

Executive Job Share Case Study: Parents Magazine

The Company

Parents Magazine, owned by Meredith Publishing Group, is targeted to parents and expecting parents. It has a rate base of 2.2 million adults between the ages of 18 and 54. The magazine is focused on offering opinions about health, money, fashion, and spotlighting issues important to parents and children. Based in New York, the business has branches in Chicago, Detroit, San Francisco, and Los Angeles.

The Role: Account Manager

The Los Angeles-based Account Manager role is responsible for all advertising sales in Southern California, the second largest market for Parents. The role is customer-facing and clients demand long hours. Some travel is required for the role as well. Once a sale is made, extensive follow-up is required to ensure the service is delivered and the customer is satisfied.

How it started

Lee Zamos and Courtney Halle had worked in the same department for the same manager for several years. Ms. Halle actually reported to Ms. Zamos at one point. As pre-existing friends, they trusted each other and had the trust and respect of their manager. So, when they each made the request for more flexibility, their manager was open to it. Together they chose a job share program to ensure full coverage of the role and built-in backup for their clients.

The “Marriage”

Ms. Zamos is very direct and confident. She connects easily with people and can offer fresh, innovative solutions to problems. Ms. Halle is a numbers person with perfectionist qualities. She is focused on results and brings a lot of energy to the role. She also has a softer approach to dealing with people.

Together, Ms. Zamos and Ms. Halle are organized, accountable to each other, and excited about their growing business. Their clients love working with them because they are hard-working, energetic, responsible and fun. While it certainly is an unusual arrangement, clients quickly adapt and find it even better than expected to work with the two. Response times are very short and there is simply never a break in service. They also appreciate the creative solutions available by tapping the creative energies of two people.

Ms. Zamos and Ms. Halle have been successfully job sharing this role for 4 years and plan to continue this for the foreseeable future.

Logistics

Ms. Zamos works Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. Ms. Halle works Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. They have overlap time on Wednesday where they attend joint meetings, hand-off projects and work collaboratively together. They back up each other's vacation times, travel days, and sick time. They are also willing to work extra hours if circumstances require it.

Both partners have Blackberry devices and their own laptops, and they share a voice mail account. They are in constant communication, even on their days off. Also, they copy each other on everything to minimize the need for protracted updates. They share an assistant, whom they co-manage. They are both very efficient with their time and are adept at documenting everything.

Each person works 30 hours per week (the entire role is really more than a single person could handle so this way the company gets maximum coverage without having to employ two full time people.) Both are getting benefits and they are making slightly different salary amounts, based upon their previous experience. This has provided no conflict for the team whatsoever.

Benefits

By installing this job share program, Parents Magazine was able to retain two solid performers as well as give clients great service. Also, having refreshed, balanced employees has paid off in productivity and engagement. The energy and loyalty these two women show for their employer is unparalleled.

Overcoming Obstacles for Ultimate Success

When the role was established, there were a few hiccups in communication while the team learned to work together. Additionally, several of their peers were jealous of the relationship and less than enthusiastic about accommodating it. Each partner, also, was originally worried about letting things go, so there was an adjustment period before they could truly trust each other. However, the team was actually surprised at how well it works and how quickly they were able to integrate into the role.

The biggest challenge, occurred when Parents was acquired by Meredith. The team had to prove to the management team in New York that this arrangement works so it would be left intact. They collected client testimonials and rallied the support of their peers, who by then were ecstatic about the arrangement. Ultimately, their superior job performance and top sales results convinced corporate this was the ideal way to work.