

# The Best of Both Worlds.

## Job-Sharing: A New Concept in Part-time Work

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Un nouveau concept de travail à temps partiel est le sujet de cet article qui examine les avantages et les désavantages pour l'employeur et pour l'employé/e de cette nouvelle approche.

Two days a week Carolyn Rose, a busy mother of three, changes into her uniform, closes the door on her household chores, and steps out in her other role as a dental hygienist.

Honey Manilla is secretary to a chartered accountant and on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday of each week she can be found typing correspondence and processing tax documents for Cooper, Balderson, and Company.

Elaine Levinoff finds her teaching job very rewarding. But with a fourteen-month-old child at home and another on the way, Elaine has cut her full working day in half and shares her job with a colleague.

What do these women have in common? They are all married with children and they all work part-time. But each one also shares her job with another woman—and they all agree that at this point in their lives it's the best working arrangement they could hope for.

What is job-sharing? It is a relatively new idea in Canada, and it means having two or three people dovetailing separate hours on one full-time job—each sharing a part of the workload.

The employers of these three women do not view them as second-class employees, as is so often the case with part-time employment. On the contrary, it is the expertise that these women possess that persuaded their employers to agree to job-sharing in the first place. Good employees are hard to find, and, rather than lose these women who had growing responsibilities at home, the employers agreed to job-sharing, even though the practice presents some problems for them.

This kind of work has many benefits for the employee. Carolyn finds working part-time is an added bonus for her children because she has time to take them to after-school activities like hockey, skating, and swimming. As well, this system enables the children to grow socially and emotionally by being in constant contact with other adults who share in the day-care arrangements. Another plus is the free time she has to 'schmooze around' and shop.

Honey Manilla agrees that getting out of the house was very important to her and yet she feels that working full-time would be a strain considering the needs of her children aged nine and ten, and her husband who works long hours.

Elaine Levinoff considers 'overlap' one of the most important aspects of job-sharing in her work. This is done usually during lunch hour when the two teachers spend time going over any problems experienced by Elaine in the morning that will need prompt attention in the afternoon.

All three women emphasized that the money earned is not simply for frills, but is a necessity in this day of rampant inflation. They receive the same benefits as full-time employees—unemployment insurance, Canada Pension, and holiday pay. (There is no sick leave because in all cases if one employee is sick she arranges for her co-worker to take over.)

From an employer's point of view there seem to be specific advantages and disadvantages in this type of work distribution. The Personnel Director of one of Toronto's largest hospitals (he would not allow his name to be used as he wanted to avoid a stampede of potential job-sharers in his office), explained his position this way. 'Three years ago we noticed an increasing number of good staff with tenure who could no longer work full-time because of family obligations. The hospital wanted to keep these women [nurses] on staff even for half the time. Presently we have fifty nurses and one pair of team leaders [assistant head nurses] job-sharing. The benefits are enormous: greatly reduced

absenteeism, improved morale, increased productivity due to less fatigue, and satisfaction with their own lives resulting from increased leisure to 'do their own thing'. Furthermore, we figure we saved the taxpayer \$400,000 in one year!

This personnel director also spoke of some disadvantages: increased administration costs for double personnel when providing training, uniforms, lockers, and benefits; other employers listed possible lack of communication and continuity high on their list of problem areas. Furthermore, depending on the work involved, tenure and promotion can be complicated by job-sharing.

In 1975 M. Bossen in her study *Part Time Work in The Canadian Economy*, commissioned by Labour Canada, found little application of this kind of arrangement in her sample survey of forty-two large organizations in the private

and public sectors. She made recommendations on the validity of this kind of arrangement in fields containing what she calls continuous activities such as health services, computer services, public libraries, retail stores, and hotels.

There is a great need for workers to have the choice to share jobs—especially women workers. Job-sharing offers society the chance to redistribute work opportunities for a larger number of people—it could help many pre-retirement workers to ease into part-time work and continue longer in the work force as contributing members.

What it offers me as a young woman with three small children is a possibility for part-time employment in my chosen field with time for mothering and other family obligations. Is anyone out there interested in going for an interview with me?



### Poem

Yesterday (for want of something better to do)  
I took stock of myself  
and realised  
I am now twenty-nine years old  
possess a husband and two kids  
and until recently I almost  
had  
an almost lover  
who doesn't ring me any more.  
I write the occasional poem  
and intermittently  
I have the odd sweep around the house  
usually when I can't locate the phone  
or one of the children.  
Not much really for the sum of a life  
more like a suicide note  
so I decided to do something about it  
resolved to break out of my cliché  
and start to live.  
Then this morning when I came to  
I realised I was still twenty-nine years old  
with a husband two kids and the inevitable  
almost lover  
(a must for successful fantasizing)  
so I picked up my broom  
and had a quick sweep around the house  
before discovering my typewriter  
and sitting down to write this poem.

Lynne Kositsky

Abigail Heyman