



## JOB SHARING

### What is job-sharing?

Job-sharing is an arrangement in which two or more people share one full-time job, each working part-time on a regular ongoing basis. It may be viable when ordinary part-time work is not, such as when a job needs to be filled on a full-time basis, though not necessarily by one person.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), around 185 000 or 9 per cent of employees who usually work part-time, were in a job sharing arrangement as of November 2003.

While job-sharing is not widespread in Australia, interest in it is growing. Already it can be found in a range of employment categories, including hospital staff, lawyers, teachers, shop assistants, bank tellers, administrators and computer programmers.

Job-sharing allows employers to respond to social and demographic changes in society and the labour force; it can lead to better use of human resources by ensuring that experienced and skilled staff are retained, and can help employees to better balance their work and personal responsibilities.

Job-sharing can be adapted to a variety of circumstances, because arrangements are individually designed to suit the needs of the organisation, the job sharers and the nature of the job.

### Benefits to employees

A major benefit of job-sharing is that it can help employees achieve a balance between work and other activities, including family responsibilities. For some employees, it may offer the only chance to continue working.

Examples of employees who may be helped by job-sharing include:

- ✓ workers with child or elder care responsibilities;
- ✓ older workers who would prefer a phased retirement;
- ✓ workers who wish to undertake studies while continuing in employment; and
- ✓ people with disabilities who want to work only part of the day or week.



Apart from increased flexibility, job-sharing provides specific benefits such as:

- ✓ the possibility of a partnership where one's skills and abilities are complemented by the other partner;
- ✓ opportunities to learn from the job-sharing partner; and
- ✓ mutual support and encouragement on the job.

## Benefits to organisations

Potential benefits to organisations include:

- ✓ availability of a wider range of skills and experience within the one job;
- ✓ peak period coverage — it may be possible for both partners to work during very busy times; and
- ✓ continuity of coverage — it may be possible for one partner to cover for another in certain circumstances, such as sickness and holidays.
- ✓ staff retention, especially of women and men with family responsibilities;
- ✓ reduced staff turnover;
- ✓ attracting new staff;
- ✓ improved staff morale;
- ✓ lower absenteeism; and
- ✓ increased productivity.

## Job-share Design

There are three basic forms of job-sharing, each with differing characteristics which make them more or less suitable to particular jobs.



### ***Shared responsibility***

The two employees share the responsibilities of one full-time job. Together the two individuals perform the full range of tasks within a single position. There is no division of duties. Instead, the partners are interchangeable, with either member of the team able to pick up where the other left off.

This arrangement is most suited to ongoing work, rather than project-based work. It may require the highest level of communication and coordination, but if implemented carefully need not disrupt clients and co-workers. Well matched partners are essential to the success of this type of arrangement.

### ***Divided responsibility***

Two people share one full-time position and divide responsibilities between them. Partners may also provide back-up for each other as needed.

This arrangement is useful when work can be easily divided by client group or project, and may be performed when partners do not know each other well.

### ***Unrelated responsibility***

Two people perform completely separate tasks, but generally work in the same department. In essence, this is two part-time jobs.

This is most suited to situations where partners do not have similar skill levels. It can also be used when two work groups need extra staff but do not have enough work to employ a full-time person.