
Reports available to download:

- The Job Share Project 2011 research report
- Top Tips for Individuals
- Top Tips for Employers

CAPABILITY JANE:
www.capabilityjane.com/jobshare

- Toolkit & Guidelines
- Workshops and Briefings
- Sourcing & Matching Service
- Job Sharer Talent Bank

How to contact us:

- Email: jobsharing@capabilityjane.com
- Telephone: 08456 041 916
- www.capabilityjane.com

WORKING FAMILIES: www.workingfamilies.org.uk

Membership of Working Families supports you in achieving a workplace culture and environment that maximises talent potential and employee engagement, with attendant increasing productivity. In addition to providing you with access to thought leadership in this area and preferential rates at our cutting edge events, membership includes entry into the Top Employers for Working Families Benchmark and Awards, the definitive list of the UK’s best organisations for working families.

This benchmark offers you the opportunity to take a strategic view of the deployment of flexibility and work-life balance measures, and to see where future adjustments might best be made. It is robust and provides actionable, prioritised recommendations based on deep analysis.

For further details, please contact us at membership@workingfamilies.org.uk
APPENDIX 1: JOB SHARING – LITERATURE REVIEW

PAM WALTON WITH DR CAROLINE GATRELL AND DR JENNIFER TOMLINSON

This literature review provides a brief review of the development of job sharing generally, identifies specific types of employment and professions where jobs shares are common and outlines the situation in other countries such as the US, Australia and New Zealand. In addition to an examination of the academic literature, this review includes reports and studies from the more general employment and diversity literature.

BACKGROUND

The notion of ‘job share’ has been part of the flexibility debate for around 30 years. From the 1980s, onwards, job shares have been regarded within the UK as potentially a creative yet effective means of moving forward the equal opportunities agenda (Crampton et al 2005). Yet it appears that the numbers of job shares [in the UK] remains low. In 2005 only 0.6 % of all employees had job share agreements compared with 0.7% in 1995 (TUC 2005). Far fewer employers offer job share as an option than might have been anticipated when the idea was developed in earlier decades.

There are few large scale surveys of job sharing documented, other than that carried out by Meier (1979) in the USA (see later section), but a more recent examination of how job sharing arrangements work in 48 public and private sector organizations in the UK (IRS Employment Trends 1998) found that the use of job sharing can promote equal opportunities, improve staff retention (most notably in the case of maternity leave returners) and enhance flexibility, for example by improving sickness and holiday cover. Although in practice job sharing arrangements were most commonly found to exist in secretarial/clerical and administrative work, higher level occupations were also shared, with 21 organisations saying that they currently employed managers in job shares. A survey in the London Boroughs (New Ways to Work 1997) found that 28 out of 32 boroughs had job sharing policies, compared to two when New Ways to Work opened its doors in 1981. A survey of 106 people working flexibly at senior and managerial levels (New Ways to Work 1993) found that almost half of respondents were working on a job sharing basis.

SPECIFIC TYPES OF EMPLOYMENT AND PROFESSIONS

In the following section of the literature review we explore job shares across different types of employment and professions and in so doing we explore possible reasons for the low take up of job sharing. Analysis and advice regarding how job shares might work in practice across and within different professions has been offered in scholarly and practitioner publications over many years. Such analysis ranges from what legal issues might affect employers (Leighton 1986; Leighton and Rayner 1986); to what the costs and benefits of job sharing might be to employers, (Harries, G, 1997) and how
cultural attitudes may impact on job shares and other forms of flexible working (Lewis 2010).

Complementing these studies, a range of in depth studies have examined how job shares are working in practice in the UK, USA, New Zealand and Australia from the 1980s and to date, (Branine 2004). These extant studies are relatively few and most are focused on public and health sector roles including nurses, teachers, librarians, administrative and university employees (see for example studies by Brocklebank and Whitehouse, 2003; Harries, 1997). With one or two exceptions (e.g. Chapman 1983) studies on private sector job shares are even more limited in number and tend to be located in practitioner oriented journals.

The lack of job shares reported in academic literature could reflect that some are unrecorded and that this is an under-researched area. However, the relative lack of research on job shares suggests that the numbers of job shares overall is small across professions and this is in keeping with figures from the labour force survey quoted above.

Drawing together the limited, but relevant literature which does exist across specific types of employment, it is apparent that different professions share particular issues in common. Arguably, it is in these shared issues that clues may be found regarding the continuing low numbers of job shares [in the UK and more widely].

First, it is important to note how job sharers in post can find this to be a viable and attractive means of balancing family responsibility and career (Branine 2004; Goulding and Kerslake 1996). Kane and Kartha (1992: 5), for example, in their study of job sharing nurses, make the (arguably somewhat optimistic) statement that ‘Job sharing may be the alternative choice which allows working women to cope with the multiple stressors of having it all-career and family without having to sacrifice their sense of well-being.’ (Notably, in the context of the work-life balance agenda, it is apparent that job shares – in keeping with other forms of flexibility – appear often to be targeted at mothers only, Burnett et al 2010). Unsurprisingly therefore, the vast majority of case studies and examples relate to women, and not men.

However, from the limited number of extant studies it is apparent that, while job shares may be on offer from organizations in theory, these have over the years been difficult to access in practice due to lack of co-ordination regarding policy implementation. Van Someren (1992: 1377), observed how although job sharing by doctors was ‘officially encouraged’ within the UK NHS, there were few formal schemes offered, and job sharers bore personal responsibility for finding job share partners.

Similarly, Thornicroft and Stratthdee (1992) report how job shares among senior psychiatrists within the NHS can work well – but only if applicants can obtain an interview, and persuade employers to modify terms and conditions on an individual basis to meet the needs of the job share. A study by Goulding and Kerslake (1996) of flexible working and job shares within libraries also showed how managers implementing the various schemes lacked understanding of how best to make the scheme work for those who sought to access it. More recently Branine (2004) in one of the larger extant studies on job shares reports how, among 32 councils in England and Scotland (where most of the female employees might have liked the option to
work flexibly through job sharing) formal policies for implementation were few and far between.

These findings suggest that job shares are likely to be problematic for individuals to access across a range of professions due to the lack of formal policy regarding how job shares should be implemented (even if organizations supported the idea in principle). By implication, the lack of formal implementation policy was accompanied by a related expectation that applicants might take personal responsibility for making their own arrangements.

**EXPLORATION OF INDIVIDUAL JOB SHARES**

There is little academic literature examining individual job shares in detail, (Thornicroft and Strathdee 1992, Eick, C.J., 2002) but there are a number of studies by independent charitable organisations which document detailed case studies of job shares at senior and managerial levels (New Ways to Work 2001, Working Families 2007).

An article examining the advantages and disadvantages of job sharing (Diversity at Work 2006) profiles senior job sharers, and includes partners in a solicitors firm and job sharing chief executives of a Primary Care Trust. All have found it a creative and sustainable way of working. Because there are so many variables involved in a job share it is hard to be prescriptive as to what makes one successful. But according to the senior sharers interviewed for this article, there are a few pre-requisites. The first, and most obvious, is the ability to collaborate. Job sharers cannot be competitive with one another, as they have to operate as one person.

The eight private sector senior job sharers interviewed in the Working Families research (2007) were all in challenging roles. Developing openness, trust, clarity and communication were seen as key factors in the success of the partnerships, as was the absence of the need to be possessive about work done.

A number of the individual accounts of job shares make reference to the fact that job sharing can be a very different way of working – collaborative and sharing. For example, Eick (2002) likens it “to partners in a marriage”. The fact that partners “shared philosophy, ongoing dialogues, trust and respect for each other and mutual need for help, created their experience of co-mentoring each other.” This study involved a narrative of the induction of two middle school science teachers in the US as partners in a job sharing arrangement.

Two psychiatrists sharing a consultant post describe how they successfully applied together for the post and their experience of making it work (Thornicroft and Strathdee 1992). They conclude that the most difficult part can be getting an interview and also say that: “we find it hard to imagine sharing a post unless there is at least mutual trust and respect” pointing to one of the key success factors mentioned by job sharers in senior and managerial posts interviewed for a set of detailed case studies (Working Families 2007).

Most studies point to the fact that the employer gets “two heads for the price of one”. A job sharing chief executive (Diversity at Work 2006) suggests that the more senior the job “the more important it is that you choose each other so that you share the same core values and goals and have a common vision.”
The advantages to an employer of retaining two highly skilled and experienced individuals, who otherwise might resign, is repeatedly given as one of the main benefits of job sharing. In early 2007 two Ford Motor Company engineers were allowed to share the job of program manager for the redesigned 2011 Explorer crossover. It is the highest-ranking shared job at Ford. The move permitted the employer to retain two top engineers (LaReau 2010).

In addition to the operational problems caused by lack of clarity regarding implementation of job share schemes, the literature leading up to and beyond the year 2000 suggests that, when job shares were first initiated, organizations were keen to promote these under the banner of equality of opportunity.

More recently however, job share opportunities have been linked to more neo-liberal concepts such as the ‘business case’. Organizations considering the implementation of job share arrangements are seeking evidence to demonstrate how job shares will increase productivity (Harries 1997) and lessen sickness levels (Stanworth 1999). As Branine (2004) has observed, neo-liberal attitudes and long hours cultures are damaging to the concept of job sharing, which may be regarded by contemporary employers as economically non-viable.

**EVIDENCE OF JOB SHARING RESEARCH IN INTERNATIONAL CONTEXTS**

As in the UK, there appears to be very little published research on job shares in other English speaking countries around the world. A South African study (Ngambi 2004) examines job sharing as a possible solution to the problem of low levels of employee productivity within South African organisations. Much of the literature found dates back to the 1970s and 1980s when job sharing was being proposed as a new form of work organisation. While literature is sparse, there are published studies directly on job shares and others that are pertinent to job sharing, such as research on how to negotiate reduced hour working within an organisational context. The next sections focuses on Australia, New Zealand and the USA.

**NEW ZEALAND**

A small study in the early 1990s sampling 60 organisations in the public (30) and private (30) sectors in the city of Dunedin, produced a rather positive and optimistic account of the use of job sharing (Hall 1993). Eighteen of the 60 organisations surveyed (telephone survey with HR/personnel manager) stated that they employed job sharers; six of these organisations were private sector and twelve public sector. Interestingly, the survey data found that employers acknowledged many business benefits of employing job sharers including: increased productivity; providing a suitable alternative to monotonous work; provision of additional/continuous/overlapping cover; employing two skill sets; retaining specialist skills and reducing training time and associated costs (Hall 1993: 65).

Job shares were not common throughout organisational hierarchies and across different occupational groups. Indeed two occupational areas accounted for over 90% of the job shares reported in this study. Of all the employees in the 18 organisations holding a job share position, 52% worked in professions such as teacher or doctor and a further 39% worked in clerical and administrative jobs. None were reported as ‘managerial jobs’. Likewise, Meier’s job share research comprising 238 survey
responses from job sharers in the US in the 1970s also highlights the fact that professional workers (26%), clerical and/or administrative workers (40%) were also the most common job share roles. Again, none of the job sharers were reported as managers or having managerial responsibilities, though of course professional workers may have managerial responsibilities as part of their jobs.

Unlike the earlier US study on job shares (Meier 1979), many of the jobs in the New Zealand sample were what Hall refers to as ‘employer led’ job shares in that they were employer initiated, either through potential job sharers being asked to apply for the jobs by the employer or that a job share was offered as such in a job advertisement. 80% of the job shares were termed employer initiated, which is quite a distinctive finding in this study and not one found in other studies where most job shares were employee initiated, according to Hall’s review of the extant literature.

In conclusion Hall claims that employers in the city seemed to take a pragmatic approach to job sharing, using job shares as and when appropriate and commonly due to the business benefits of such arrangements. Additionally her research found that almost half of the employers in her sample were willing to experiment with job sharing and intended to use jobs sharers in the future. Whether this intention was fulfilled is not known.

**AUSTRALIA**

Also during the late 1970s, Benson (1982) conducted a piece of research on attitudes to job sharing among Australia trade unions. In 1979 when the survey took place, very little was known of job sharing arrangements, though at this time there was an emergence of part-time work and drive for greater flexibility in the labour market. Associating job shares with part-time work and hence lower job security, fringe benefits and generally poorer employment conditions, most unions were sceptical of job shares and resistant to working patterns that might undermine the full-time standard employment contract. As such they constituted a threat to labour standards.

Benson also notes that:

“Although job sharing practices have been introduced in a number of countries and in a variety of professions, procedures for the restructuring of jobs via job sharing arrangements remain vague and unstandardised” (1982: 14)

Hence back in the 1970s and 1980s there were no formalised procedures on how to implement a job share or best practice guidelines (this is probably still the case decades later). Of 20 unions surveyed Benson found that only three had developed policies on job shares and on each occasion the policies were drafted in opposition to the concept. Of the other 17 unions with no policy, 14 did not envisage developing a policy in the near future (Benson 1982: 15). Benson claims the lack of interest at the time could be explained by two factors: a genuine lack of interest of union members (typically male memberships during 1970s and early 1980s) and confused understanding of the aims and objectives of job sharing.
A minority of union representatives did however concede that job sharing might be a partial solution to:

1. increasing employment opportunities 4/20
2. creating new opportunities for older workers 6/20
3. problems of full-time work for mothers 6/20
4. creating time for retraining 5/20
5. high labour turnover and absenteeism 2/20
6. falling employee morale
7. improving quality of life 5/20
8. problems associated with casual employment 4/20

Interestingly this survey indicates that unions thought job sharing would be equally useful for women with children as for older workers, indicating that job sharing might not simply be seen as a women’s issue. Union representatives main concerns were that job sharers should receive pro rata employment rights as full-time workers and that job sharing must be voluntary (mainly employee initiated).

**USA**

Olmstead’s (1979) review referred to job sharing as an emergent work style, although known in Europe, it was typically associated with having its origins in the US labour market. It was the US, Olmstead claims, where initial experimentation with this working pattern, by employers and employees (the latter typically female workers with children), emerged. Like other research of the time, the primary candidates were professional workers and clerical/administrative workers and alongside being associated with a rise in female employment, job share was associated with employees wishing to work while make a gradual transition towards retirement (Olmstead 1979; Benson 1979).

Moorman, Smith and Ruggels (1981:11) point to the fact that the main reason for the support of school districts in California for job sharing in the 70s was to “reduce the impact of teacher layoffs and to open jobs for new teachers. The typical arrangement in these instances was the placement of a new teacher with an experienced teacher who was close to retirement”.

Olmstead also states that job shares are more likely to be employee initiated in line with Meier (1979) and in contrast to the later work of Hall (1993).

One of the initial challenges Olmstead notes with job shares is the ability to remunerate efficiently and fairly, one problem area being that of fringe benefits which can account for up to 25% of an employee’s earnings, this being particularly pertinent for workers in liberal economies such as the US. Olmstead notes that there can be
different working arrangements depending upon the type of jobs and tasks that are to be shared between the two workers. For example, a bank teller job could be split by days of the week, one person doing three, another two if a five day week; both doing three days each if a six day week. Engineers might work every day on a morning afternoon shift pattern with an overlap handover hour. Teachers may block teach for half the week with a transition on Wednesday lunchtime. Importantly, a similar theme is emerging: these types of new working patterns are suitable for clerical and administrative staff, some professionals, but job sharing among those occupying management positions is not considered a viable option.

Core concerns about job sharing back in the late 1970s in the US remain today. In particular concerns about growth in the numbers of employees, task responsibility and accountability are seen as central, along with a reluctance to implement changes in work organisation. Corwin et al (2001) note these concerns remain decades later in their study of part-time management.

That said, with increased focus on work-life balance and flexibility, evidence indicates that reduced hour working among managers and professionals is beginning to emerge in US organisations, according to Corwin et al. (2001), though job share is not referred to specifically in their research, the content of this paper is applicable given its focus on reduced hours and management level employees. Corwin et al argued that part-time working arrangements among part-time managers are often negotiated (employee led requests) due to care responsibilities but also due to careerists opting to study for post-graduate qualifications such as MBAs.

Corwin et al. state that ‘making a part-time work arrangement takes time, energy and creativity’ and that it is up to the part-timer to do much of the ‘heavy lifting’ (2001: 121) meaning much of the effort required to make non-standard arrangements work needs to come from the part-time employee. They state that there are significant difficulties and hurdles to making part-time work effective at senior levels but that challenges are not ‘insurmountable’. They identify five strategies that have the potential to make part-time arrangements successful in professional and managerial work. These are to: make work-life priorities and plans clear and transparent to organisations; promote the business benefits of alternative working-time arrangements; establish routines to protect both work and personal time; cultivate champions in senior management to advocate reduced hour arrangements and finally send clear messages within the workplace that working part-time should not lead to marginalisation in the workplace (Corwin et al., 2001: 122).

Whether these strategies are achievable and realistic could be questioned, however. For instance, while UK employees with children have the right to request flexible working, if employers can refuse a request, what happens to those employees who have less accommodating employers, do not have ‘champions’, role models and/or mentors, or cannot put together a convincing business case for a reduction in working hours? As Liff and Ward (2001) and others have identified (Tomlinson and Durbin 2010) many female middle managers cannot identify role models whose work they identify with and who work similar patterns, to them, and therefore securing a champion may prove to be difficult.
Interestingly, job sharing in the USA has also decreased in recent years. Only 13% of employers offered job sharing as an option in 2009, down from a recent high of 20% in 2007, according to the Society for Human Resource Management, based on a survey of 534 companies.

In conclusion, while the notion of job share may have appeared in theory to offer an ideal solution to the issue of work-life balance and part-time working at senior level, the number of job shares implemented in practice remains very few. Furthermore there are signs that, as the recession bites and the economic agenda becomes more pressing, job shares and job sharers are being edged even further towards the margins. Why should this be? And what might be done about it?

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