

Job Sharing CEOs



Interview with Tricia Shaw and Michele Jackson – Joint CEO at Audrey Page and Associates.

WHAT IS THE ROLE AND HOW DO YOU SPLIT IT?

Our current role is CEO, Audrey Page & Associates. We have been **job sharing for over 10 years**, in two different businesses and this is our **fourth executive role** as a job share partnership.

In terms of how we split the role, our approach has been consistent over that time. We don't consider it to be two people who do half a job each, or as two-part time roles.

Our view is that it's one job that happens to be filled by two equal partners. We strongly advocate that both partners need to be able to do the whole job, so that while we will have preferences and strengths, there isn't any aspect of the role that one of us couldn't do.



WHY HAVE YOU CHOSEN TO JOB SHARE?

Initially we job shared to enable us to work in senior / executive positions while being present in other areas of our life which at that time was look after our teenage children.

With both sets of children now grown up and largely independent, our motivation is simply that **we prefer the ongoing experience of working in partnership with each other and find reward from that in itself.**

WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO LOOK FOR IN A JOB SHARE PARTNER?

As we mentioned above, a critical element is that **both people are able to do the whole job. That means that regardless of who's day it is, every facet of the role can be managed, every strategy progressed and every client understood.**

Trust and values alignment are also two critical elements of success. A decision made by one needs to be supported by the other; having said that we have worked successfully together for such a long time that I can't recall the last time we fundamentally disagreed on a decision.

There also can't be any level of competition between the partners; it is one unit, a shared ego almost.

A third element is that as a team, we are adaptable to the changing needs of our team and the business - flexibility of approach is important to us. During particularly busy times, we have been known to divide and conquer – so it is important that both partners have an understanding of the other person's flexibility. It really is a matter of being on the same page at all times. And it really helps if you like the person!

HOW DO YOU MAKE THE JOB SHARE ARRANGEMENT WORK?

At a practical level, we both work three days each, with a day of overlap. We use this day to have our leadership team meetings, catch up with direct reports, and have our strategy or planning sessions.

Inevitably, there will be meetings or other events that we both want or need to attend that don't fall on our day of overlap – but individually, we both have quite a lot of flexibility so we manage around that quite easily. That works for us – others would need to find their own way of managing this situation.

Communication is critical – and it needs to be regular and clear. For us, that works best when its daily communication. There are times that this is via email, other times where it's a phone call – depending on the nature and complexity of the matter at hand. If you've told one of us something, everyone should feel confident that the other person knows about it so that both of us are fully up to speed. We've been told it's like we read each other's minds or share a common pool of knowledge – in fact it's



a finely honed communication plan that we are diligent about and committed to doing on a daily basis.

We have a shared drive on our system and we track the major projects and initiatives through a spreadsheet that we both update regularly. In our daily updates, we are also really clear about what needs progressing the next day and what can wait.

WHAT TIPS DO YOU HAVE FOR PEOPLE WANTING TO JOB SHARE?

- 1 Do your due diligence thoroughly - understand the partner, understand the role and understand yourself.
- 2 Both partners need to discover and commit to what works for them. Another job share partnership could look very different to ours – I don't think there's a one size fits all approach to job share.

- 3 You need to take responsibility for the complexities arising from your partnership and manage that for others that you work with – any inefficiencies, real or perceived, are yours to manage.
- 4 The partnership is almost more important than the job - mergers and acquisitions often fail because of culture and values misalignment; the partnership is a merger of sorts and a strong values alignment is critical to success.



WHAT DO YOU LOVE ABOUT JOB SHARING?

One of the characteristics that has recently become clear for us is that, as a unit, we are very self-sufficient, independent. We have each other to work things out with – a built-in trusted adviser. So we can test those major decisions or strategies with each other and typically come to the table with a well thought out approach.

