

Planning and partnership leads to simplified talent management for New Zealand's most paw-pular pet care brand



New Zealand's most popular pet care brand and leading pet company Animates and Animates Vetcare, has been in the market for more than 20 years, growing its operations to 45 stores, 28 grooming salons and almost 20 vet clinics. It employs more than 900 people including veterinary professionals, groomers and specialist permanent and casual retailers. Animates continues to grow at a strong pace, even through economic challenges, as they help people do what is best for their pets and their wallets.



Employees: 950

Industry: Animal Health & Retail

Region: New Zealand

Customer since: 2023

Business impact:

Improved efficiency, processes and simplicity across the business to meet the varied and specialised needs of team members across 45 retail stores, 28 grooming salons and 18 vet clinics.

Products used:

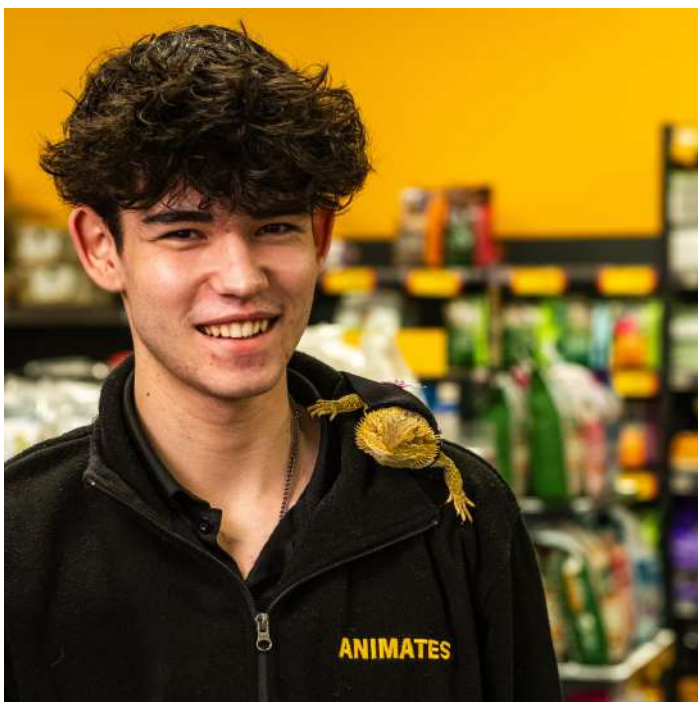
- ✦ Recruiting
- ✦ Performance
- ✦ HR
- ✦ Compensation
- ✦ Learning & Content

Animates' previous system, dubbed "The Cage", was a simple intranet with document management, a learning management system and recruitment, which had applicant tracker capability.

Animates' Head of People and Capability, Juliet Davies, explained: "We didn't have a single source of truth. We were relying on our payroll system for our employee data. Nothing was integrated. The system wasn't sophisticated enough to meet our needs, which meant a lot of paperwork for the People team on spreadsheets, SmartSheets, and anything we could find to help track and manage employee information. Everything was paper-based, time-consuming, and a lot of administration."

Coupled with a clunky system, Juliet was concerned that this could lead to an increase in employee turnover through the business not having a system capable of supporting structured learner-led development including retail career pathway, which was impacting engagement.

To meet the expanding needs of the business, Animates needed a secure all-in-one solution that was user-friendly and could serve as a single source of truth.



Defining Success

After researching what was available in the market and making preliminary contact with a number of solution providers, the People and Capability team at Animates developed a clear idea of the team member experience they wanted and therefore the features and outcomes needed for their system. After narrowing the field down to just a few frontrunners, they released a Request for Tender with firm views of what success looked like.

Animates' diligence and research made it easy for Cornerstone to propose a customised solution that they knew would meet the evolving needs of the business and its people.

Why Cornerstone?

After thoroughly reviewing their options, the Animates team decided that what set Cornerstone apart from other vendors was their ability to support and facilitate the organisation's learning and development goals and provide a single platform to meet their people's needs.

"We needed a really good learning platform to support that competency-based learning we wanted. Before choosing Cornerstone, we'd already developed retail competencies and knew what we were looking for. Learning was the most important thing for us, and the other big deciding factor was that we only wanted one platform. When we already have other employee platforms, we didn't want multiple platforms for different areas of the employee lifecycle" Juliet explained.



We needed a really good learning platform to support the competency-based learning we wanted.

— Juliet Davies,
Head of People and Capability, Animates

Seamless implementation

The Animates People team was a compact seven people, and one was Health, Safety and Wellbeing and therefore not involved in the process. The installation process needed to be smooth, with little margin for error. Once the board approved the proposal the team swung into action. "Cornerstone's implementation partner, Tomorrow's People, recommended we do it in two phases," said Juliet. "We started with HR and Learning. Then, we moved on to recruitment, onboarding, performance, and succession together. So, we ultimately did it in two halves."

The process took less than 11 months from start to finish. "I think Cornerstone and Tomorrow's People have been incredible from the start and very clear. Our project manager at Tomorrow's People kept everyone on track with their weekly tasks and deliverables," said Juliet.

"Everyone played their part. On our side, the Animates team was really engaged in the project, and we all wanted to achieve the same result. There was also no difficulty undertaking the change management process, and I think all of that made a huge difference."

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The only word I can use is synergy. It has been so synergistic the whole time. Everyone is on the same page. We've had nothing but support and positive advice, feedback and guidance.

— **Hannah Fossum,**
L&D Manager, Animates



Stress-Free Onboarding Process

Just as the implementation process was fuss-free, the onboarding process could not have been smoother. The team at Animates took a blended approach. They hosted an online webinar series for each module, which team members attended based on their division and the module's relevance to them, making it more targeted to how they would interact with the platform for both HR and learning.

"We also produced documented workflows so that team members would have quick reference guides and cheat sheets that they'd be able to access for a process that might not be something they're doing on a daily basis," explained Hannah Fossum, Animates L&D Manager "All of our team members, who were administrators of each part of a module, hosted drop-in hours for people to be able to come along and learn."

"It was such a change for the team members to get used to an all-encompassing employee platform - moving from a paper form to something automated. So, the ongoing support from our team to our customers internally was critical."

You are currently logged in as Juliet Davies



**Animates have named their Cornerstone solution “the pawtal” internally.*

ROI

Given the speed of implementation and that Animates is still finalising Career Pathways, it's too soon to formally measure success through quantitative data. However, the Animates team quickly cite anecdotal indicators for success: "We can see that users are searching for their own content. They are proactively seeking optional learning based on workplace situations they're experiencing on the retail floor or in the clinic. People are taking ownership of their learning and development, which is great to see. In terms of measurement metrics, we are currently relying on that kind of anecdotal evidence, as we're still in the very early stages, since launching."

What's next?

The next step for Animates is finalising the Career Pathways component, which was another critical driver for selecting Cornerstone. Hannah explained: "While we can pull in development plans and observation checklist, it's not just the formal learning aspect that's important for us. It's also the other parts of the platform that work well to complement a proper learning experience. It's a whole journey led by team leaders to help team members get to where they want to go within their careers. Developing and delivering that will be very effective for us."

Animates is also building on its learning content. Given the nature of the business and its trusted status in terms of pet care advice, it must rely heavily on its bespoke content, said Hannah: "We're definitely tapping into the Cornerstone learning library and pulling on excellent resources, like some of the mind tools and Ted Talk assets that are in there. Fantastic."

"There's no point in us reproducing something fit for purpose. But we predominantly create our own learning content. As a trusted source of pet-care information, all of our learning has to be viewed through a lens of health and well-being of pets for our retail team members in particular."

"There's something unique about our retail business that needs to be captured through bespoke learning. We are currently working on evolving our retail career pathways. So we've only touched the surface so far," said Hannah.

Animates is working on content for its sales assistants and senior sales assistants and providing opportunities to move into store leadership roles and "step up" roles. The focus for Animates is evolving its leadership competency framework and its leadership learning offering into the portal.

Learn how companies around the globe use Cornerstone to give leaders and their teams the tools and training needed to unlock people's full potential. Start your demo with Cornerstone today!