

# TWO FOR ONE

CHALLENGING *senior roles and part-time work* are **MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE**, right? Not for these three **JOB-SHARING DUOS**, who prove that when it comes to flexibility and fulfillment, two heads often **TRUMP** one.

WORDS SALLY WILSON



## “COMMUNICATION SHOULD BE TRANSPARENT”

**ESTELLE BENFIELD + SAMANTHA LLOYD FRANCIS**  
Senior Designer, Plum Collections

**ESTELLE:** We’ve been working as a team at Plum for four years. We both began working part-time once we started having children – we have six children between us, aged from five to 17.

**SAMANTHA:** As senior designers, we each work three or four days plus the occasional day if work demands it. We are always there if we’re needed.

**ESTELLE:** We were friends before we started working together, having met working at a design business 15 years before that. This is a definite bonus as we have more tolerance due to our friendship, as well as complete faith in the other person’s skills, capabilities and decision-making.

**SAMANTHA:** We have to stay on top of everything the other is doing. However as a team we don’t always agree with each other, and have been known to have robust discussions in order to come up with the best solution.

**SAMANTHA:** Our employer gets to benefit from a wealth of design and professional experience between us – Estelle worked as a textile designer for many years and I worked as a womenswear designer for several major brands. As baby and childrenswear-designing mums, we are in tune with the needs of our customers. And when it comes to the design process, two heads are always better than one.

**ESTELLE:** Excellent communication skills are a must (we discuss our progress every day as well as copy each other on all emails) as well as tolerance, respect, flexibility and a sense of humour. The bottom line however is that between us we always ensure we get the job done at the end of the day.

**SAMANTHA:** Ensure you know that you’ll be on the same page in every respect. You need to have total faith in them and that they will not let you down – you bat for the same team.



## “HAVING THE RIGHT PARTNER IS KEY”

**LISA TUFFS + SARAH GOSS**  
Practice Lead – Industry & Society, Ericsson South East Asia and Oceania

**LISA:** We’ve been job-sharing since the start of 2011, when Sarah returned from 12 months maternity leave after having her first child. I was previously managing the strategy function working three days per week, then there was a global re-organisation and I was asked to perform this new role. I attempted to do it part-time for six months, but I was essentially working five days and getting paid to do three. I felt that returning full-time, resigning or job-sharing were the only options, so I asked the company to consider the job share as I knew Sarah

was returning from her maternity leave. Ericsson wanted to retain both of us, so they agreed to the job share arrangement which we structured and proposed.

**SARAH:** We each work three consecutive days a week, with Tuesday being our overlap day. In practice, we effectively operate ‘as one’. Until recently, we shared the same workload and worked interchangeably based on our days in the office. As our role is broadening, we are now finding for certain responsibilities that it’s more effective to divide them up and allocate them between us.

**LISA:** There were initial reservations about the set-up as traditionally, senior management roles were not considered flexible enough to be managed on a shared part-time basis.

**SARAH:** We’ve established clear ways of working between us and in the way we work with others, both internally and externally. We have to make it seamless for colleagues and for those we work with outside Ericsson. It is absolutely critical that we ensure we ‘are one’ in terms of how people experience working with us.

**LISA:** We can arrange to be in two places at once if we need to be, such as when we have a meeting clash. Job-sharing also means we have inbuilt capacity for back-filling and covering periods of leave.

**SARAH:** Support from leaders is also critical to the success of our job-sharing arrangement. If we didn’t have our line managers’ support in particular, it simply wouldn’t work.

**LISA:** To be an effective job-sharer, you need communication, communication, communication! It’s crucial that the individuals working together in the job share can operate as an effective team because ultimately you are accountable to each other for your collective performance. >