

Job share model: Classic 'twin'

Case Study



"I'd like to see job share as just a normal job. Par for the course. It shouldn't have to be something that you defend, shouldn't have to be something that you need to prove the worth of, over and above the worth and capabilities that you bring to any job."

Liz Moore

The early adopter and amplifier

Liz Moore has job shared for 15 years, working in EPA, DPC and Industry and has worked with multiple job share partners. Liz job shared with Jane Mallen-Cooper for 12 years, moving roles together from EPA to DPC, until Jane's retirement. Liz has also managed a job share while she was part of a job share. In 2019 Liz will job share the role of Executive Director, Strategy and Policy in the NSW Department of Industry with a new job share partner Michelle Wood.

Liz's arrangement is a 'classic' or 'twin' model of job, where both partners have joint responsibility for all parts of the role and work as a team to complete their duties. This model of job share is best suited to roles that deal with a degree of complexity and rapid turnover of issues but still require consistent coverage across the content of work and stakeholder or client relationships.

This model requires a high level of trust and communication between partners.

According to data collected as part of the People Matter Employees Survey (PMES) in 2018 approximately 2.2% (or 3,702 government sector employees) of survey respondents indicated they job shared.

What made you want to job share?

Liz: I always saw the value in taking on and sharing a role so that I had access to an interesting role but not the pressure of feeling that I had to compress it into 3 days, which you can't do effectively.

How did you get that first job share started?

Liz: Jane and I put together a proposal, explaining how we would make it work. We were prepared to trial it first so everyone could see that it worked and reassured the department that it would meet their needs as well as ours.

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We had to pitch the case to our boss, get our boss' boss and everyone up the line to approve it and it only got across the line on the basis that we'd see how it went.

What does your job share arrangement look like?

Liz: We each work 3 days with a crossover day on Wednesday, which is the day we have meetings, performance conversations, things that need both of us to be there.

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri
Liz	Liz	Crossover day	Partner	Partner

And how do you make it work?

Liz: We made sure the operating rules were right up front, made sure the boss was happy and made sure the team was comfortable and we made sure the people we dealt with on a day-to-day basis understood what was happening and were comfortable with our processes.

I'm open and honest about the job share, it's on the bottom of my email 'I'm a job share, I'm here on these days, you can talk to my partner on these days'. I've always given people opportunities to raise any issues that they might have.

In the early days with job share you spend a lot of time checking in with people, whether that's internal staff, external stakeholders or up the line, you just have to take the time to do those check-ins. That drops off over time as people get comfortable.

Liz's tips on making job share work

- **Communicate and seek feedback**
Invite a conversation about how the job share works and keep the communication going by seeking regular feedback from your team, manager/s and stakeholders on what is working and any issues.
"Team first. You've got to make sure the team are comfortable and understand the way you work. You absolutely have to give confidence to the boss! That you're both across the issues and you're going to keep across the issues. Your stakeholders need to know that as well."
- **Be flexible and available to your partner**
"We were willing to make ourselves available to each other whenever we needed to. One of the rules for making it work for us was that my partner and I were always able to contact each other if we wanted to, but staff only contacted whomever was in."
- **Trust and a united front**
"Absolutely operate as the one person. You never contradict each other to anyone. Any disagreement or difference of opinion is behind closed doors within the job share. To make that work you've got to have absolute trust in the other person and you need to work at it to get that trust."

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"We always talk about the achievements of the job share rather than the individual. Whenever I've put in a job application I have always been upfront about the fact that I've been in a job share and that means shared achievement and shared responsibility."



Liz and her current job share partner, Michelle Wood.

What's your handover process?

Liz: I do the front part of the week so first thing on a Wednesday we take ourselves off to a room and I'll do the download, my partner will do handover notes last thing on a Friday. I would normally tag in on a Friday night and have a quick look and ask any follow-up questions.

We always ran the job share as total joint responsibility. We didn't divide up projects, we kept across everything. This obviously takes a fair amount of commitment but working in a space where there is an incredibly rapid turnover of issues day-to-day, you really can't afford not to be on top of whatever comes up on the day.

What are the benefits of job share?

Liz: Double brain power to start with so there is incredible benefit there! We would tease out issues together, resolve them and come up with a solution rather than a problem for the next level up, that's an efficiency in itself. The other thing that I didn't expect but I think is incredibly beneficial for the organisation was that working 3 days with 4 days off meant that I was incredibly charged up, and there was total commitment for the three days that I was in the office. Another unexpected benefit was the fresh ideas that you get because you've slightly more time off to have a chance to cogitate a bit, things are percolating when you're not at work. And you never get that thinking time in a workplace.

How do you measure whether the job share is a success?

Liz: You measure success and tackle issues through the discussions around the job share. The job share partners that I've had over the years, we've always had an open door policy so anybody at any time can raise an issue, whether that's your direct report or your manager, if something hasn't worked for you raise it and let us know and we'll fix it for you.

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We ask our teams, what's working? What do we need to fix? How's it gone for you this week? This month? Whatever? We check it at team meetings, at PDPs, one-on-ones, pretty much any meeting point.

What types of concerns or issues did your team raise and how did you deal with these?

In terms of performance reviews it can be intimidating having two people sitting across the table from you. We were upfront in saying our preference was that we both have a discussion with our direct reports about performance, but we adapted and did things differently when any issues were raised. Whatever worked for the team, we had to adapt for that.

And of course questions like 'who's going to sit on that committee for me?' Well whoever's there on the day! We'll be across everything, it doesn't matter what day it is.

How important are leaders in making job share happen?

Liz: In my experience it is incredibly beneficial to have champions at the top who absolutely point to and push on the performance outcomes. From the Secretary's perspective it's 'why not?' rather than 'why?'. Which is a great space to be working to.

When did you talk to your partner about exiting the job share?

Liz: We had a conversation early and agreed that we both wanted to maintain the job share for as long as we possibly could. I was always aware that my partner was going to move out of the sector before I was ready to do that so we always knew there would be a time when exit made sense.

We had the conversation at the point where Jane was ready to think about exiting, so it probably wasn't until about the 10th year of the job share.

What was it like managing a job share partnership whilst being in a job share?

On a crossover day on a Wednesday there would have been four people around so that was great expert brain power downloaded into the one space.

Any final tips?

Go on leave at the same time if you can, it gives other people the opportunity to act up.

Things to consider

- In a job share you may have less time for extra-curricular activities at work.
- The classic job share model requires a high level of trust, communication skills and emotional intelligence.