



Civil Service guide to job-sharing

Practical advice for job-sharers, their managers and their teams

Introduction

When job-sharing works well, it works very well, and brings lots of advantages, both for individuals and for their departments. Job-sharers can get the balance they want between work and the rest of their lives, and still take on a job with the full range of responsibilities. For the Civil Service, job-sharing (among the range of flexible working options) allows us to hold on to, and make the most of, staff skills and experiences. For managers and teams, job-sharing brings the advantage of two sets of skills, experience and ideas to any one post.

At the same time, if you're thinking about job-sharing, or, as a manager, taking on job-sharers in your team, you need to be aware of the potential challenges and manage them proactively. The key to successful job-sharing is good and clear communication structures, both with one another and with all colleagues and stakeholders.

Having two sets of skills and ideas is a real strength of job-sharing; but job-sharers need to work hard behind the scenes to give their colleagues a clear and consistent approach. Every job-share partnership is different, and depending on the work you do, your particular working styles, and the needs of your colleagues, you'll need to decide your way of making it work. The suggestions in this report are designed to help you do that.

Many employees working in the Civil Service have made a success of job-sharing. This guide was developed from research within Home Office and the experiences of job-sharers across the Civil Service. Their experience, both of how to make it work and of the challenges, forms the basis of this guide. The quotes used here are all from people who currently job-share or have job-shared, at all levels from SCS to personal secretaries. For more formal guidance (including on your legal rights as a part-time worker/job-sharer) see departmental guidance or look on the ACAS website.

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1. Is job-sharing right for you?

Many employees, both men and women, have job-shared in the Civil Service at various grades. There is no typical job-sharer. But the key things to think about if you're considering it are:

- Job-sharing offers access to a much wider range of jobs than simply working part-time, especially jobs with greater management responsibility. For some people, it gives more job satisfaction than part-time working in a five-days-a-week working world. Is this what you're looking for?
- Job-sharing, when it works well, can be incredibly creative and supportive – one person described it as “like a long-distance marriage”. It's a relationship you have to work at, but it can give a foundation of confidence and support. Would you appreciate this kind of collaborative, supportive relationship at work?
- When you job-share you have to give up a certain degree of control over the work, be prepared to discuss decisions and sometimes to compromise, and to share the credit for successes and failures. You may not get individual credit for your work. Would you be happy with this?
- Job-sharers say that job-sharing has helped their careers by allowing them to do a much wider range of jobs than would be possible as part-timers; but that it can also be difficult in career development terms – for example when one of you wants to move to a different post and the other doesn't. Could you let some of your career choices be impacted or a subject for negotiation with your job-share partner?

If you can answer yes to these questions, job-sharing might well be just what you're looking for!

“After the birth of my first child I wanted to return to work part time, but not in a part-time job as my impression is that one has to squeeze five days work into three. Job-sharing seemed a better option.”

“Job-sharing has made me more reflective about how I work and how I communicate. It's also made me much more disciplined. It's like a kind of mentoring on the job.”

One way to find out more is to talk to existing job-sharers;

“When starting out on a first job-share, my partner and I found it invaluable to seek out a couple of more experienced partnerships both inside and outside the Department, to talk about what worked for them and what they had done differently over the years.”

case study: Sarah Maclean and Tessa Griffiths



Department for Education

Sarah Maclean and Tessa Griffiths work in the Qualifications Systems and Reform Division in the Department for Education (DfE). They both work three days a week with an overlap on Wednesdays.

“Tessa and I have been job-sharing for over four years here at the Department for Education. We have worked on a number of policy areas covering the National Curriculum, Vocational education to GCSEs and A levels more recently. We both have young children but both wanted a ‘proper’ job whereas many of the part time opportunities seemed less stretching. Job sharing has enabled us to do roles we would not have been able to do part time.

Job-sharing has brought other benefits too: no one will ever be as interested in hearing you talk about your job as it is theirs too! Having someone at work on the days you are not there removes concerns about having to catch up on your return or leaving your team in the lurch.

We have applied for one promotion to Grade 6 as a job-share and were successful. We prepared together for separate interviews and were very relieved when we both were considered suitable for promotion.

We run the DfE job-sharing network which provides advice and support to those who are currently or thinking about job-sharing. We would recommend it as a positive way to flexible working enabling a really good work life balance and the opportunity to do a high profile job at the same time.”

2. Finding a job-share partner

There are lots of ways to find a job-share partner. Sometimes posts are advertised as a part-time/job-share or with the option of part-time/job-share; some people job-share with a colleague they already know; some line-managers may recommend trying job-sharing. Some departments have a job-share register which may help staff find a job-share partner. You may also be able to get advice from your departmental HR team or staff network group.

There are many advantages to job-sharing with someone you already know – it’s likely to smooth the start of a job-share partnership if you know you get on well already. However, lots of people matched up in other ways have formed excellent relationships with their job-share partner.

The most important thing is to be really clear from the start about both your hopes and expectations, the kind of work you enjoy, your ways of working, particular skills and previous experience, and how you would plan to manage and communicate about the work (see more on this later on). Be as honest as you can be about what kinds of work you enjoy and what you’re looking for.

Before you commit to job-sharing, make sure this really is someone you can work with – trust your instincts, and don't be embarrassed to say no if you don't think you can work together.

People who've been line managed by job-sharers say it's very important that people job-share with someone complementary:

“As important as finding job-sharers whose working hours complement each other is finding people whose competencies and personalities complement each other.” (from someone line managed by job-sharers).

At the same time, people managed by job-sharers also find it really helpful to have someone in every day of the week – so, if the job requires it, you may need to find someone who can make their days in the office match up with yours to cover Monday-Friday.

case study: Emma Cole and James Burt



Emma Cole and James Burt work in the Office for Renewable Energy Deployment (ORED) in the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC). Emma works 3½ days a week, compressed into three days, and James works three days a week equivalent, compressed into 2½ days, including half a day a week working from home. They overlap in the office on Tuesdays and Thursdays and neither of them usually works on Wednesdays (though Emma sometimes swaps her days if there is something important on).

Emma joined DECC, having previously worked in the Home Office and Cabinet Office, on return from maternity leave in 2009: “I had applied on promotion for a full-time Grade 7 post in DECC but on a part-time basis; I was successful and the recruiting manager then recruited a job-share partner for me. My first job-share partner, Alex, started some months after I did. When she decided to take a career break following maternity leave, I started job sharing with James, who was recruited in the usual way. He was already working part time but was looking to change roles within DECC.

“We job-shared successfully for about 14 months and the key we found to making it work was to make clear to others, inside and outside the department, which work areas we shared responsibility for and which we had decided that only one of us would cover. Our working pattern, particularly overlapping in the office on two days a week, meant our handover could be more informal. It also allowed us to meet external stakeholders together and to both attend team meetings.

A recent restructuring exercise in ORED means we’re now working on different projects within a project team. Although our current projects don’t need a job-sharing arrangement, future ones might and job-sharing again in the future is something that we would both do happily; both of us find it more satisfying and more productive than simply working part-time. More importantly, job-sharing enabled us to balance family responsibilities with a challenging and interesting job in a high-profile policy area.”

3. Finding a job

If you’re already in a post, or coming back from a career break or maternity leave to your previous job, and want to work part-time hours and/or job-share, you need to have informed your line manager in advance of your plans. If your line manager thinks that the job would lend itself to a job-share arrangement they can then discuss with HR how best to fill the other part of the post.

If you've already identified someone you want to job-share with, talk about this with your line manager who may then seek further advice from HR on how to fill the post.

If you've found someone you want to job-share with and you want to apply together for a new post, you should check the process for the department you're applying for. You may both need to fill in separate application forms, making it clear on both your forms that you are applying as job-sharers. It is likely you'll be interviewed separately.

Be prepared to tell potential line managers about how your job-share works, or how you envisage it working – including outlining how you can play to each other's strengths and previous experience. Many managers haven't worked with job-sharers before and will have lots of questions.

One of the difficulties for established job-share partnerships is that in going for new jobs, and particularly jobs on promotion, managers can choose to accept just one of the job-share partners, thus breaking up the partnership. Whilst this is possible, it seems to happen fairly rarely. More often people have been able, when they wanted to, to move on to new posts together (see also section 10: your career development).

4. What kind of jobs are suitable for job-sharing?

Any kind of job can be suitable for job-sharing. All posts should now be advertised as open to job-sharers and part-timers, unless there's a good reason why not. If a manager of a post you're applying for is uncertain about whether a job-share could work, encourage them to read this advice.

People are already job-sharing all kinds of roles across the Civil Service – from Director General level to G7 team leaders, HEO/SEO policy work, press officers, EO caseworkers and personal secretaries– and all of these are working well.

“All kinds of jobs are suitable for job-sharing – people need to be a bit more creative and think laterally about the possibilities”

“In my experience job-sharing can work well with most kinds of work if the relationship is good and communication is excellent.”

“Where it can be difficult, but not impossible, is if you need to do a lot of ministerial briefing (usually at the beginning or end of a day), see legislation through the House (potentially lots of late nights) or travel overseas (need to plan this well in advance to get childcare sorted out). This would be true for anyone full-time or part-time who has outside work commitments.”

5. Dividing up the work – job-sharing, or job-splitting?

So you've got the job, and hopefully a clear job-description for one full-time post. What's the best way to share out the work? Again, there are lots of different ways of doing this. You need to think about what kind of work it is; what your colleagues need from you; and what your personal preferences are. For many people a balance of job-sharing and job-splitting seems to work best. In managerial roles some element of job-sharing – if not the whole job– is essential.

Different people have different experience and views as to what works best for them:

“I think it works best when it is possible to divide tasks between job-sharers rather than share work on the same tasks. This approach avoids clients having to deal with a different person on the same issue.”

“We strongly believed it was better for us both to cover all the work rather than to split it by function. This provided a better service for our interlocutors because there was none of the “so and so deals with that and is only in on Thursdays” business which can give job-sharers and part-timers a bad name.”

In practice, many people have worked out a balance of job-sharing and job-splitting that works for them and that particular post. Often people cover for one another even on the tasks that are officially ‘split’ – for example if an important meeting comes up on the day that they are in:

“I think the ideal post involves a mix of on-going work with short deadlines, which can be shared, and longer term work with longer deadlines, which can be split. Too much of the former and you are both struggling to stay on top of everything and having to duplicate a lot; too much of the latter and you don’t get any of the benefits of job-sharing.”

“Keep at least one project each ‘split’ for your individual contribution – this helps your line manager with your report at the end of the year”

The key thing is that you’re completely clear – with each other, and with your colleagues – about what’s shared and what’s split. What things can colleagues come to either of you about? What things will they need to wait until your job-share partner is able to give a view? Making this clear to everyone, and choosing the right elements in your job to split/share, will make the balance work well for everyone.

case study: Tom Powell and Kathryn Alford



Tom Powell (TP) and Kathryn Alford (KA) work in the Department of Energy and Climate Change having successfully applied for a Grade 6 opportunity as a job share partnership from the Ministry of Defence (MOD). They kindly agreed to share their experiences of job-sharing below;

How did you find each other?

TP – Our job-share partnership started in the MOD. We knew each other previously in our working life. I was already working part-time and looking for a new challenge; Kathryn was coming back from maternity leave and looking for a new B2 (Grade 7) position.

KA - I had job-shared with someone else before I went on maternity leave, but when I left my job-share partner had returned to working full-time. Tom and I found a full time post we liked the look of and talked to the recruiting line manager about a job-share before applying.

How did your new team react to the job-share?

KA - Although this was a new role, there was quite a big team to manage whose previous line manager had been there a long time and was very well thought of.

TP - We made sure we sat down with all the team members individually and consulted with them about how it would work in practice. We took onboard their suggestions and thoughts and kept arrangements under review so the arrangements evolved to support the team.

KA - We also asked for feedback regularly just to make sure it was working. The team were pretty open and honest and that helped us manage the job share (and most feedback was very positive!).

How do you work out who is doing what in your role?

TP - We divide the job up so we don't overlap on every task. It is only on the really urgent or important aspects that we have to know in detail what the other person is doing - so you can respond in an emergency. We each have our own set of objectives and our own e-mail addresses.

KA - We divide the line manager duties too, but discuss tasking fortnightly because, for example, someone I'm line managing may do a task for Tom and we need to make sure they are not being pulled in two directions.

TP - So there is a bit of matrix management. Our team will do some tasks for both of us but will do the majority of their work for one of us. That is how we decide who their formal line manager is.

What are the advantages to job-sharing?

KA - Tom and I have got quite different skill sets and strengths and so our managers get a more rounded output than if they had just one of us. It really works because we can have a healthy debate about the issues and can peer review and build on each other's work and thinking.

TP - It also makes you think much harder about what work is really important and gives you a better perspective on your job. It gives you time to think, as you're not 'fire-fighting' five days a week.

KA - For example, I can leave on a Friday thinking over an issue and then by Wednesday when I come back into the office I've got a solution in my head even though I haven't spent active time thinking about it. I also think job-sharing makes me very good at planning because if you work five days a week you can get into a mindset where you always think you've got next week. I'm only in three days a week in the office, which means a deadline in two weeks is in fact only about five days for me. You have really got to be disciplined about how to get the task done by the deadline without dumping the team in it.

TP - Another advantage is that we overlap on a Wednesday so on that day the business gets two people. There are also fewer long gaps during holidays as we often go at different times too.

6. "Two minds are better than one" – making the most of being two

A key advantage of job-sharing, cited by job-sharers, their managers, and their teams, is "two minds are better than one". Where the work is shared, rather than split, job-sharers bring two sets of ideas, expertise and skills and can therefore make more considered and objective decisions. Many job-sharers feel this is the biggest benefit of their partnership. It works best if the job-share partners can share their ideas 'off-line' and present staff and colleagues with one, agreed, viewpoint.

However, two sets of opinions aren't always an advantage – particularly if staff you manage feel that they're getting conflicting opinions, have to get two sets of clearance for work, or have to wait for both job-share partners to have a chance to comment. So how can you get the benefits of being two without the disadvantages?

- Be clear at what stages in a project or piece of work it's helpful to have two different perspectives/sets of comments – and at what stage (probably nearer completion) colleagues need 'one' view or sign-off.
- If you can, agree at the start who will make the ultimate decision on an issue or a piece of work. If it's your job-share partner who'll sign it off add in your perspective at an early stage, and trust your partner to make the decision/give the right steer when you're not in the office.
- Back up and don't query or change decisions made when you're not there – even if you have another perspective.
- If you do these things, you'll prevent delays and confusion for your staff!
- You can also make the most of your differences by playing to one another's strengths or previous experience. Doing something like the Myers-Briggs Type

Indicator (MBTI) together can help you be clearer about where both your strengths lie. These exercises can also tell you areas which might be a weakness for both of you – then you can think about how best to draw in other colleagues to cover this particular skill.

- Talk to your manager or HR team or look on Civil Service Learning to see what development offerings are in place to help you to work better with your job-share partner.

case study: Beverley Adams and Tracy Armstrong



Beverley Adams and Tracy Armstrong are part of the HR Flexible Specialist Team at the Ministry of Justice (MOJ). They first started job-sharing in 2001 when the Court Manager at Newcastle Upon Tyne Combined Court decided to put the two together, working 3 days each at opposite ends of the week. Although they didn't choose each other their job-share arrangement has proved to be really successful and they have been able to jointly gain two promotions and stay together as a job-share for over 11 years.

“We had no previous experience of job-sharing but we took to it really well. We are both very different people and have different views from each other but we have learned to compromise and recognise when one of us feels strongly about something. As our job-share relationship developed we could recognise each others' strengths and weaknesses and understand each others' working styles. We have benefitted from job-sharing by being able to progress our careers while still achieving a good work life balance. The MOJ has gained both sets of skills, expertise and experience in one role.

We share all of our work, although on occasions one of us may be more involved in a particular piece of work than the other. It is very important to both of us that we take joint credit for everything we do; although we appreciate that this won't work for everyone, it works for us. We also understand that it is unrealistic to check every decision with each other, we work on the basis that whoever is working on that day will make the decision and the other accepts that. We don't always agree on everything, but one of the most important things when you job-share is to always present a “united front” if you want others to take you seriously.

We share an email account which makes communication easier for ourselves and others and we find having an overlap day is helpful to discuss work face to face. As we work remotely from the rest of our team, it is nice to have the support of your job-share partner and someone to bounce ideas off.”

7. Communication – the key to success

All job-sharers cite one key thing as the key to the success of their job-share partnership – good communication. Getting this right will be the key to making your job-share work. Top tips from existing job-sharers about communicating well with each other include:

- Many job-sharers see overlap time in the office as essential. This is particularly important where you're job-sharing more than job-splitting, and in management jobs, so that you can discuss issues with staff together, face to face.
- Copy each other into all your email and written communication, and ask everyone to copy you both into everything. Having access to each others' email in-box and calendar is a must! Some job-sharers have found that operating a shared inbox is very helpful and you may want to discuss whether this is a possibility with your local IT team or talk with job-sharers in your department to see what mechanisms they have put in place.

“Talking to experienced job-sharers was particularly helpful in enabling us to navigate more quickly some of the tedious, but important, aspects of making the job-share work - particularly obtaining a joint email account and how to operate this successfully. We were also advised to review how the job-share was working with our team on a regular basis”.

- Having a regular and systematic time or system for handover is essential. Some people handover at a regular Wednesday morning meeting, half way through the week. For others it's a handover email or note at the end of their working week. Other people call one another at home at a set time each week.
- Whatever it is you do, do it consistently, and let other people know that this is how you'll be handing over the work and the time at which you'll make any joint decisions. An advantage of written handover notes/ emails is that they can be shared with managers and other colleagues, thus helping communication in the team as a whole:

“We have a regular meeting on Wednesday mornings to discuss issues that have arisen in my absence, and I keep an ongoing update email to send to my job-sharer before I leave on Friday.”

- As well as having formal handover and decision-making systems, many people find it really helpful to have informal time together – lunch at work, or time together outside the office. It's also important once in a while to set time aside to talk about how the job-share relationship itself is going, not just talking about the work itself.

“Because we live near each other, we meet up in the evening every so often, and we talk on the phone outside work. It feels to me more like a working relationship within a friendship. I'm sure this helps us when things get stressful in the office!”

- In any job-share relationship there are bound to be times when you disagree over something. But these disagreements aren't necessarily bad! Remember, you can learn a lot from the different skills, perspective or approach of your job-share partner.

“We look at differences of opinion as an opportunity to get to the right answer – it lies somewhere between our two views.”

Having a good relationship – including the informal aspects mentioned above – helps to keep any differences of approach in perspective. When disagreements do occur, remember to keep talking, and to sort any differences out 'off-line'. Staff managed by job-sharers say that the hardest thing for them is when disagreements between the job-share partners become apparent.

“Talk to each other all the time. Accept that sometimes your partner will not do something exactly as you would have done it and be willing to give up total control, because the benefits far outweigh the disadvantages. Take the opportunity to learn from your partner, and enjoy the support. Never, ever, criticise your partner to staff or colleagues.”

Case study: Isobel Stephen and Jacinda Humphry



Isobel and Jacinda have been job sharing on and off since 2008 in a few different roles and currently share the Department and Business Strategy Director role in DWP.

“For us it is a successful way of working, but there are some golden rules;

- whilst you don't need to know your job-share partner before you begin job-sharing, you need to have a good vibe about them. If you like, trust and respect them, and your values are aligned, then things will be much easier. It's a positive advantage to choose someone who is different from you;
- don't make any big decision without talking to your partner unless you are absolutely sure you can second guess them;
- but once a decision is made, stick with it as though you'd made it yourself
- don't try to be identical (that's impossible and not even desirable) but do be consistent;
- pay real attention to making your handovers work – harder to do the Friday/ Monday one because it impinges on the weekend therefore focus on the Wednesday one;
- communicate, communicate, communicate - we speak nearly every day, sometimes several times - but non-work time is more interruptible when you know it's just going to be a quick chat;
- don't worry about leaving your partner a “to do” list;
- be clear with the team and others around you on how the job-share will work. Will help it to work and provide reassurance to the team particularly if job-sharing is new to people.”

8. Communicating with colleagues and stakeholders

As well as communicating with each other, good communication with colleagues and staff you line manage is essential to the success of job-sharing. The key to giving that consistent message is the communication between the two of you – as covered above – but here are some practical ‘top tips’ for communicating effectively with everyone else:

- Ask everyone to copy you both into everything they send you or use a joint inbox. You may need to remind colleagues to do this many times!
- Many people include their job-share partner's contact details on their out-of-office replies; and some have a joint email ‘signature’ on all outgoing emails. Some people have a shared business card with both sets of details on it.

- Some job-sharers put up all their work (e.g. submissions) in both names no matter who wrote it, to make clear their shared responsibility for the work. Going jointly to some external meetings with stakeholders – particularly at the start of a project – can help to fix the idea of you as a job-share in other people’s minds.
- So that you don’t overwhelm your colleagues with the same information, or slightly different replies to emails, be clear who’s doing what, and who’s going to reply to which incoming emails. This can be a problem if one of you is working at home and the other in the office. Call your job-share partner to check that you’re not duplicating an email they’re already planning to send out. Again, feeding in your view and trusting your partner to reply to something for both of you works best for everyone else, rather than two replies.
- Some people managed by job-sharers say that being able to call managers on their days at home is sometimes really important to keeping things working well. If you can and if you’re happy to, agree with staff under what circumstances they can call you, and provide them with an out of the office contact number.

9. Managing staff and leadership issues

Managing staff is one of the most sensitive and complex areas of responsibility for job-sharers. Having line managers who job-share can have real advantages for staff – including access to your wider range of skills and expertise, more objective decision making, and a manager who is ‘fresh’ for work right through the week. This section is split into four different issues or areas that you need to think about together:

- Sharing formal line management responsibilities
- Practical things you can do to make it work
- Informal aspects of line management
- Leadership

Sharing formal line management responsibilities

Most job-sharers split the formal line management responsibilities for their staff, with staff having one person as their formal line manager (for HR systems roles, flexi, leave etc), even if both partners work closely with that staff member on a day to day basis. Although one person is formally the line manager, and writes the final report, generally both job-sharers will contribute to the report. Staff have said they liked the added objectivity in their annual report reflecting the views of more than just one person.

In some job-share partnerships, the line management is entirely shared, with bilaterals alternating between the two managers, and a note of each meeting sent to the other partner. This approach can have the advantage of making sure that you both have strong relationships with everyone in your team.

Practical things you can do to make it work

Business planning, and use of the corporate filing systems to hold shared work and project plans etc can be particularly important for teams managed by job-sharers.

Hold team or unit meetings on days you are both in if you have a day in the office which overlaps, and if chairing share it between you. Team meetings can be very important for ensuring that staff get a clear and consistent message, and so you can be sure that everyone has the same information.

Your staff need to know who to go to on which piece of work; at what stage you want them to seek your input; and who will give them final sign-off. Agree the line you want to take, timescales, and your expectations about quality etc, before work is delegated, so that staff have a clear and consistent line on the work they're doing.

When new team members start, make sure they start on the day their line manager is going to be in (if you're splitting line management responsibilities). Don't assume that any of your working arrangements are clear, or will work in the same way, for the new team members. Be prepared to start from scratch with explaining how you work together, and making reasonable adjustments if necessary for your new team members.

Informal aspects of line management

However you share, or split, the formal line management responsibilities, it's important that you share the informal aspects of line management, so that you both build a relationship with all your staff. Given time available in the office, building relationships with everyone can be a challenge - so you'll have to make it a priority.

"I feel that the level of bonding that can be developed with a full-time manager was reduced when compared to job-share managers." (from someone managed by job-sharers)

Colleagues want to see a shared and consistent line, but have also commented that when this happens, it can feel that job-sharers have an 'exclusive' relationship, or that their common line or approach is overwhelming to other individual viewpoints. It's a difficult balance to get right, and you'll need to find a balance that works for the two of you, and for your team.

Encourage honest discussion about the impact of your job-share on colleagues, and how you can minimise any negative impact on them. Build their views and what they need into the way the job-share works, and make it clear to staff how you're adjusting what you do to meet their needs.

Leadership

Having each other to talk things through with and agree an approach can give you greater confidence in your decisions and the courage to see difficult or innovative things through – a key leadership characteristic. But beware of becoming too self-sufficient between the two of you – you still need to be open to hearing a wider range of views beyond your shared perspective.

Encourage your team to recognise the benefits of job-sharing as a team-working model which can be at the heart of the culture of the whole team. At the same time, be clear when you do need to agree a line that's not up for discussion, and/or when your team is looking to you (both) for a clear lead.

Some staff managed by job-sharers have said that with two leaders the 'vision' isn't always clear, and that when this is the case, the work can lack momentum. Take time together away from your desk to develop your shared vision for your team or unit. Involve your line manager if you can, especially when you see things differently. Plan how you will communicate this (shared) vision clearly to your staff.

You're two different people, so it's inevitable that your staff will have different relationships with each of you. This doesn't need to be a problem per se – but make sure you avoid any attempts from your team to 'divide and rule' you, or play one off against the other.

“The main difficulty has been when staff ask my job-share for something, and when the answer is not what they want then the staff member approaches me, in the hopes that the answer will be different.”

10. Your career development

As mentioned at the start, many job-sharers feel that job-sharing helps their careers, by giving them access to wider range of posts and more management responsibility than they could do as a part-timer on their own. Some job-sharers cite problems with accessing training – however this is usually more because of working part-time rather than job-sharing .

The downsides are that, if the partnership works and you want it to continue, you'll need to find new posts that both of you want to do and can get which can cause problems. Some people have had the experience of the partnership breaking up when one partner gets promoted and the other not; or when one person gets accepted for a new post and their partner not. Other people have had a more positive experience of being able to move on to new posts, including on promotion, together. Sometimes job-share partnerships come to a natural end because one partner leaves the department or wants to go back to full-time working.

So what should you do if your partner leaves or moves on to another post without you? If you want to stay in your current post, you will need to discuss this with your line manager who may need to seek advice from HR about how best to fill the other half of your job.

Remember it's not always a bad thing if your job-share partnership has to end. You can find someone new to job-share with, and that relationship will bring its own

case study: Wendy J Barnes

strengths and new insights.



Wendy is the Chief Operating Office at the Department for Energy and Climate Change. She describes her experiences of working with a job-share partnership below;

“When I was working at a Director in a large private sector industry, I had two job-share Personal Assistants. The way it worked was that Jo worked Monday to Wednesday lunchtime and Kath worked Wednesday lunchtime to Friday. They had an hour overlap on a Tuesday which I attended if they needed me to. They covered full time for each other’s holidays unless there was an unavoidable clash.

It was a great arrangement I would certainly repeat in the Civil Service. The experience taught me some lessons about making job-share work;

- (1) The two people doing the job-share are not the same person; they have different strengths and it’s important to work with these strengths. For example Kath was extremely meticulous and thorough, whereas Jo was great at getting through huge amounts of work but ran the risk of small errors. Jo was great with PowerPoint and technology, and Kath preferred doing work around relationships and making calls. Although there was a core of activities that both Kath and Jo covered, I didn’t expect them both to cover all the additional work but we allocated this according to strengths, but at the same time they helped each other develop by sharing work they had done and how they had done it;
- (2) The three of us had to be a team and avoid situations where two ganged up on the other! If one of us had an issue or challenge we shared it with the other two, not just one. We all trusted each other implicitly;
- (3) The other Directors’ offices didn’t have a job-share arrangement and we learnt that we had to communicate very clearly how our arrangements worked so that people understood that it could be a different PA depending on what day of the week it was;
- (4) The key to success was the daily log. This would probably be something on the system these days but at this time it was a book which had all the key things that each PA needed to know about, particularly things that one PA had started and continued in to the time the other PA was in. Without this we would have failed miserably – and we did at first as I was expected to remember these things which I was useless at, but the log saved us. The log also helped protect the time of the PA who wasn’t in work as it prevented calls to check up on things. We protected the non work time with a passion and the two of us that were in, me and the PA, would make sure we went to all lengths to sort out an issue and not contact the PA who wasn’t in as we saw that an unfair and we viewed contacting them as a no-go area.

My main memory is that we worked together great as a team, I trusted the system and readily accepted glitches, and I would recommend anyone to take the job share approach with members of their team.”

11. Advice for line managers of job-sharers

People who've managed job-sharers in the past gave us the following 'top tips' for anyone new to managing job-sharers:

- Job-sharing can work well in all kinds of posts and there are many benefits of job-sharing as highlighted above including; often high levels of motivation and commitment; and usually some degree of cover for the post all year round – even if one partner is on leave, the other is likely to be around for their part of the week.
- Make sure it's job-sharers you want, rather than two part-time posts. Ask yourself; is this a post that will benefit from continuity through the week? Is this really a post for one full-time equivalent, not two jobs?
- Job-sharers often provide each other with a great deal of support and someone to bounce ideas off, so they may rely on you less for these kinds of management support than a full-timer. They may need more of your support to help them make the job-share work well for them and all their colleagues.
- You can make it work well by: talking through the job clearly with the job-sharers, and making sure that objectives contain the right balance of shared and individual objectives. Have regular bilaterals, alternating separate meetings with meetings with both job-sharers. Make clear to the job-sharers, and especially to other colleagues, your support for job-sharing. Wherever possible, hold team or unit meetings on a day that both your job-sharers are in.
- Having some individual objectives will help you write personalised reports for each partner at the end of the year. Reports for each partner should be separate and confidential, to allow you to comment on any differences in performance. For the objectives that are shared, many managers find it hard to assess the partners separately – but this needn't be a problem.

“Line managers can find it difficult that they don't know who has done what – but this is a sign that the job-share is working well! If the objectives are shared then both partners have to take full responsibility for them and its right that you're judged together on whether or not you have achieved them”

- You may have two people with different levels of experience, skills or motivation. If that happens, you need to be flexible in your line management style – as with all staff – to offer each of the job-sharers the support or development opportunities they individually need. Let the job-sharers tell you how they want to share/split the work – but also be prepared to challenge their proposal, if, for example, you feel that one needs development in an area where the other is already strong.
- Depending on the requirements of the role, you may want to avoid an arrangement which means regular time when neither job-sharer is in the

office, as this can cause additional pressure for other colleagues and for you. If at all possible, find an arrangement which involves some overlap time in the office. This may cost more (for example, if your job-sharers are doing 3 days each, to overlap on Wednesdays) – but the benefits in terms of their effectiveness are worth it.

- Encourage your job-sharers to read through this practical advice and think about how they can share information well and give the rest of the office a ‘seamless service’.
- Remember, your visible support is crucial to your job-sharers’ effectiveness!

“The manager as much as the job-sharers should want and be prepared to do whatever within reason is necessary to make the arrangement work.” (a manager of job-sharers)

12. Advice for staff managed by job-sharers

We asked people managed by job-sharers what they like and don’t like about it, and what teams can do to help the arrangement work well for everyone. As well as some of the advantages and disadvantages outlined above, employees line managed by job-sharers say some of the advantages include:

- Job-sharing line managers can embody a more collegiate, consensual approach to leadership and decision making, which can be good for the whole team. Some staff have said they like the fact that two people have an input into the appraisal system, as that can make it more objective. And job-sharing line managers are likely to be supportive of work-life balance for their staff.
- Staff also echoed the point that communication and consistency is key.

“It was very hard to avoid duplication and also crossed wires. The practicalities of ensuring that both partners were kept in the loop meant that more time was spent briefing and discussing with both. There were occasions when differences in opinion between the job-sharers became apparent, and it was quite difficult to manage the tension this created. Also, this created an opportunity for mischief.” (from someone managed by job-sharers)

The earlier part of this report tells job-sharers what they can do to prevent these problems for their staff.

If you have line managers who job-share, here are some of the things you can do to make the job-sharing arrangement work well for you, your managers, and the rest of your team:

- Encourage your line managers to be absolutely clear about how they will communicate and hand over with each other; who is leading on each piece of work; and what the final sign-off or decision-making process will be for each project.

- Get the benefits of having two line managers by getting both their inputs at the early stages of a piece of work. Avoid the disadvantages by making sure you get their agreement about which one of them will sign it off.
- If there is a problem and things aren't working out well – for example, if you're getting sent the same information twice, or being asked for the same information twice - talk to your line managers straightaway. Don't let the problem fester. It may well be something that they're not aware of and that a small change to the way they work could make better.
- Copy everything to both line managers, and don't play one off against the other – it may be tempting in the short term, but leads to longer- term problems for the team as a whole!

“Plan in advance, perhaps to a greater degree than you might otherwise; and become skilled in the use of the office technology – job-sharers make full use of remote working and diary management etc.” (from someone managed by job-sharers)