

# DJS celebrates becoming employee-owned at 20th birthday party!

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**There was music, there was cake and there was plenty of sunshine – our DJS birthday celebrations were finally underway...**

On a baking hot day in early September, we were finally able to get the whole company together to celebrate 20 years of DJS Research as a market research agency, and the start of our [employee ownership](#) journey.



Uniting the team physically has been difficult over the last 18 months due to the [Covid-19 crisis](#), but the lifting of restrictions (which handily came just after our 20th anniversary!) meant we were able to start making some plans and throw a bit of a party!

So, against the backdrop of the tranquil Strines countryside where our head office is located, the sound of laughter, music and chatter once more filled the air as staff were reunited en masse for the first time since the day we packed up our desks and set off for home back in March 2020.

The long overdue meet-up brought together colleagues and teams from both our Stockport and Leeds offices, as well as our [network of remote workers](#) from locations across the UK. It was also a great opportunity to welcome the many new faces to the

company who have joined us over the last 12 months as the business has continued to grow in all areas, from research to operations.



The celebration was the first time Alasdair Gleed stood before us in his role as Managing Director – one of the changes brought about by the company’s restructure to employee ownership. Sadly, former DJS owners Danny and Ali Sims (now DJS Chairman, and Research Director, respectively) were unable to attend due to self isolation.

### **A new chapter...**

As the musician crooned along to his guitar in the stifling heat and staff got reacquainted over drinks and mezze, we caught up with Al to ask him about his new role and what lies ahead for DJS as an employee-owned company:



*“One of the first things I'm doing in my MD role is writing a strategic plan for DJS for the next two or three years. The first stage is to speak to our staff and get their views on our strengths and weaknesses as a company, as well as what our opportunities are,” he said.*

*“The one thing I've realised throughout this process is how many clever people we have at the company, with a lot of ideas. I think we are going to be able to come up with a good, exciting plan for how we can tackle a few things, do a few new things, do a few things differently – and as we've created this plan together, hopefully everyone will be bought into it!”*



The get-together also gave staff the opportunity to meet John-Paul Simpson, who is supporting DJS with the move to employee ownership, acting as an independent external trustee for DJS Research's Employee Ownership Trust (EOT). Successfully transitioning his own business to employee ownership in 2018, he told us some of the benefits he's seen for his own company over the last few years – and what we can expect as we embark upon our new path:

*“We've noticed that for attracting new talent, employee ownership is really helpful – people want to talk about it; also, for retaining staff it is very positive as it gives employees more insights into the business, such as how it is run, etc. Staff feel more involved and engaged,” he said.*

He also advised that the transition to employee ownership is not instant; it doesn't just happen overnight, but rather a steady evolution over weeks, months and years.

*“Employee ownership is a process which takes time – it's a journey,” he said. “People like the sense of being able to move the company forward for the benefit of all staff, rather than just for a few people.”*





Like all good birthday parties, there was a fancy cake, aptly decorated in our DJS colours and displaying our new employee-owned stamp.

By mid-afternoon, the festivities were interrupted briefly so [James](#) could say a few words, followed by a chorus of 'Happy Birthday' and a gallant effort to cut through the generous layer of solid icing with a plastic knife from the buffet table. While the cake remained in one piece (the knife, not so much), laughter erupted across the pavilion...

And with that, the team were back together.