

Entrepreneurial duo realise business ambition with employee ownership

Two business owners of a bespoke civil and structural engineering consultancy firm have realised a life's goal in adopting employee ownership, just six years after founding the company.

Alistair Christie and Richard Gillespie of Christie Gillespie Consulting Engineers have taken their firm to £1m plus turnover after both leaving a multinational to start their own engineering business in 2015.

Christie Gillespie, which took on the £9m contract of the Award Winning 4-North development in central Edinburgh, has just won a new £18m contract for the major refurbishment and extension of the Edinburgh One office building, located in the capital's prime Exchange area.

The duo have now turned to employee ownership specialist, [Ownership Associates](#), to implement their long term succession plan which will see all 20 plus members of staff gain a share in the business through an Employee Ownership Trust [EOT].

It is hoped the move to employee ownership will create a lasting legacy for its loyal team, to whom the owners have attributed the success of the business.

Richard Gillespie, Co-founder of Christie Gillespie, said:

“This is a move that has been six years in the making. From the get-go Alistair and I were determined to leave a lasting legacy for our staff which centred on our core values of generating exceptional client-driven service.

“We have been fortunate enough to have an extremely high retention rate amongst our staff, with just one colleague leaving us in the six years of operating. It’s this dedication and drive that has reinforced our decision to go down the employee ownership route.”

Alistair and Richard started their journey in 2015 after they both left WSP Global. The pair went from working on major projects such as Forth Valley Royal Hospital in Larbert, the Edinburgh Gateway Rail Station and RBS Gogarburn Headquarters; to beginning their new venture initially working on small domestic projects.

However, the duo built the business up and soon began landing bigger contracts with greater workload, regularly working with firms like Muir Group, CALA Homes, Knight Property Group, and Intelligent Growth Solutions, amongst many others.

The business is currently spread across bases in Dundee, the Lothians and Fife, with plans to further expand the team and geographical spread in the near future.

Fellow Co-founder, Alistair Christie, said: “We had envisioned this idea of adopting a succession model for the business when we first started, we just didn’t know what that would be. We decided quickly against selling to another firm as it meant the possibility of staff relocation or job loss and a risk to the company ethos and culture built on strong client focus and communication.

“It became clear through the years that some form of employee ownership model was our number one choice, but we didn’t quite know how it would work. We approached Scottish Enterprise for support and they introduced us to Carole Leslie at Ownership

Associates. She explained the process and instantly put our minds at ease.

“It’s emotional discussing the succession plan of something you have built from scratch, but Carole understood how we felt, how the staff would feel, and what needed to be done moving forward. There was no stone left unturned.

Carole said: “Christie Gillespie is a business that has always put its staff first, and so it felt like the natural progression for this engineering firm to embark on an EOT.

“Under Alistair and Richard’s leadership the business has gone from strength to strength as it becomes an ever-growing competitive player in the Scottish construction market. To help the pair realise a long time ambition is a privilege.

“This is yet another fantastic addition to the employee ownership community which continues to grow rapidly across all sectors.”

Operating across Scotland and beyond, Alistair and Richard hope this transition will see the company continue to flourish, and develop the new leaders to take the business forward to further success.

Richard added: “We recently held our first team meeting following our transition to employee ownership, and already we could see every member of staff was more engaged than ever before – it was the most productive meeting we’ve ever had.

“Irrespective of an EOT, Alistair and I have always tried to engage with our staff in a positive way, but now they each have a genuine stake in the success of this business, and we have noticed big differences already.

“Adopting employee ownership is undoubtedly one of the biggest achievements in our careers.”

The employee ownership trust was introduced in the Finance Act

of 2014 to encourage companies to consider a sale to employees as a feasible succession solution.

Ownership Associates works exclusively within the employee-owned sector, supporting companies on their move to employee ownership and working with established employee owned businesses enabling them to maximise the ownership advantage.

<https://www.christiegillespie.com/home-1.html>

<https://ownershipassociates.co.uk/>



Employees of Christie Gillespie Consulting Engineers