

Job share model: Islands 'job split'

Case Study



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Kristie Clarke works part-time, remotely out of Murwillumbah. She job shares a Director role within Service Delivery, Service for NSW with David Walsh, who is based in the Sydney CBD.

Their Executive Director, Jody Grima, has been a big supporter of their job share arrangement from the start.

"Kristie submitted her resignation to move up north for her family, but I didn't accept it. Instead, we discussed other options, such as working remotely and working part-time. I could see that her role needed full-time coverage, and I wondered if a job share could work. I asked Kristie if she would consider trying it. David was at a different point in his life, wanting to wind back work in order to travel. By supporting job share, it meant I could access two different perspectives, strong outputs, and a diversity of thought."

"The combination of Kristie and David is superb. Getting a good rhythm and pattern in their job share meant they

needed to work with each other and have flexibility in their structure. We adjusted reporting lines and the accountabilities of the role, to ensure there was both individual and collective ownership."

"As a leader, I have two hard workers for the price of one. Kristie and David are both really engaged in the workplace, and Kristie's regional location adds another lens through her engagement with her community and how she goes above and beyond with it," Jody said.

David says that the experience of leading a team together has been particularly rewarding.

"From the outset we made it really clear to staff that we were a united front. It wasn't that one person was the Director and the other was just helping them. With all of our direct reports we did performance reviews together and 1 on 1s together."

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performed brilliantly and some who underperformed. We had one particular individual with a performance issue, so we provided a consistent approach, met with the person together and in the end, there was a very good outcome. In hindsight, it was actually better - the way we did it because we had that support, we had each other," David said.

Both David and Kristie put their success down to communication and sharing a strong work ethic.

"Key to us working together has been communication. Both of us are really proactive about following things up," Kristie said.

"It's a mutual agreement that you come to early, the way that you'll communicate. Kristie was great with that ability to be available and feed me the right information or leave me information that would guide me. I think those little things can't be underestimated."

"And we have a very similar work ethic. It's about believing that I'm accountable for this job just as much as Kristie is, so I need to make sure I achieve as much as I can in the days that I'm at work. Kristie is exactly the same, and I think this is what has been crucial to us being a success," David said.

"The work ethic is important but also the organisational skills, you're twice as organised and you spend a lot of time doing

Kristie and David's tips on making job share work

- Be accountable, have a sense of shared responsibility.
- Communicate with each other and be organised.
- Set each other up for success. Ensure your partner has all the information they need to walk into a situation and do their best.
- Hold joint meetings with your supervisor to go through the priorities for the unit.
- Be consistent in what you will and won't tolerate and be on the same page in managing performance issues.

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Executive Director, Jody Grima,
Service for NSW

the pre-work to get people lined up for a meeting, even more so for me being remote," said Kristie.

"It's a consultative approach. If you're going to a meeting that your partner normally goes to, it's about getting the lay of the land from your partner and understanding what their position is and what you're advocating for, to make sure you're on the same page."

"It's not just managing the staff below you; it's managing those above you as well. For instance, in our roles we do an enormous amount of consultation with other parts of the business and I found initially that there would be certain key players who wouldn't engage with me, they'd only want to engage with Kristie. That's a real culture change, asking people to relate to a job share pair instead of one person," David said.

"Jody's support was key to our success. Having leadership backing has made it better for us. She was innovative, flexible and pragmatic enough to see that it could work," said Kristie.

Jody has been actively involved in their job share arrangement as it has evolved over time.

"We all saw job share as an experiment and understood from the start that the role would need to evolve from how it had been done before. For example, we initially tried to keep the team whole, so everyone reported to both Kristie and David. But we quickly found that this caused duplication, and for Kristie and David, keeping each other informed was taking up almost as much time as the work itself."

"We played with the model; for example, assigning a lead for select day-to-day initiatives, while the other person

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would step in when the lead was not there. We experimented with what worked and didn't work. There was no fixed approach - just a recognition that the job share would need to adjust to fit its people and team context," Jody said.

"Jody is good at working out the strengths of staff and providing work on that basis. Kristie's strengths are in analysing the setup of service centres, which is not my strength at all. I never felt I was doing stuff that Kristie should have done. We both didn't want that to happen," David said.

"When David originally started we were both doing three days a week, overlapping on Wednesday and Thursday to get across everything. Now, we're still operating as a team like we're job sharing but with specific functions that we are each responsible for."

"More formally, we're doing some staff consultation to move ourselves away into two part-time roles with separate responsibility because the work and responsibilities that have now been allocated are quite separate. David is now looking after some detailed contract management and performance which I don't have to be across. We are developing a regional strategy for the SNSW network and that's a piece of work that I'm leading. I'll invite David to workshops and he'll have visibility of it, but he's not involved in the detail to the degree that I am."

"We may still have some of the overlap between strategy and planning and project delivery, which David will ultimately be leading. We will still have key meetings together, maybe not every week, more like once a month. I think it would be good to have that collaboration, but we will run it as two separate units," Kristie said.

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