

From Kyrgyzstan to the U.S. – 6 Ways I Turned My Vision into a Thriving Business Overseas

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Born and raised in Kyrgyzstan, I've always been captivated by the power of technology and its potential to transform lives. This fascination led me to pursue a career in software development, where my true passion lies in not just creating software but in bringing these solutions to market.

In 2007, along with a couple of friends, I embarked on a journey to start a software company. However, we realized that the domestic market in Kyrgyzstan, with its population of just around seven million, was too small to support our ambitions. We needed to think globally to achieve our envisioned success, and it became clear that the U.S. market was our best shot. Here's how I launched my U.S. business from overseas.

1. Choosing the right market

After conducting market research, we decided to create and sell classified ads software scripts, pre-built solutions that enable online entrepreneurs to create classified ad websites similar to Craigslist. Although the business showed initial promise, it eventually stalled. I didn't see this as a failure but as a lesson. It underscored the importance of choosing the right market with sustainable demand. In 2008, I pivoted to job board software, which I believed had more promise.

The U.S. has many niche job boards, each requiring specialized solutions, and I saw an opportunity to cater to this market. Within a few months, I hired a couple of developers, and they developed the software based on my instruction. We landed our first customers, and our new business began to take off.

Recommendation: Be prepared to pivot when necessary. Choose a market that has potential and aligns with your expertise and long-term vision. Don't be afraid to adjust your focus as you learn more about your market's needs.

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2. Incorporating your business in the U.S.

One of the first steps in establishing credibility in the U.S. market was incorporating the company in the U.S. Fortunately; this was relatively straightforward, thanks to numerous firms offering incorporation services and providing virtual addresses for a small fee. This process is even more streamlined today, with companies like Stripe offering services specifically designed to help overseas startups establish U.S. entities.

Recommendation: Incorporate your business in the U.S. to gain credibility with customers and partners. Use modern services that simplify this process, allowing you to focus on growing your business rather than spending time on administrative tasks.

3. Navigating banking challenges

Running a business in the U.S. also required a U.S. business bank account, which proved to be a significant challenge back in 2008. No bank was willing to open an account online for a

non-U.S. business owner, so in 2010, I had to travel to the U.S. to open my first account.

Fortunately, things have changed since then, with some banks now offering the option to open accounts remotely for overseas business owners. Mercury Bank, for example, has become a leader in this space, making it easier for entrepreneurs to run a U.S.-based business from anywhere in the world.

Recommendation: Secure a U.S. bank account as soon as possible, as it will be essential for handling transactions, paying taxes and establishing a financial presence in the U.S. Select banks that cater to international entrepreneurs and offer remote account setup and management services.

4. Balancing operational efficiency and growth

For a time, I enjoyed the benefits of low operational and living costs in Kyrgyzstan while earning revenues from the U.S. market. However, as the business grew, so did the demands of our customers. More clients required regular video calls and meetings, which became increasingly inconvenient due to the time zone difference. Additionally, we saw an opportunity to expand by catering to associations and government organizations, which often prefer working with vendors they can meet in person. This required me to attend various events and conferences in the U.S., something that was nearly impossible while living in Kyrgyzstan.

Recommendation: As your business grows, be prepared to reassess your operational model. Consider the importance of proximity to your market, especially if your clients value face-to-face interactions. If necessary, be open to relocating to serve your customers better.

5. Making a move to the U.S.

By 2020, it became clear that to take my company to the next level, I needed to move to the U.S. Fortunately, the U.S. government offers several visa options for entrepreneurs. The E-2 Treaty Investor Visa was the most appropriate for my situation, allowing me to live and work in the U.S. as long as I maintained an active business that employed at least two U.S. workers and had received a substantial capital investment.

To meet these criteria, I hired a U.S. lawyer who helped me prepare my application. Given the business's success over the years, obtaining approval was not challenging. In 2023, my family and I moved to the U.S. Since our company operates remotely, we could choose where to live.

We chose Boulder, Colorado, a city that felt familiar due to its mountainous environment, similar to what we were accustomed to in Kyrgyzstan. Additionally, Boulder's proximity to Denver International Airport made it convenient for me to travel to conferences and meetings across the country.

Recommendation: If your business growth requires a presence in the U.S., explore visa options that best suit your situation. Hire a qualified immigration lawyer to navigate the process and ensure you meet all necessary criteria.

6. The importance of resilience

Relocating to the U.S. has been a game-changer for my company. It has allowed us to establish the company as a leading provider of AI-powered matching and job board software for organizations. We've been able to onboard some of our largest clients to date. This level of growth would have been difficult to achieve while operating solely from Kyrgyzstan, and we have even bigger plans for the future.

Reflecting on my entrepreneurial journey, resilience stands out as the key lesson. From the early days in Kyrgyzstan to establishing a significant presence in the U.S., my company's evolution has been marked by learning, adaptation and strategic thinking. The ability to bounce back from setbacks, pivot when necessary and keep pushing forward has been the driving force behind our success.

Recommendation: Resilience is crucial for aspiring entrepreneurs. Embrace change, understand your market deeply and continuously refine your business strategy. These qualities will help you overcome challenges and build a thriving business.

Launching a U.S.-focused business from overseas is more feasible today than ever before. With the right approach and determination, it is possible to build a successful business that transcends borders and significantly impacts your chosen industry. I hope my journey will inspire other entrepreneurs to seize the opportunity and advance their ventures. With persistence and a clear strategy, you can turn your entrepreneurial vision into reality, no matter where you begin.

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