

The pros and cons of job sharing

Question: "One of our employees has asked her manager if she can 'job share.' Instead of working full time, she'd work three days, another person would work two days, and they would share the job duties. I'm a little worried—especially about shared responsibility, and who is ultimately accountable for the work. What are the pros and cons? Does anyone else have experience with job sharing?"—**Jeanne, MN**

Comments

Not knowing what type of job they are performing makes it a bit difficult to respond. I manage the leave area at my company. Each of my 3 leave administrators is responsible for their part of the alphabet. When one is out, even for a partial day, the others must pick up the slack - in essence they share jobs. The leave administrator assigned to the case (based on last name of employee) is responsible for the management of the leave.

Perhaps the jobs your employees wish to share can be managed in a similar way.

Posted by: Kathy, PA | October 03, 2007 at 06:18 AM

Not all jobs lend themselves to this type of arrangement, but for some, it can work. If possible, divide the duties to allow both individuals ultimate responsibility for a portion of the work. Many times the accountability for a project falls on the whole team and this is really no different. The success of the position will fall to both individuals, but there can be personal accountability on both parties. Without knowing the nature of the job, that's the best advice I can offer.

Posted by: Beth | October 03, 2007 at 06:50 AM

As previously stated, it is difficult to know if it will work without knowing the type of job in question.

But, I think that job sharing could work for almost any type of administrative office position, provided that the employees are equally trained in the position, and that the quality of work is equal.

As far as who is ultimately accountable, that should fall on both employees. Whoever starts a particular task must finish it, unless mutually acceptable by all parties.

Posted by: Patty | October 03, 2007 at 12:38 PM

I have not had good results with job share. Most times personalities clash, ie, one person more dominant than other. We no longer have job share positions for this reason.

Posted by: Cynthia | October 24, 2007 at 01:54 PM

I successfully shared an Employment Representative/Recruiter job for several years while working for a major university. The keys to our success included clear communication between the two of us (including keeping current notes on activities for each job opening), clear information for our clients about how we would handle the work, and an overlap each week of at least an hour, when we could talk about the work and any issues that needed discussion. We took joint responsibility for the work, and could fill in for one another if necessary.

It was a great experience and I believe we provided seamless service for our clients.

Posted by: Kathy Petersen | November 07, 2007 at 08:34 AM