

# **Is Job Sharing a Viable Option for Law Enforcement?**

By

Lieutenant Lisa G. Perrine  
Pasadena Police Department

Command College Class 41  
August 2007

This Command College Independent Study Project is a FUTURES study of a particular emerging issue in law enforcement. Its purpose is NOT to predict the future, but rather to project a number of possible scenarios for strategic planning consideration.

Defining the future differs from analyzing the past because the future has not yet happened. In this project, useful alternatives have been formulated systematically so that the planner can respond to a range of possible future environments.

Managing the future means influencing the future--creating it, constraining it, adapting to it. A futures study points the way.

The views and conclusions expressed in the Command College project are those of the author and are not necessarily those of the Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST).

## **Is Job Sharing a Viable Option for Law Enforcement?**

Browsing the web, Scotty, a 28-year veteran police officer, found several great articles speaking to the benefits of job sharing. As a veteran of policing, he was concerned about retirement and losing contact with the profession. At the same time, he felt as though he wanted to “cut back” and work part-time to create room to travel and do some of those things he had put off for years. Scotty began to daydream about having the best of both worlds after retirement. Suddenly his cell phone rang. He answered it. It was his police department telling him that his Chief approved job sharing. “Oh, great!” Scotty thought, “It wasn’t a dream. I will be able to job share after retirement. I can have the best of both worlds. I will be able to retire and still be able to work part-time doing what I love most, investigating criminal cases.”

About a year after retirement, Scotty was still very happy and enthusiastic about being able to job share. His schedule was great. He worked every Monday, Tuesday, and alternating Wednesdays. Every weekend felt like a vacation. Scotty found time every week to be with his wife, exercise, spend time with his grandkids, and spend time on his hobbies. One day, the telephone rang. Scotty answered it. It was his Chief, who shared, “I am glad that someone with your knowledge and expertise had a desire to job share.” The Chief advised a review of the first year’s job share program had been completed. To Scotty’s relief, the report noted the program proved beneficial for both the organization and the job sharers.

Job sharing can improve productivity and help retain essential workers. Research indicates that job sharing works and it has numerous benefits for both the employer and employee. As retiring baby boomers threaten to deplete corporate workforces, many

employers are taking a fresh look at the recruiting and retention advantages that job sharing has shown it can offer (Hirschman, 2005). Job sharing is not the sole solution, but may be a viable option, which can help law enforcement agencies recruit and retain employees.

Many non-law enforcement employers use job sharing. Why haven't we heard that job sharing is widely used within police agencies? Perhaps, because agencies have not truly realized a workforce shortage is eminent for the law enforcement field. Or because they are not sure what job sharing is, know that both employers and employees benefit from it, know that some law enforcement agencies are already using it and know its relation to law enforcement. Let's explore this issue and questions together. What will the result be? Is job sharing a viable option, which can help law enforcement agencies recruit and retain employees?

### **“Police Find It Hard to Fill Jobs”**

“Police Find It Hard to Fill Jobs” is the title of an article published in the Washington Post about law enforcement agency workforce shortages. Police departments around the country are contending with a shortage of officers and trying to lure new applicants with signing bonuses, eased standards, house down payments and extra vacation time (Pomfret, 2006). The Washington Post reports that more than 80 percent of the nation's 17,000 law enforcement agencies have vacancies. The Washington Post cited several factors for staffing shortages: demographic changes; the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have siphoned off public-service-minded people to the military; higher-paying positions in the booming homeland security industry; an increase of baby-boomer officers who were hired in the 1970's that are

retiring; and the younger generation is better educated so a career in policing where the average salary is \$32,000, is not as attractive as it was before.

There are concerns, said Elaine Deck; a researcher at the International Association of Chiefs of Police, that staffing changes and shortages could affect public safety and the well-being of law enforcement officers. “When you have single officers in vehicles, a lack of backup, slower response time, cuts in prevention programs and fewer school resource officers, things could obviously be affected. Also, with fewer recruits entering the system and a large number of veterans exiting, officers’ street knowledge – critical to effective law enforcement – is evaporating” (Pomfret, 2006). This shortage of law enforcement candidates seems to have caused law enforcement agencies to offer additional benefits and lower standards when hiring employees.

Some departments are offering signing bonuses; some are offering compressed workweek schedules. Elsewhere, departments have dropped their zero-tolerance policy on drug use and past gang association, eased restrictions on applicants with bad credit ratings and tweaked physical requirements (Pomfret, 2006). Experts said that while they hope the inherently conservative nature of law enforcement agencies will protect against a slew of bad hires, there is a concern that with a smaller pool of applicants, less qualified people are becoming police officers (Pomfret, 2006). Lowering hiring standards is not the solution. Job sharing is viable option to help law enforcement recruit and retain those best suited for the profession.

### **What is Job Sharing?**

The 1990's economic expansion not only removed years of long standing labor market problems such as unemployment and stationary wage rates, but also the increase of flexible work schedules according to the U.S. Department of Labor. What is flexible scheduling? Simply stated, flexible scheduling is when an employer offers employees flexibility in defining when, where, and how the work gets accomplished. There are many different types of flexible scheduling than an employer can choose, or combine them together in such a way that benefits both the organization and the employee (O'Brien, 2004).

Job sharing is a type of flexible scheduling that an employee can choose within the framework of a program established by the employer. Job sharing offers two (or possibly more) employees an opportunity to share a single job. It also offers employers an opportunity to retain valued knowledgeable experienced employees they would normally lose due to family obligations, retirement, or medical issues. It can help eliminate the need to train new employees if a valued employee were to leave, or to retain others to compensate for the loss of a veteran employee. Job sharing can seem intimidating to managers, who may fear that it could lead to confusion, more paperwork, and a host of other hassles. If a proper plan is in place and each job sharer is held accountable for their duties, these issues can be avoided (Reference For Business, 2006).

### **Employers and Employees Thoughts on Job Sharing**

Hudson Highland Group, Inc. is a worldwide leader in the provision of specialized recruitment, outsourcing and human resource consulting services. The Hudson Report is

published quarterly. The January – March 2006 quarter report highlighted the results of a job share survey they conducted. Hudson personnel personally surveyed 8,693 employees. The participants were surveyed from 18 core industry groups. The core groups ranged from Marketing, Education, Healthcare, Information Technology to Non-profit, Government and Retail. Hudson asked employees if they would consider job sharing as an employment option, now or in the future. Seventy-two percent said, yes. Hudson reports that their findings are in line with international research (Hudson Highland Group, Inc., 2006). Is the demand there? From the results, it is safe to say that the demand is there.

There are numerous articles on job sharing written from the perspective of job sharers, business journals, human resources, employment consulting companies, etc. The articles, as a whole, lean towards the fact that the advantages of job sharing outweigh the disadvantages.

#### Advantages for Employees

- ***Employees have a more balanced life*** (Hagestad, 2006). Employees who work fewer hours are able to spend more time with their families, pursue educational endeavors, or pursue other personal interests.
- ***Employees experience increased job satisfaction and reduced stress*** (Casey, 2006). Increased job satisfaction leads to greater productivity, which in turn increases job satisfaction. Usually when employees are satisfied, they are less stressed.

- **Employees decrease absenteeism and presenteeism** (Casey, 2006). Because job share employees rely on professional child care less, they are more prone to be at work, thus using less sick time.
- **Reduced commuting time** (Casey, 2006). Allows for more family time, less wear and tear on personal vehicle and less money spent on gasoline.

#### Disadvantages for Employees

- **Job sharers may feel disproportionate treatment** (Acas, 2006). They may feel they are achieving proportionately more than a full time employee and thus being inadequately paid.
- **One job sharer may be impacted by the actions of their partner job sharer** (Bahls, 2006). If one job sharer stays late to finish a project or to provide some overlap, the two employees may be trying to work at the same desk or the same computer terminal. If one job sharer does not perform to standards, the other job sharer may suffer from negative perceptions. This can be avoided! Communication and accountability is key. Job share partners must consistently communicate with each other.

#### Advantages for Employer

- **The employer gets 1.2 employees for less than the average cost** (Shiple, 2006). The average cost is less to the employer because of shared benefits and less overtime costs. Employers can ask job sharers to work more during busy times, therefore eliminating position coverage overtime.

- ***The employer gets 1.2 employees with greater versatility*** (Shipley, 2006). An employer has more flexibility while maintaining productivity. The job share position is covered at all times. Usually, if one job sharer is absent or goes on vacation, the other works full time for the duration.
- ***Employers are able to use job sharing to retain and recruit employees*** (Hirschman, 2005). Job sharing appears to improve retention and reduce employee turnover. Employers have a broader pool of job applicants from which to draw. Job sharing attracts diverse employees who may not be able to conform to rigid schedules. Employers are able to retain employees who are skilled, experienced workers.
- ***Employers get employees with higher levels of loyalty and commitment*** (Casey, 2006). Job sharers tend to be quite appreciative of the company that is willing to offer them flexible hours. Accordingly, they do their work with dedication and enthusiasm.

#### Disadvantages for Employers

- ***Possible management resistance and skepticism*** (Hudson Highland Group, Inc., 2006). Managers may be skeptical and resistant because of the extra time and communication needed for two employees versus one employee. However, managers whose organizations allow job sharing, realize that the advantages of job sharing outweigh the disadvantages.
- ***Can be intimidating to the employer*** (Hudson Highland Group, Inc., 2006). The employer may fear that job sharing may lead to confusion, more paperwork,

and additional administrative and training costs. Creating a solid plan to implement a job sharing program will eliminate the fear.

Employers and employees each benefit from job sharing, even in a setting with the rigorous training requirements of policing. Would police employees though, be interested in this type of work schedule flexibility? There are a number of agencies in the United States and abroad that already offer job sharing. We will look at some of those departments and their issues. We will then focus on the sentiments of employees in one California agency to see if the need for such a program might exist. One agency's employees were asked just that question.

### **Law Enforcement Agencies and Job Sharing**

Law enforcement, like other public service professions, requires its employees to remain up to date with training mandates. There is also a traditional expectation the expertise gained will be used in daily obligations to serve their citizenry. In addition to the job shortages noted above, California law enforcement agencies face challenges due to the 3% @ 50 retirement plan for sworn personnel. This retirement benefit has resulted in early retirements by many, and has caused a gap in efforts to retain expert personnel. This gap may be intensified with the general slowing of pace of the labor force growth forecast 2015-25. As baby boomers retire, succession planning and alternate staffing strategies become even more important (U.S. Department of Labor, n.d.). Job sharing offers employers an opportunity to acquire and retain talented workers who otherwise might not be available. (U.S. Department of Justice, 2006).

In fact, the law enforcement industry is already using job sharing. How, then, do they use it and what are the issues? Research revealed that several law enforcement agencies in other countries that have job share programs. It even uncovered two California law enforcement agencies employing this strategy.

### California Agencies

The Huntington Beach Police Department, with 234 employees, approved job sharing in January 2001. Police Officer Lisa Gallatin gave insight into their job share program (personal communication, August 21, 2007). It was proposed by a police officer six years ago. Initially, it was done on a trial basis. After an evaluation of the program, however, it was approved as a permanent program. Up until two years ago, they had two job share teams working patrol. Currently, no one is working under the program due to a lack of persons desiring it. Officer Gallatin said that when used, job sharing worked well. This conclusion is based on the agency's debrief of the job sharers and supervisors, as well as an evaluation of the work product of the job share teams. Officer Gallatin said that the job share teams were reliable, communicated well with each other and their supervisors and made the job share program a smooth operation.

The Orange County CA Sheriff's Department has offered job sharing since November 1999. Job sharing is offered to the professional staff and deputies of the 4,000 member agency. Kim Scaife, Human Resources Analyst, gave insight into their job share program (personal communication, August 21, 2007). Their job share program was proposed because of a need to retain qualified employees and as a recruitment tool. Scaife said that more and more employees are taking advantage of the program. The

exact number of job share teams, however, was not available. To date, all job sharers have been female employees. Administratively, supervisors say the program works. Scaife said job sharing works well, as evidenced by positive interviews of job sharers as well as exit interviews of job share persons who have left the program.

### Canadian and European Agencies

Many of the Canadian, British and French websites post very detailed outlines of their job share program. The Thames Valley Police Department in Britain, by far, had the most extensive written job sharing policy and documentation. The nineteen page “Flexible Working for Police Officers and Police Staff” policy includes an appendix section, which contained a formal application form, and other sample forms needed to document and track job sharing. The Thames Valley Police Department experiences very few problems with the application, processing and actual job share guidelines as their policy and process are done in a fair and consistent manner (Thames Valley Police, 2006). If an agency were to decide to job share, the Thames Valley Police Department policy would be an excellent model to follow.

The Calgary CN Police Service’s website centered on the ‘employee life balance’ job share advantage. They focused on police work and family responsibilities. The website states “juggling the commitments of police work and the responsibilities of a family is not easy.” However, many officers have proven it can be done. Constable Wendy Medwid faced the challenge of balancing her career with her family. After the birth of her second son, Medwid decided to job share. Medwid shared the following, “The Calgary Police

Service has been a great employer. They've worked with me to find positions in policing that accommodate my professional goals and the desire to spend time with my young family" (Calgary Police, 2007).

The Victoria CN Police Department offered a great deal of information about their program. They have allowed job sharing for the last ten years. Sergeant John Craig (personal communication, August 13, 2007) and Inspector Del Manak (personal communication, August 21, 2007) gave insight into their job share program. Their job share program came about because of a police constable. A constable is equivalent to California's officer or deputy rank. The constable did some research of other agencies who allowed job sharing. The Victoria Police Board and Victoria Police Union worked together to form the job sharing letter of agreement. The department has 222 sworn employees of which eleven job share. All eleven job sharers work patrol, are women, and are at the rank of constable. Their patrol section works 12-hour shifts of four days on and four days off. Job sharers essentially work four days and then have off twelve days.

The Victoria Police Department initially approved job sharing for a short period, while employee's children are young or while they pursue their educational endeavors. Sergeant Craig said their Chief has been very flexible with the program. Since its inception, it has extended from a program of a "short period" to a permanent "life style" program. Inspector Manak said that because of demographics, a struggle to retain qualified employees and insight that they were missing a segment of the population during recruitment, they made job sharing a permanent program.

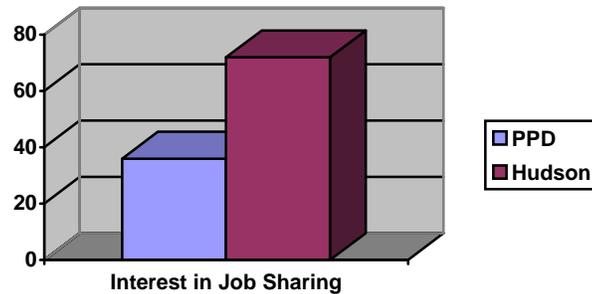
Sergeant Craig said that at first supervisor's were not "super excited" about the program due to a fear of administrative headaches. Administratively the program has worked in terms of scheduling however work flow can at times struggle. The one draw back, according to job sharers, is that is hard for them to keep up with the change in laws, and maintain training standards. However, they really enjoy the program. Sergeant Craig said that "communication" plays a large part as to the success of the program and the job sharers themselves. Inspector Manak advised that actual job sharers said they would have had to resign if it were not for job sharing. The success of their program is based on the productivity of their job sharers, the satisfaction of their job sharers and the lengthy time their job share program has been in existence.

### **Job Sharing and Its Relation to Law Enforcement**

To assess possible issues of implementing job sharing in policing, this author polled the Pasadena Police Department (PPD), a mid-sized agency located in the San Gabriel Valley, California. The 2007 survey examined the interests of employees to job share now and by the year 2016. It is based on responses of seventy-eight participants. The survey showed similar results to that of the Hudson Highland Group Inc.

## Is the demand there?

Figure 1. Interest in Job Sharing



The survey results showed similar results to that of the Hudson Highland Group, Inc. Although the final percentage number differs between the Pasadena Police Department survey and the Hudson report survey, the percentages are statistically considered consistent due to the ratio of participants surveyed between the two groups. The report indicates that the more people surveyed the higher the percentage outcome may be. Also, the results may vary due the variance of industry sectors. Overall, the results from both surveys indicate that there is some demand for job sharing.

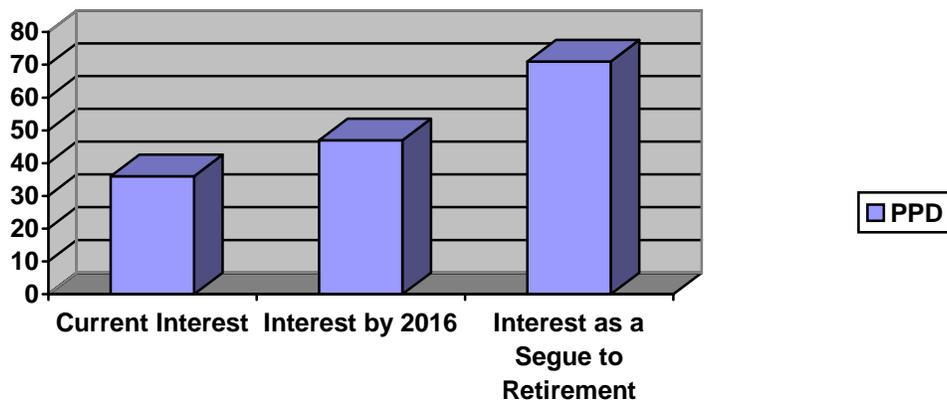
## When would an individual job share?

Both surveys consistently showed that work and life balance is the motivator for individuals looking to job share. The majority of Pasadena Police employees who showed an interest in job sharing cited having young children as the reason. Others cited pursuing educational endeavors as another reason. The Hudson respondents cited balancing family needs such as caring for children or elderly care. Hudson respondents also cited balancing study and work. The surveys were also consistent in that individuals might seek job sharing in the future as a transition into retirement, by moving from full-

time to part-time employment for an agreed period of time. The Hudson Report stated that job sharing provides the individual with the flexibility required without putting career progression on hold or deskilling.

### Interest by Police Employees to Job Share

Figure 2. Interest by Pasadena Police Employees to Job Share



#### What does the data mean?

- The results provide a case for employers to provide integrated job sharing programs as a flexible work solution to their employees
- Job sharing interest appears to vary considerably depending on the number of those surveyed
- No matter what the percentage results are, organizations need to engage directly with the issue of work life balance as part of their overall retention and attraction strategy
- The data shows that there is a compelling case for providing job sharing as a segue to retirement

- The Hudson Report statement that job sharing allows flexibility required without putting career progression on hold is consistent with Canadian Victoria Police Inspector Manak's statement that job sharers would have had to resign if it were not for job sharing
- Agencies currently using job share programs state that work and life balance is the motivator for individuals looking to job share, which is consistent with the Hudson Group and Pasadena Police survey
- Job sharers whose agencies allow them to job share take advantage of it because they have young children. Pasadena Police employees who showed an interest in job sharing cite having young children as a primary reason to job share

### **Summary**

With the emergence of the millennial generation and competition with the private sector for potential job candidates, law enforcement agencies need to be committed to offering flexible work schedules. Police departments need to recognize that flexible work practices offer benefits that help them stay in line with the private sector. Regardless of the enthusiastic debate on either side of the issue, it's important to realize that, to maintain a viable workforce, you must consider alternatives, other than traditional methods to remain competitive in attracting and retaining the workforce of the future.

To create a successful job sharing program, planning must be tailored to meet the needs of the specific law enforcement agency. According to the Hudson Highland Group, Inc., evidence confirms that when a job sharing program is properly implemented and

integrated into an organization, it significantly contributes to an organization's ability to attract and retain staff.

Imagine tomorrow's news headlines: *Recruitment at an all time low! Law enforcement to cope with mass vacancies by establishing recruitment centers outside detention centers; first-time offenders accepted.* No, police recruitment and retention has not reached this extreme...yet! However, what if? There are a number of potential strategies to impact current and future retention woes. Job sharing is one of them, and warrants serious deliberation by law enforcement leaders. For the good of employees, staffing and your communities, make job sharing a reality!

## REFERENCE LIST

Acas (n.d.). Job Sharing. *Advisory Handbook: The A-Z of work*. Retrieved May 26, 2006, from <http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=883>

Bahls, Jane Easter (February 1990). Getting Full-Time Work from Part-Time Employees. *Management Review*, volume 79. Retrieved September 29, 2006, from <http://find.galegroup.com/ips>

Calgary Police (2007). Women in Policing. *Recruiting*. Retrieved August 13, 2007, from [http://www.calgarypolice.ca/recruiting/html/women\\_in\\_policing.htm](http://www.calgarypolice.ca/recruiting/html/women_in_policing.htm)

Casey, Judi (2006). Work-Family Information on: Flexible Work Schedules. *Sloan Work and Family Research Network, Boston College, Effective Workplace Series, Issue 2*.

Hagestad, Harriet (n.d.). New Ways to Work: Telecommuting and Job Sharing. *CareerBuilder.com*. Retrieved May 26, 2006, from [www.investorsalley.com/marketcap/12-11-06/article4.html](http://www.investorsalley.com/marketcap/12-11-06/article4.html)

Hirschman, Carolyn (September 2005). Share and Share Alike. *HR Magazine, HR Management*, 54. Retrieved May 26, 2006, from [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m3495/is\\_9\\_50/ai\\_n15627800](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m3495/is_9_50/ai_n15627800)

Hudson Highland Group, Inc. (January-March 2006). Jobsharing: A Fresh Look at Flexible Working. *The Hudson Report, Employment and HR Trends, Part*

*Three, HR Insights, 5, 9.*

O'Brien, Amber (May 2004). Flexible Work Schedules a Growing Trend.

*Business Women*. Retrieved October 25, 2006, from

<http://www.snohomishcountybusinessjournal.com/archive/bw04/obrien-bw04.htm>

Pomfret, John (March 27, 2006). Police Finding It Hard to Fill Jobs.

*Washingtonpost.com*. Retrieved April 17, 2006, from

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/03/26/AR2006032600995.html>

Reference for Business (n.d.). Job Sharing. *Encyclopedia of Small Business*.

Retrieved May 26, 2006, from

<http://www.referenceforbusiness.com/small/Inc-Mail/index.html>

Shipley, Dave (2006). Job Sharing. *Magma*. Retrieved May 26, 2006, from

<http://www.magma.ca/~urbship/jobs.html>

Thames Valley Police (2006). Part Time Working and Job Share for Police

Officers and Police Staff. *Flexible Working Regulations 2002*. Retrieved

May 26, 2006, from <http://www.thamesvalley.police.uk/>

U.S. Department of Justice (April 17, 2005). Part-Time Employment and Job

Sharing Fact Sheet. *Worklife Program*. Retrieved May 26, 2006,

from <http://www.usdoj.gov/jmd/ps/worptshare.htm>

U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (n.d.). Annual Rates of

Labor Force. *Working in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Retrieved October 25, 2006,  
from <http://www.bls.gov/opub/working/page1b.htm>

U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (n.d.). Flexible Work  
Schedules. *Monthly Labor Review: The Editor's Desk*. Retrieved October  
25, 2006, from  
<http://search.msn.com/results.aspx?q=FLEXIBLE+WORK+SCHEDULES>