



J GADD
ASSOCIATES



Wallace & Gromit co-founder, David Sproxton,
talks handing the business to employees

WORKING TOGETHER





David Sproxton, co-founder of the UK's biggest animation co-op, is navigating the employee ownership process in this interview.

Stay on track

“Having investigated employee ownership options since 2011, I knew just how much work was needed to nail down the various moving parts; new governance structures, financial and legal implications, not to mention the stakeholder management piece. Formalising our relationship with JGA in October 2016 was critical to our swift completion of the process. The team helped us map out, and systematically work through, every step of the journey - from assessing the legal ramifications to setting up employee representative groups.”

“With what felt like an insurmountable ‘to do’ list in front of me, it really eased the burden having JGA’s wealth of knowledge to draw from. We were able to pre-empt and avoid common pitfalls, and most importantly, were kept on track throughout, enabling us to move forward quickly and efficiently. Thanks to JGA’s deep expertise and insight, the whole process was wrapped up within a year of making the announcement to our employees.”

Engage the right people, from the start

“Like any major organisational change complex emotional issues arise and engaging the right people is essential. Luckily, JGA really get the people piece. Their creation and facilitation of key representative bodies and engagement programmes helped us maintain a constant and open dialogue with employees.”

“This was really beneficial in navigating a key two-stage shift at Aardman; working through our employee ownership model while simultaneously empowering key groups to understand, and transition to, their new roles. From supporting us in deciding how partners select representatives, to creating role descriptions and helping representatives understand their new roles through a series of workshops, JGA’s formalised approach to setting up the employee representative group really worked for us.”

“This process was a very steep learning curve for everyone at Aardman. The early engagement helped people feel well prepared for their new roles delivering and maintaining the new model from the outset, including myself as founder.”

A photograph of a man with a white beard and glasses, wearing a red jacket, raising his right arm in a celebratory gesture. He is surrounded by other people in a social setting, possibly a restaurant or event space.

“Jeremy brings deep insight and a wealth of experience, including from John Lewis. Most importantly, he took the time to get to know our business culture and it really paid off.

My suggestion? Take the dive with an expert and make JGA your partner.”

Company, **Aardman animations**, shares his top tips for

Ask yourself; what next?

“For Peter Lord and me as co-founders, dealing with ‘what next’, and the inevitable shift in authority that came with handing over Aardman to our people was a huge emotional journey. Being prepared for, and aware of, your reactions to this process as an owner, co-owner or board member is essential. There is a mourning process to work through, anxieties and doubts will inevitably appear along the way.”

“Jeremy’s insight helped me manage the exiting process and understand how I could continue to engage with Aardman in way that’s meaningful for me and the business; through ambassadorship, ongoing support and training, as well as local community involvement.”

Take the dive, with an expert

“Taking the employee ownership route was always the right thing to do for Aardman. It’s been received really well among employees and the animation industry at large.”

“With so much to work through, I do believe you need someone with specialist knowledge and a structured approach on your side. Jeremy is an incredibly convivial guy, who brings deep insight and a wealth of experience, including from John Lewis. Most importantly, he took the time to get to know our business culture and it really paid off.”

JGA roles



Transition support



Senior leadership mentoring



Employee survey delivery



Engagement: supporting internal and external comms



Engagement: employee rep group creation



Summary

J Gadd Associates (JGA) have been working with Aardman since 2016, delivering a range of services to help the company create and execute their employee ownership transition plan.

This includes the creation and facilitation of key representative groups and engagement programmes empowering the co-founders, board members and employees to deliver the new model through clearly defined roles and responsibilities, and improved two-way communication.

Aardman's employee ownership model continues to be shaped through the feedback surfaced in their first employee survey, developed and delivered by JGA.

About Aardman animations

Aardman animations are a four times Academy Award® winning Bristol based animation studio. Aardman are known for films made using stop-motion clay animation techniques, including Wallace & Gromit, Shaun the Sheep, Creature Comforts and Chicken Run, among others.

Contact us to explore how J Gadd Associates can help you:

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