



**Job Sharing in
Senior Operations
Roles – Promoting
Gender Diversity**

INTRODUCTION

The call for greater flexibility in the workplace is louder than ever, and for good reason. The benefits have become as plain as day over the past few years, and more workplaces are going above and beyond to break down barriers to flexibility in their specific industry and offer increased flexibility to employees while reaping the rewards in terms of productivity and recruitment.

Operations-based workplaces are also experiencing a push for increased flexibility, and our [recent case study](#) focused on how successful the initiative can be in operations-based roles. In this article, we're exploring the significance of greater gender diversity in the operations sector and how job sharing at a senior level, in particular, can be a game-changer in achieving flexibility goals.



Image of team members at Lincoln Sentry (DuluxGroup)

WHAT IS JOB SHARING?

Job sharing is a practice that involves two employees sharing a single full-time position and is emerging as another mechanism for increasing flexibility (and associated gender diversity) in operations roles. At NAWO, we see job sharing as an important tool for increasing female representation, especially at senior operations levels. In 2021 in Australia, women held fewer than 10 percent of leadership positions in STEM-related industries. It's clear that significant work still needs to be done. Job sharing might not be in widespread use, but it's gaining traction as more evidence for its success accumulates, and in notoriously complex senior operations roles, the practice can form part of a multi-pronged approach to increased gender diversity.



CHALLENGES OF FLEXIBILITY IN OPERATIONS-BASED ROLES

Operations-based roles are often perceived as inflexible and demanding, with long hours and a relentless focus on efficiency and productivity. These characteristics can pose significant barriers to work-life balance and attracting a diverse workforce. Increasing flexibility is one of the best tools for rectifying the massive imbalance of female representation at senior operations levels.

We've discussed the barriers to flexibility in operations-based roles extensively. Factors like round-the-clock operations, resistance to change, and perceived loss of productivity all impact the pace and scale of increased flexibility in operations roles. However, we've also seen that each barrier can be removed when a dedicated team (supported by senior management) puts their mind to the task. The rewards for these focused organisations are tenfold - increased flexibility becomes a win/win for employers and workers alike.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF GENDER DIVERSITY IN OPERATIONS

Gender diversity in the operations sector is not just about equal opportunities; it's about reaping the benefits of varied perspectives, improved decision-making, and enhanced innovation. There are also compelling reasons to focus specifically on increasing female representation in senior operations roles:

1. **BROADER SKILL SETS** Women often bring different skills and approaches to problem-solving, enhancing the team's overall capabilities.
2. **IMPROVED DECISION-MAKING** Diverse teams tend to make more balanced and well-informed decisions, minimising the risk of groupthink and replicating mistakes of the past.
3. **TALENT RETENTION** Organisations that promote diversity are more likely to attract and retain top talent, increasing their competitive advantage.
4. **ENHANCED INNOVATION** Diverse teams tend to be more innovative and creative, which is critical in ever-evolving business environments and a rapid external pace of change.

HOW TO JOB SHARE

Whether senior roles are advertised as being suitable for job sharing or employees directly drive the implementation, there are distinctive relational traits behind successful job share partnerships:

1. **TRUST** Trust is the cornerstone of a successful job share arrangement. Each partner must have trust in the other's abilities and reliability to handle the responsibilities when it's not their scheduled workday.
2. **COMMITMENT** Both individuals in a job share must be fully committed to the arrangement, their respective roles, and the success of the job share partnership. This commitment is essential for long-term sustainability.



Image of Daphnie Christodoulou, Warehouse Operations Manager at Lincoln Sentry (DuluxGroup)

3. **TEAM PLAYER** Job sharing requires a collaborative mindset. Successful pairs work as a team, valuing the collective outcome more than individual contributions. They avoid competing with each other and clashing egos, as this can disrupt the harmony of the partnership.
4. **ORGANISATION** Attention to detail and effective communication are crucial. Partners should be organised and provide clear notes and updates on work in progress during handover, ensuring a seamless transition between their workdays.
5. **RESPECT** When disagreements arise, it's important that job-share partners maintain respect for each other's decisions. They must present a united front to avoid destabilising the team around them and undermining their joint authority.

In addition to the essential traits mentioned above, successful job-share pairs often possess complementary skill sets and share similar values. These factors contribute to the effectiveness of the partnership.

JOB SHARING AT A SENIOR LEVEL: A SOLUTION FOR GENDER DIVERSITY

Job sharing, a viable solution to foster flexibility and diversity, is gaining traction in senior operations roles, and the initial time spent setting up job share arrangements is counteracted by the benefits it brings, such as:

- **EFFICIENT KNOWLEDGE TRANSFERENCE** Job sharing enables a smooth transfer of knowledge and responsibilities between two individuals, minimising the impact of staff changes and ensuring consistent operations.
- **FLEXIBILITY AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE** Employees who job share enjoy greater flexibility while maintaining a commitment to their roles. This flexibility can attract a wider pool of candidates, including parents who need to balance family and career.
- **ENHANCED DIVERSITY** Job sharing allows for two individuals with different backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives to collaborate in a single role, promoting diversity at a senior level.
- **IMPROVED PRODUCTIVITY** With two employees working together, job sharing can lead to increased productivity as they complement each other's skills and cover a broader range of responsibilities.

For operations-based companies, the path to increased gender diversity and flexibility in senior roles is challenging but achievable. We're already seeing successful job-sharing arrangements in senior operational roles, and as these partnerships become more visible, it will be easier for others to replicate job-sharing success. Job sharing offers a promising solution to low levels of female representation in senior operational roles and brings significant benefits to companies by allowing them to tap into a broader talent pool and enhance the efficiency of their operations. By embracing this innovative approach, the operations sector can pave the way for a more inclusive and dynamic future, where gender diversity and flexibility are not just buzzwords but integral components of success. As businesses and individuals embrace job sharing, they will redefine senior operations roles and shape a more balanced and productive workplace landscape for all.

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We acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Nations people of Australia and the traditional custodians of the lands where we live, learn, work and connect.

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