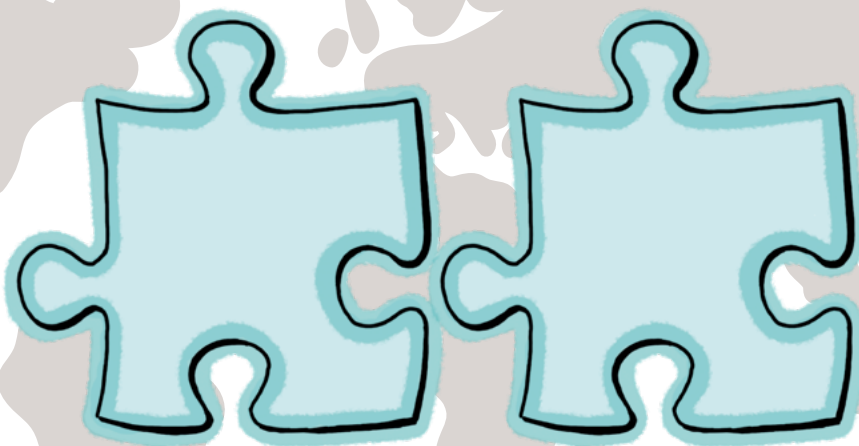


JOB AND TOP SHARING IN INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

JOB & TOP SHARING



PRACTICAL GUIDE

cinfo 

The Swiss Centre of Competence
for International Cooperation

GO

FOR JOBSHARING
SHARE AND WIN

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Impressum

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February 2023

1.

TOWARDS A MORE FLEXIBLE WORK ENVIRONMENT IN THE IC LABOUR MARKET

With the aim of ensuring a better gender mix, effective work-life balance, intergenerational cooperation, and in general, a higher degree of inclusion, the issue of diversity in the Swiss labour market of International Cooperation (IC) has become increasingly important.

Based on a [study](#) of cinfo undertaken with the Bureau for Labour and Social Policy Studies BASS on gender equality and the promotion of women's careers, possible wage discrimination, age and cultural diversity and the inclusion of people with disabilities, several IC organisations are encouraged to assess and improve their current policies regarding staff diversity.

The study showed that all employers do not offer flex-time, job and top sharing, and flexible annual working hours. Where appropriate, these models should be implemented across hierarchical levels to improve work-life balance and along with other aspects, ensure better gender equity. Presently, only 40% of IC organisations implement job or top sharing models, most of which are found at the headquarters.

These special types of working measures should be systematically trialled in senior positions. Job and top sharing models are already used by some organisations in IC, primarily in reaction to a request from a duo and most often at the head office. It is also evident that such models are not frequently seen in countries of operation. There are understandable hurdles to this. And yet it is worthwhile, particularly in fragile contexts, to consider implementing such models. In this guide, you will find an interesting example of a top sharing assignment in Iraq.

The relevance of this topic is high in Switzerland, where 59% of women work part-time, compared with only 18% of men (employed population, FSO, 2022).

Yet, despite helping ease the work-life balance, part-time positions at the headquarters rarely make it possible to attain positions of responsibility. The effects can even be adverse, restricting highly skilled people to positions without any potential for advancement and diminishing their valuable skillsets. Job and top sharing represent fundamental options to get into a career while working part-time. A further increase in the percentage of women in management positions could be achieved through a more systematic implementation of this flexwork model. Job and top sharing work models are now seen as increasingly desirable by both men and women of all generations. Leading-edge companies implement these models

to ensure that knowledge remains current and relevant, retain valued employees, and remain attractive as an employer in the labour market.

Many employees care about the career of their partner. Wherever possible, dual careers should be taken into consideration. Job and top sharing models could be applied in such cases.

This guide provides valuable information for HR staff, line managers and employees interested in job and top sharing. The guide discusses the advantages, risks, contractual issues and practical details for applying jointly for a job or hiring a duo and highlights the importance of a win-win situation. Positive examples and models are presented in this guide¹, which should be widely shared within the IC sector. Organisations are encouraged to examine these "Best Practices" and "Learning journeys" to help them implement these new types of working models.



¹ This guide is largely based on a practical guide on job and top sharing published by the Association PTO (go-for-jobsharing.ch) and adapted to the IC sector, see [Practical guide PTO](#). The PTO guide was also financed by the Federal Office for Gender Equality (FOGE). This work has been undertaken within a collaboration between cinfo and PTO.

2.

FLEXWORK ARRANGEMENTS IN IC (at headquarters and in the field)

Flexibility is the key ingredient for an environment where everyone can achieve a healthy work-life balance. Flexible working is only possible when the organisation, the manager and the employee work together.

- The **organisation** sets the strategic direction that underpins the policy framework and cultural norms. This includes ensuring there is clarity of expectations, roles and performance. Effective job design, systems and processes will enable the organisation to perform at its best.
- The **manager's responsibility** is to actively work with employees to help find solutions that balance work and personal needs and are fair and equitable to everyone involved. At the same time, they manage the business imperatives of the work unit and ensure performance standards are maintained.
- The **employee's responsibility** is to take ownership of their career and personal goals and work with the organisation and the manager to discover mutually workable solutions. Adaptability and an understanding of team and organisation needs are key capabilities.

Of the flexwork arrangements existing, the following are key:

1. Measures related to scheduling of work
 - Flexible working hours
 - Compressed workweek
 - Annualised hours
2. Measures related to the duration of work
 - Part-time work (with responsibility)
 - Job and top sharing
3. Space flexibility
 - Satellite office
 - Working from home
 - Teleworking abroad / Digital nomadism

The following guide should help IC organisations better implement these types of flexwork arrangements within their work environment and, in particular, job and top sharing.



1 + 1 = 3 How job sharing creates value for an organisation



“The day-to-day challenge of selecting, planning and preparing a roster of about 600 Swiss experts in humanitarian aid to be deployed for short and long-term missions in fragile contexts around the globe – like South Sudan, Myanmar, Syria or Venezuela – is a big responsibility. In German, we use the term ‘Eierlegende Wollmilchsau’, referring to the fact that it’s impossible to cover all the skillset required for such a complex job in one person, a so-called ‘superhero’. So why not split this complex job into two positions where you divide tasks and share responsibilities?”

This is exactly what we have done at SDC, Humanitarian Aid Unit. With over 20 years of HR experience in the Humanitarian Aid Unit (SHA) and a sixth sense for what is going on under the surface, Lisa Lang takes care of selection, planning and organisation of the SHA missions. As a newcomer from the private sector with eight years of field experience in peacebuilding in Latin America, Tony Zuber took over the learning and development section to strengthen organisational change and development. In a Co-Lead model, we are responsible and accountable for the Resources Field section. With over 20 employees, together as a team, we take important decisions to best fulfil the mandate of Humanitarian Aid: Save lives and alleviate suffering.

Job sharing gives us a safe space to discuss challenging issues with a true sparring partner. It allows the different stakeholders inside and outside the organisation the possibility to address relevant issues with the person they feel most appropriate. This helps create a work culture based on diversity, knowledge and shared responsibility.

In a nutshell: Mix gender, technical expertise and age to increase your chances of getting more added value for your organisation and yourself.”

Lisa Lang and Tony Zuber
Co-Heads Resources Field
Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC, Humanitarian Aid and SHA

TESTIMONIAL



3.

DEFINITION OF JOB AND TOP SHARING

Job sharing means two or more employees who share a full-time position with inter-dependent tasks and joint responsibility.

Top sharing refers to job sharing in a position with high levels of responsibility, including the management of co-workers.

The concept of **job splitting** is often mentioned in literature. It refers to one job divided into independent roles where the workers are complementary but have no joint responsibility (ex. All positions where there is different shift work but no shared responsibility).

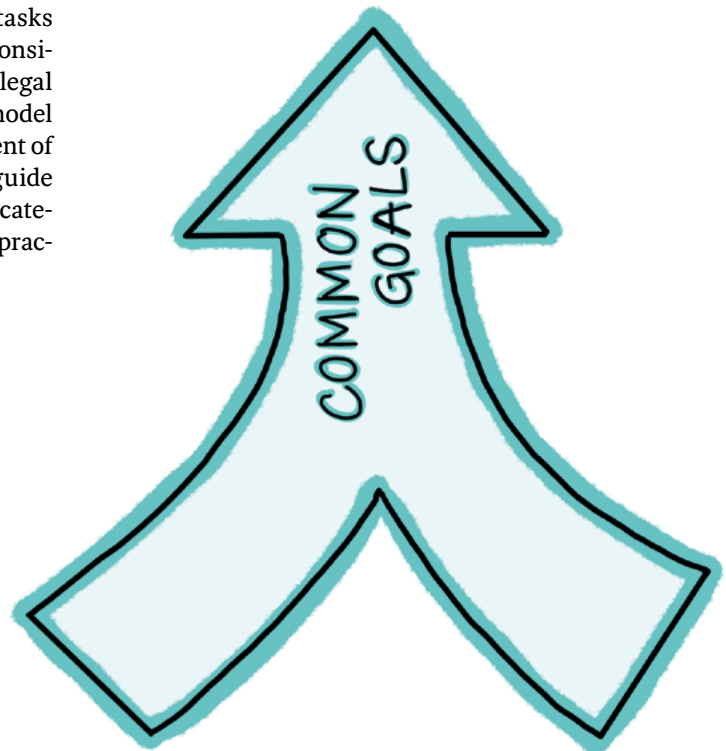
There are two categories of job sharing:

- “Pure” job sharing: This method uses a single employment contract between an employer and two workers. The job sharers are completely interchangeable in handling all projects and tasks, for example, using a single e-mail account.
- “Hybrid” job sharing: This method uses two separate employment contracts between the employer and the workers. In practical terms, hybrid job sharing involves the division of projects between the job sharers on an informal basis, and the other tasks remain interchangeable. In both cases, the responsibility is shared between the job sharers. The legal consequences may differ depending on the model chosen, most notably concerning the replacement of an employee on long-term leave. This practical guide will primarily address the hybrid job sharing category, which is likely to be the most frequently practised form.

INTERGENERATIONAL JOB SHARING

Intergenerational job sharing (a duo with at least a ten-year difference in age) is a potentially innovative solution for utilising the more experienced co-worker's skills to train and integrate the younger one. Job sharing offers an alternative approach that can be practical in the various phases of an individual's working life. It is suitable for:

- Young professionals eager to integrate into the organisation through an intergenerational exchange.
- Dynamic women and men who want to hold a stimulating job while also maintaining other activities.
- Older individuals who wish to remain active professionally while working fewer hours and are willing to pass on their knowledge.



How we pioneered job sharing in our field programmes

MÉDECINS
SANS
FRONTIÈRES



“At Médecins Sans Frontières, finding people for our programmes in highly insecure environments is a challenge, and can result in high turnover rates. This has negative impact on team stability and institutional memory. Working in such stressful conditions expose our managers to complex situations in terms of networking, security and HR management, in addition to managing day-to-day activities.

This was the case for the position of Head of Mission in Iraq. During 2017, the position was, at times, vacant and had an extremely high turnover rate. By introducing the job sharing model in Iraq as a pilot project in 2018, we were able to mitigate the turnover rate to zero for two consecutive years.

How was job sharing implemented here? There was an initial period of matching potential candidates. Once the duo was selected, they agreed to work on a 2-month rotation. Both people were employed at 80%, partly at the mission and partly from their home country.

The two Heads of Mission complemented each other by working in tandem. They played the role of operator when they were in the mission country and the role of support when they were working from their home country. By taking turns, each of them was able to experience both roles respectively.

What made this work? This new working model has enabled greater stability, improved corporate memory and reporting, networking and enhanced management capacity. At the same time, the tandem partners have benefited from greater flexibility in balancing work and private lives, as well as being in a less lonely position in such a challenging context.”

Roya Milani
HR Project Manager, Compensation and Benefits Advisor
Médecins Sans Frontières Switzerland

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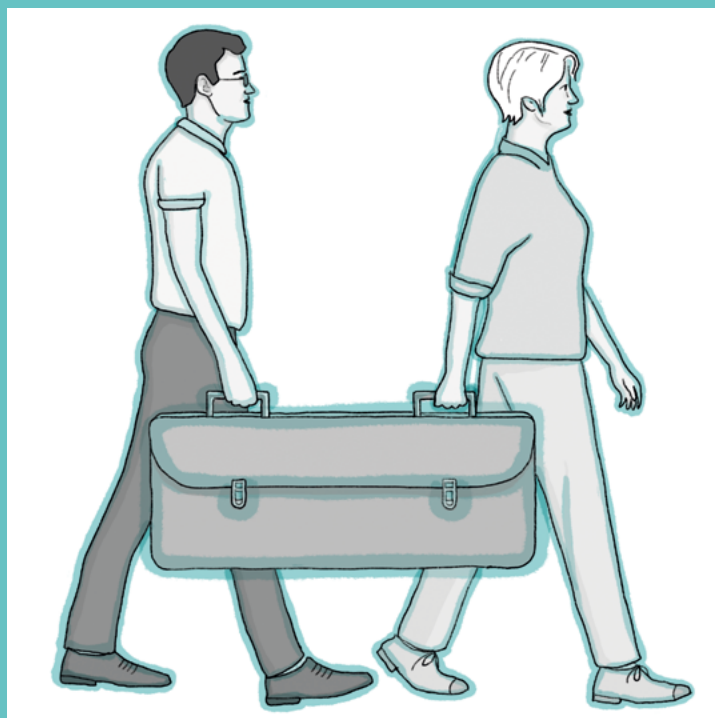
ADVANTAGES

FOR EMPLOYEES

- Access to more stimulating jobs while working part-time.
- Diversity and innovation through an extensive range of activities.
- Work-life balance.
- Development of new skills and greater expertise.
- Transfer of knowledge, particularly in the case of job sharing in the field.
- Joint decision-making process and a reduced feeling of isolation by managers.
- Better integration into the organisation for those who temporarily left the labour market.
- As a duo, access to a broader network.

FOR EMPLOYERS

- Greater productivity and continuous presence at the workplace.
- Talent retention through the introduction of flexible work models.
- More effective decision-making process.
- Skills and networks doubled.
- Knowledge transfer in the case of intergenerational job sharing and job sharing in the field.
- Motivated and loyal employees and reduced risk of burnout.
- Favourable leading-edge company image.



TESTIMONIAL

Co-chairing an HR department

HELVETAS

“How does it work when two heads run an HR department?”

We have been sharing the position of Head of HR for three years at Helvetas. Before that, Kathrin was already co-lead for four years. Having divided both the subject areas and the direct line management of our employees, we can ensure that everyone has a contact person for specific topics or for issues relevant to management.

This form of work enables us to manage the department and strategic and content-related HR projects, where we very often have a strong exchange of ideas, thus benefiting from each other's different experiences and competencies. We can also coach each other in critical and challenging situations, as we share a high degree of trust... and we simply enjoy working together as a team!

Our staff agree it's 'a good thing' and a sign that Helvetas promotes modern working methods. As an HR department, we are naturally proud of this. Of course, you may need to get two opinions when introducing a new project or process, but this is generally part of the Helvetas culture, because participative behaviour is important to us.”

Manuela Häfeli and Kathrin Indermaur
Co-Heads HR Department
Helvetas



5.

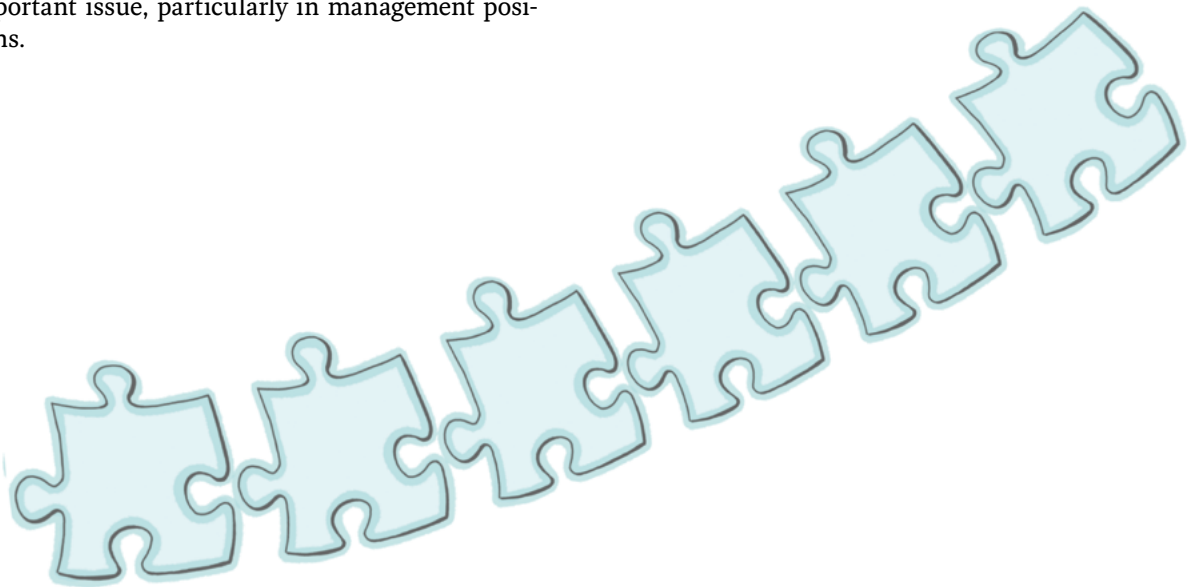
CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS

FOR EMPLOYEES

- A proportionately greater workload: the way the responsibilities are divided can increase the number of projects handled compared with traditional part-time work at a similar activity rate.
- Calls for greater flexibility and organisation: extra flexibility is required whenever important decisions must be taken outside working hours. Similar to regular part-time positions, job sharing requires sound organisational skills.
- The pressure is on for results: like any alternative model, job sharing must prove its worth, and the expectations are high. The job sharers may feel they are under a certain amount of pressure to prove not only their skills but the ability to make the job sharing model work.
- Internal coordination and compatibility: First, a balance must be found between the job sharers, which takes time. This process calls for the qualities that go hand-in-hand with efficient job sharing: flexibility, generosity, confidence, transparency and the ability to critically evaluate one's own actions. Communication is key.
- Decision-making process: a procedure should be in place to address any potential disagreement on an important issue, particularly in management positions.

FOR EMPLOYERS

- More complexity in the recruitment and monitoring process: the job sharing duo works as a single unit but still comprises two individuals.
- Higher costs: two computers and/or workstations and possible differences in training needs generate additional costs.
- Single point of contact: in cases where a single point of contact is required, it can be difficult to select one job sharer over the other.
- Cost of information sharing: it is recommended that the job sharers spend half a day working together, especially, for larger team meetings (requiring the presence of all co-workers).
- Risk of conflict between job sharers: although low, there is a slight risk of conflict, as there is in any partnership. However, the recruitment procedure and probation period should minimise such a risk.



TESTIMONIAL

Triple Lead of a Global Finance Function: Making a virtue out of necessity

MEDAIR

“When our previous Global Finance Director (or CFO) resigned, Medair’s Executive Leadership Team and Board had to leverage existing senior management capacity to keep the function running. What first seemed to be a short-term solution proved to be practical and has continuously been commended by the Board. Through a (13-month) transition period – the Finance Team benefited from the internal expertise of the trio – a team of three finance managers.

During that period, various tasks and responsibilities were switched from one manager to the other. For instance, one senior manager was responsible for the attendance of the weekly executive leadership team meeting for the first few months, which was then handed over to another senior manager. Other responsibilities of the Finance Director were clearly assigned based on the expertise required and ensuring to apply the four-eye principle. One of the challenges to be mindful of when adding additional tasks to existing tasks – and not reviewing the complete job description – is not to forget the time managers need to dedicate to staff management and team coordination. The most notable benefit was that there was no leadership change for the team. The various department teams continued to operate as usual. Team leaders and coordinators were very instrumental in successfully completing this coverage.

This triple leadership approach has significant advantages in a transition period as it provides the trio members with the freedom to exercise and develop their expertise and leadership skills. This helps the organisation manage during the transition period while also providing a more solid leadership base for the finance team once the new Finance Director (CFO) is in place. All in all, due to the close collaboration of the three experienced managers, the finance function did not lack the strategic leadership needed during this transition as well as handling significant projects impacting finance, including system implementation and operational compliance projects.”

Cynthia Labi, HR Director
Medair



6.

ENSURING SUCCESSFUL JOB AND TOP SHARING

The success of job sharing depends on the job sharers' commitment and their ability to work as a duo. It is important to remember that job and top sharing is not for everyone. Individuals who prefer working alone or those who have difficulty sharing information and authority will not be able to adapt to this model harmoniously.

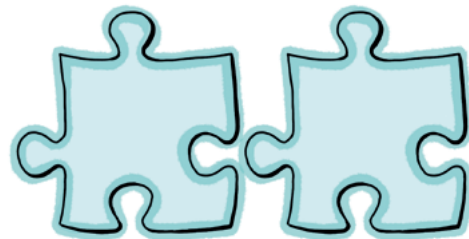
PREREQUISITES

Experience has shown that individuals in job and top sharing partnerships must have common values and the following personal characteristics: **flexibility, open-mindedness, generosity, critical thinking, the ability to regularly assess oneself critically and the ability to manage conflicts constructively.**

Collaboration between the job sharers goes further than typical teamwork, as results are evaluated jointly, and there is a greater level of involvement between the two individuals. When preparing a joint application, the interaction between the partners during the initial exchanges is an important indication. Suppose that one of the job sharers is very dominant from the start. This kind of imbalance could be detrimental to the subsequent division of the workload.

SHOULD JOB SHARERS' SKILL SETS COMPLEMENT EACH OTHER?

Or, put another way, should they rather be quite similar to work successfully in a job sharing arrangement? There is no template for job and top sharing. Both types of duos can work well together. A complementary duo has an advantage when making a joint application as the employer will see the immediate benefits (e.g. diverse language skills, prior experience among other skills). However, this type of duo will require that both job sharers grow in their roles over the following months. For example, the more extroverted of the two should not always take on the oral communications activities but instead should allow the other job sharer to develop their public speaking and presentation skills. The job sharer who is more skilled at writing should encourage the other to take on these types of tasks so that, gradually, the workload can be shared equally.



TESTIMONIAL

"Sharing leadership requires three things to succeed: A shared vision, trust and serenity."

NADEL

Isabel Günther and Fritz Brugger are leading the NADEL Center for Development and Cooperation at ETH Zurich. NADEL offers an MAS and a CAS programme for development professionals and engages at the interface of science, policy and practice.

Sharing the lead at cinfo



CINFO

“Since the beginning of 2023, we started working as co-directors at cinfo. Our motto for cinfo is ‘global network, local roots’. As specialists in international cooperation, we took into account the ongoing global processes, particularly localisation and its impact on new skills required by professionals in the sector. Localisation aims to give more decision-making power and resources to local actors in the Global South. This leads to new ways of thinking about different ways of working together.

Our complementarity goes far beyond our different professional experiences and skills. We share values that are at the core of our leadership vision. We care deeply about diversity, inclusion, flexible work, accountability and professional ethics. We firmly believe that these values are the foundation of any successful organisation, and are committed to putting them into practice within our shared leadership at cinfo.”

Irenka Krone-Germann and Urs Stauffer
Co-Directors cinfo



7.

TEN STEPS TO JOB AND TOP SHARING FOR CANDIDATES

Are you interested in job or top sharing? To help you prepare, here are the ten key steps:

- **No 1** Clarify your objectives and motives: define your professional and private objectives (family, continuing education). List your reasons for seeking a job sharing position; collect the information about the job sharing model by consulting websites such as go-for-jobsharing.ch and read the testimonials.
- **No 2** Examine the possible paths and options: analyse your current job to see whether it could be shared or whether you need to look for a new position. Check whether your company's HR policies, mission or vision contains references to alternative work models. Search for companies that refer to these models on their website and in their mission statement.
- **No 3** Plan your job share: depending on the circumstances, you will need some time to find your work partner. Set a schedule for yourself, including deadlines and intermediate goals and build in alternatives.
- **No 4** Find a compatible partner: if you wish to share your current position, think about possible partners within the organisation. If you cannot identify an appropriate candidate, consult existing information in the company or on networking sites like wejobshare.ch. As with any commitment, there are no guarantees when choosing a partner. However, meetings between potential job sharers before applying can provide an initial indication of the professional compatibility between them in the long term. Regarding job sharing abroad in the IC field, we find many duos who are also couples in private life.
- **No 5** Set up the partnership: discuss the terms of your job share. In your discussions, take into account your different strengths and weaknesses, and the points you have in common. Negotiate and agree upon the specific details of how you will share the position: working days and hours and rate of activity. Among them are several possibilities: a simple 50%-50% weekly split; a 60%-40% division of working hours, including one morning together; a model where each job sharer works 60%; or for top sharing, a 70%-70% split. If there is already a job description, discuss how the workload will be divided.
- **No 6** Outline your arguments in favour of job sharing: include arguments from both the employee's and company's perspectives. Plan your sales pitch. In addition, prepare a list of possible objections from hiring and/or recruiting managers and prepare responses to address their reluctance.
- **No 7** Prepare a joint application and job sharing proposal: draw up a presentation detailing your job share. The job application and interview must be particularly well-prepared. On the one hand, this process allows the job sharers to get acquainted with one another. On the other, it gives the employer confidence in the duo's ability to self-manage the work in tandem.
- **No 8** Prepare for your job interview: arrange a joint appointment with the HR manager. Give each participant a copy of the documents you have drawn up. With your job share partner, prepare for the interview and have alternative strategies or new options available. In advance, you and your partner should consider the possibility that your proposal may be refused. Be prepared with another suggestion.
- **No 9** Job interview: during the interview, be professional and keep your objective firmly in mind. It is an unusual subject, and every minute counts. Do not forget to position yourself as a duo, even though you might have different points of view. Such differences should be discussed in advance.
- **No 10** Negotiating the contract: in most cases, separate contracts are prepared for each co-worker. Avoid uncommon provisions or conditions concerning termination of the contract if one person leaves the partnership.



HOW TO PREPARE A JOINT APPLICATION?

An employer seeking to fill one position should receive only one application. The application should consist of at least two CVs and related documents, one or two cover letters and a proposed work arrangement including the working days of each job sharer. As for the cover letter, it can be written and signed by both job sharers. Alternatively, the two job sharers can each write their own letter stating their individual capabilities related to the job requirements while devoting a few paragraphs to their reasons for seeking a job share with the person they have identified. Providing suggestions for working hours will show the employer that the job sharers have already considered the best way of dividing the workload, including working together for a half-day.

Flexibility remains one of the keys to job sharing. This flexibility requires the job sharers to remain open to the employer's suggestions and finding a solution that suits all three in the case of disagreement, such as if work times need to be reviewed.

Co-Leading an entire NGO? Can this work?

SOLIDAR
SUISSE

“After working together as colleagues for some years, we decided to apply as Co-Directors of Solidar Suisse. This implied leading an organisation of 150 staff in more than 10 countries with a financial volume of CHF 20 million. For almost four years, the Co-Lead was very successful. The three main success factors were:

1. **Mutual appreciation, sympathies and trust:** We liked working closely together, sharing power, decision-making and responsibility.
2. **Talk, talk, talk:** We were in constant touch with each other. We shared a small office and often connected via WhatsApp, e-mail or phone as well as holding regular bilateral meetings. When trouble arose, we shared it and helped each other to resolve tricky issues.
3. **Clear division of duties:** Each of us headed different departments, brought different skills and had different responsibilities. And finally, in between, it did a lot of good to just gossip about our dear colleagues. We rated our four years together as very educational and successful for the organisation.”

Barbara Burri and Felix Gnehm
Co-Directors of Solidar Suisse 2017-2020



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8.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO HR SPECIALISTS

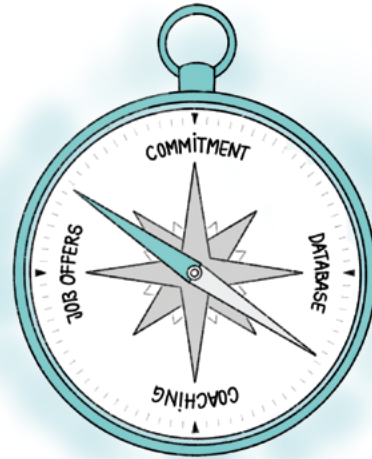
Company executives and Human Resources (HR) managers play a vital role in implementing job sharing.

With their knowledge and experience, HR managers can guide company executives toward adopting new work models while optimising the potential of part-time workers.

To support employees embarking on a job share, HR managers must understand existing work models and how to implement them. They can offer their support for concrete initiatives from committed, innovative co-workers.

A company that opts in favour of job sharing can adopt the following measures:

1. Internal and external job offers should explicitly mention the possibility of applying for a job share (using wording such as “full-time role or job sharing arrangement”) to encourage candidates to consider the option. If the immediate supervisor for the open position refuses to consider a job sharing arrangement because they are sceptical, HR experts can take the role of promoter and analyse applications from potential job share partners. Many job sharing requests are still viewed unfavourably by managers who have little, if any, knowledge of the concept.
2. With the agreement of those concerned, the HR department can draw up a list of part-time workers (potential partners) with basic information about each employee (educational background, professional experience, current rate of activity). This internal document will serve as a “database” and can be distributed to the part-time employees to help them find a partner to apply for a job sharing position. Organisations may also internally implement software helping to match employees interested in applying in job sharing positions: for example, the Swiss job-matching platform wejobshare.ch helps companies and organisations implement such software.
3. Switzerland’s most future-focused public and private companies already have a charter setting out the prerequisites and advantages of a job share arrangement in management positions. Having such a guideline facilitates access to information about job sharing and encourages employees to apply.
4. Getting in contact with job share experts is a way of actively supporting joint applications. Once a job share duo has been recruited, a coach can accompany the new job sharers as they get started, especially in top share arrangements (job shares in high-level positions of responsibility). HR should inform and provide this support to help job sharers understand and implement the model most efficiently.



CINFO'S GUIDANCE FOR JOB SHARERS AND HR SPECIALISTS

Extra guidance may be required to ensure optimal job and top sharing implementation. As a centre of IC competence, cinfo provides coaching–counselling sessions to job sharers and HR specialists in IC, focusing on the following aspects:

- Personalised coaching with the duo.
- Job interview preparation.
- Transfer of knowledge regarding the information process between job sharers.
- Contractual knowledge transfer by focusing on the rights and modalities for job sharers.
- Practical advice to duos for their daily business.
- Conflict management and resolution.

The sessions last two hours on average and are highly recommended at the beginning of a job or top sharing to avoid mistakes or misunderstandings about the concept. These services help job sharers get well–organised to ensure maximum efficiency. HR specialists can additionally profit from cinfo's expertise regarding recruitment procedures and contractual aspects.

TESTIMONIAL

FEDERAL
DEPARTMENT
OF FOREIGN
AFFAIRS

Co–Leading a Swiss Contribution Office in Riga

“We are leading a small team in Riga, Latvia, where the concept of job sharing is quite novel. We have only started our journey. On the path leading to our current position, we have already appreciated to get to know each other from a new, additional side as partners. We have grown during the process and understood that, thanks to the job sharing, our employer and us, we will profit from each other's different points of view, professional experience and networks.

People and our team members are mostly curious about the concept and how it works in practice. However, some people are also concerned about who their main interlocutor will be. Giving them the comfort that we take care of the flow of information and that they will not have to repeat things helps in this regard. In addition, we encourage staff and even stakeholders to give us feedback if they have concerns or also tips for improvement.

We are proud to represent the Swiss administration as an innovative employer of choice that fosters alternative ways of working. Our international colleagues opinion that the concept stands for a progressive Switzerland, ready to embrace new opportunities.”

Evelin and Christoph Liechti
Co-Heads Swiss Contribution Office Riga



Coordinating an intercultural project in Kosovo

Melis Bilibani from Kosovo and Christian Furrer from Switzerland coordinated the kickstart phase of a new project (INTERK) of Caritas Switzerland in Pristina, Kosovo, for seven months.

Melis and Christian found their teamwork particularly inspirational. “We complemented each other very well. Working in a culturally mixed team is extraordinarily useful because, as a duo, it is easier to get to know different stakeholders of a new project, such as beneficiaries, project partners, donors and different units of one’s organisation. With our combined backgrounds, we had ‘a stepping stone’ into both Kosovar and Swiss cultures essential to the new project”.

Our experience shows that working in a culturally mixed job-sharing team can be highly beneficial in a multi-cultural environment such as the development cooperation sector.

Melis Bilbani, Project Coordinator and
Christian Furrer, Junior Professional





Breaking the glass ceiling at SEM

“We first met in December 2017 at an event promoting job sharing organised by the Swiss State Secretariat for Migration. We soon realised that we’d not only graduated from the same Alma Mater, but also shared many thoughts and feelings. In particular, we’d both experienced that working mothers between the ages of 30-40 are commonly confronted with a glass ceiling, independent of their qualifications and work experience. Starting from that event, we had many other occasions to talk and discuss our shared values, vision, and plans for the future. These exchanges fostered mutual trust and led to the decision to apply together for a leadership position. When we finally started managing our own team in December 2019, we were already quite a well-rehearsed job sharing tandem. Over the following three years, we led a relatively large team with great responsibilities in Swiss asylum and migration law while the State Secretariat for Migration navigated a very challenging global environment, including the Ukraine refugee crisis. Together, we assessed risks, shared our success, and coached and encouraged each other. We quickly realised that our characters and strengths were complementary. As a team, we were more creative, communicated more precisely and accurately, reached out to a wider network and felt more resistant to obstacles.

At the moment, we are pursuing professional development in similar fields separately, but still deeply value each other’s advice. And who knows what we’ll be achieving together in the future!”

Michèle Gendotti, MA International Affairs and
Karen Hamann, MA International Law

STATE
SECRETARIAT
FOR
MIGRATION
SEM

9.

LEGAL ISSUES AND ENDING A PARTNERSHIP

As with any job, there is a risk. A job sharer may resign, or the employer may terminate the employment contract. When one of the job sharers leaves, there are four potential options for moving forward:



- The remaining co-worker takes over the position, either at 100% or 80%, either temporarily or permanently.
- A new partnership is created either temporarily or permanently (new job share).
- The job (in its entirety) is advertised as vacant; the remaining co-worker continues in a part-time position.
- The job (in its entirety) is advertised as vacant; the remaining co-worker must find another position.

A partnership may end for several reasons, which may or may not have anything to do with the job sharing process, such as a move by one of the job sharers, illness, career change, personal promotion, dissatisfaction with the work or the company or disagreement between job sharers. Consequently, it is advised that the job sharers discuss these issues before applying to reach an agreement about the risks and the commitment that the job sharers expect of each other. The employment contract can also include provisions for how the departure of one job sharer will be handled. However, numerous testimonials indicate that job sharers have above-average company loyalty. Individuals who choose a job sharing arrangement are typically people with intrinsically strong social values and are highly motivated. In some cases they feel grateful to their employer. Obtaining a job share position is not easy, and the job sharers will not want to lose such a hard-earned position.

JOB SHARING ABROAD: IMPACT AND MODALITIES

In the IC sector abroad, a job sharing duo is often a couple in private life (ex. spouses who work in the same field). Such duos are found in the diplomatic and development field between ambassadors or diplomatic staff sharing different countries. A job sharing duo who, in private life, are a couple reduces the cost related to family charges (schooling, social security costs). It is possible to observe job sharing duos abroad who are not couples in private life in specific situations, but they are less frequent. (see the case in the humanitarian sector by Médecins Sans Frontières).

An interesting set-up could also be job sharing duos comprising a local employee and an expatriate from the donor's side at the same level of decision and function. This could improve the modalities of cooperation and knowledge transfer and ensure sustainability in implementing projects and activities. There are no examples of this model to date, but several IC organisations have communicated that even though administrative issues might be complex, such a model could be of high value.

Sharing the communication at Amnesty Switzerland

AMNESTY
INTER-
NATIONAL

“Thanks to co-leadership in the communication programme, we can pool our know-how from two language regions into one position and make better use of synergies between German-speaking and French-speaking Switzerland. The diversity of our personalities, coupled with our combined experience and expertise, is a strength of the co-leadership. The modern management model is more suited to the diverse composition of the team and the challenges posed by innovations in Amnesty Switzerland’s (digital) communication. We complement each other perfectly, particularly when dealing with important strategic issues, and quickly find joint solutions.”

Beat Gerber and Nadia Boehlen
Co-Heads Communication, Amnesty International, Swiss Branch

TESTIMONIAL





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Co-chairing the unit, "Acquisition and Compliance"

CARITAS

"Can different profiles ensure unified leadership?"

Together, we have led the Acquisition and Compliance unit in the International Cooperation section for over a year. We appreciate the open attitude at Caritas Switzerland towards such new forms of management. While Oliver has been working in the unit for five years already, Marion joined the team from one of Caritas' country programmes in the International Cooperation section. As a leadership team, our different backgrounds allow for solid and broad-based management of the staff unit, combining key areas of expertise equally relevant for strategic success.

In our work within the unit, we have each set a different focus to ensure clear points of contact for our colleagues within the section. Likewise, a direct line management responsibility for our team members ensures regular exchange and leadership based on mutual trust. Frequent discussions with each other, formally and informally, are absolutely essential for us to assume shared leadership responsibility. On the one hand, this takes a little extra time, but on the other hand, it allows us to take the other's point of view into consideration and benefit from different approaches towards challenges. For us, shared leadership means doubling the skills and competencies, and simultaneously increasing our enjoyment of the work."

Marion Schröder and Oliver Fakler

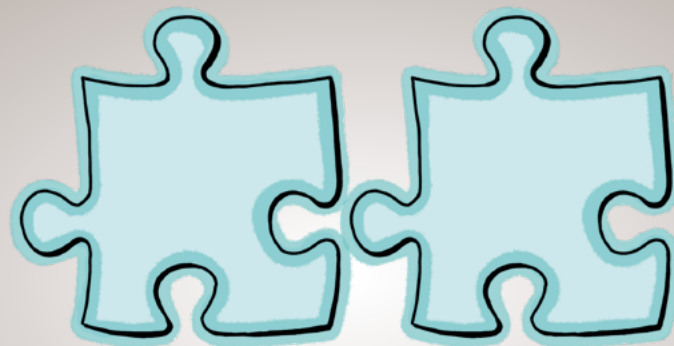
Co-Heads of Acquisition & Compliance International Cooperation
Caritas Switzerland

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