

Job share model: Twin

Case Study



“ We have twice as many ideas to solve a problem ”

Nallini Rajaretnam and Alison Weaver have shared the role of Director at the Department of Treasury for over three years. During this time, both the nature of their role and their partnership have evolved to meet business and personal needs.

Alison and Nallini have a ‘twin model’ of job share where they share responsibility for all work and have one overlapping workday.

Pioneering job share at Treasury

Nallini first job shared at another agency to accommodate to meet another colleague’s flexibility needs. Job share was an established arrangement at this agency.

When she moved to Treasury, however, Nallini found that job share was not well

understood and there was some initial wariness about the arrangement. Her advocacy, combined with the Premier’s public commitment to flexible working, supported the agency to explore the option, and her Executive Director identified Alison as a potential job share partner. Nallini notes that it helps to “demonstrate why job share will make sense for the business, and not just for yourself”.

While new to job share herself, Alison was willing to try it out, having worked with others who had job share partnerships. Alison and Nallini became the first job share partnership at Treasury. They have found most people—internal and external—very supportive of their arrangement. Their managers in particular appreciate the 100% coverage in the role it brings.

From pioneers, they now advise other colleagues wanting to know how to make

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job share work. Alison believes there is a great opportunity for agencies to raise awareness about the benefits that a job share partnership can provide, and encourage their managers to see job share as a solution to attracting and retaining talented colleagues.

Adapting to changing life and role circumstances

Alison and Nallini's role has changed in response to changes in their own lives, as well as the needs of Treasury, showing there is no 'one size fits all' approach. Most recently, their role at Treasury has evolved, and they are currently reassessing the way that they allocate and share work between them.

Periods of parental leave have also required adjustments and flexibility to change as the needs of the job share partners changed. As Nallini says, "you have to be adaptive".

An opportunity to test the waters

During Alison's most recent period of maternity leave, she and Nallini opted to use it as a vertical share opportunity for people in their team to assume higher duties. By partnering with someone more experienced, two junior colleagues were able act in a Director role in a supported environment. The opportunity provided those individuals with a practical insight into the role of a Director and associated

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri
Alison	Alison	Nallini	Nallini	Nallini and Alison

development requirements. In this way, the job share became a 'safe space' for people to experience and experiment with career growth in a way that also worked for the business.

During this time, Nallini would assume primary responsibility for more difficult or public-facing decision making, although she notes it is important to have a discussion with your job share partner prior to making these arrangements. Day to day with Alison, they clearly articulate their equal experience, although over time they play to each other's strengths, depending on the work at hand.

Finding strengths in your differences

Alison and Nallini recommend taking the time to really understand the other person's work style and identify where you are aligned and where you are not. For the latter, understanding each other's differences are important. Alison and Nallini believe they bring complementary experiences to the table that are not possible with only one person in the role - Alison having worked for many years at Treasury and Nallini having worked across a number of different agencies. This gives them twice as many ideas to solve a problem, as well as expanding the skills they have to look at future problems.

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Handling handover

Handover day for Alison and Nallini is a Friday. They use technology to assist them, maintaining a shared document that outlines the work done, decisions made and any outstanding issues needing to be addressed. Each of them updates this the day before their hand over so that the other can read it and be ready to go when they start the next day, and they copy each other on relevant emails. Nallini also recommends the use of MS Teams and OneView as a means to keep track of work done and decisions made for some types of work.

Both warn against checking your phone on your days off. Having a separate work phone makes this easier, but either way, it requires discipline. They acknowledge it is not just important for your own wellbeing, but also because it prevents stakeholders only going to one person for a matter, when they can go to whoever is in on the day.

Alison and Nallini note, like many other job sharers, that HR and IT systems have yet to catch up with the modern workplace, and this can cause inefficiencies. For example, approvals and notifications will sometimes only go to one job sharer, which can be frustrating for a team member if that coincides with the approver's non-work day. Workarounds help, but do not solve the underlying problem.

They also acknowledge that handover documents can't always capture the nuances of some matters, so they set aside time when these issues need discussing during their handover day. They maintain a fortnightly catchup together with their boss, supplemented by an additional catchup meeting individually each fortnight. Performance planning and reviews for their team are also done together, although regular catchups with team members tend to take place individually.

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Alison and Nallini’s top job share tips

- No partnership succeeds without mutual trust. You need to trust that your partner will take care of your shared work responsibilities, and that they have each other’s best interests at heart.
- Have the difficult conversations right at the beginning. By the time Nallini and Alison were introduced to each other their job share arrangements had largely been settled, so they consider themselves fortunate that it worked out for them. They recommend instead investing the time upfront in really knowing and understanding each other. The Public Service Commission has created an online job share planning tool that helps with this; new job share partners can develop a simple one-page document to plan their arrangement and share it with colleagues and key stakeholders.