

Star✈ing-Up In America

A film by Tarik Ansari

TRT: 30 minutes

Release Date: 2/28/11

Synopsis

Starting-Up In America is a documentary about the issues faced by international Silicon Valley Entrepreneurs with US Immigration.

The film was produced over the span of two months with the generous support of backers on Kickstarter and from word-of-mouth by Twitter users.

You can get involved by following us and participating in our on-going effort to raise awareness on the issue. The Startup Visa Act is the main effort addressing the issues faced by those entrepreneurs.

The Participants

Tarik Ansari

Country: France

Growing up in France, Tarik was born with the engineer and entrepreneur bug. He began hacking circuit boards at age 8 and by 14 had already built a web hosting company. By the end of his second year in college, Tarik had managed to create the first teacher review website in France and Europe, which grew virally amid controversy regarding its methods of rating teacher performance. Tarik studied abroad in England, Mexico and China before graduating from EFREI with a Masters in Computer Science at age twenty. He moved to the Bay Area in late 2007 to work on cutting-edge consumer web technology.

Carlo Alberto Degli Atti

Country: Italy

Carlo Alberto is an entrepreneur with a passion for technology. Just turned 38, Carlo Alberto is in the process of founding his third enterprise. Since 2004 Carlo Alberto has increasingly focused on the development of a software aimed at gathering and analyzing feedback. Today, myK is mentioned among the most important Enterprise Feedback Management (EFM) solutions, the only one developed in Southern Europe. myk is the only EFM solution which allows to analyze internal as well as external data, eventually crossing one with the other “within a click”. myK is the only software which complies with the market standards for the integration with enterprise architecture.

Yu-kai Chou

Country: Taiwan/Canada

Yu-kai is the Founder of RewardMe (<http://rewardmeapp.com>). He is also a Social Media Speaker/Lecturer at places like Stanford, Google, Draper Richards Retreat, Cina.org, and the Internet Marketing Conference. Yu-kai was selected as one of the 50 young leaders of California to attend Arnold Schwarzenegger's Governor's Global Climate Summit. His startup was also rated on Mashable as one of the Top 10 Social Networks for Gen-Ys as well as being first place in Jason Calacanis' This Week In Startups - LA and was interviewed on the show. Yu-kai is also a board advisor for a number of organizations and startup companies in California and Israel. Yu-kai graduated with a degree in International Economics from UCLA, specializing in China's Green Economy. **Vinny Lingham**

Vinny Lingham**Country: South Africa**

Vinny Lingham is the CEO of Web 2.0 startup, Yola. He is also the co-founder of SiliconCape.com, an NGO based in South Africa, that aims to turn the Cape Town region into a Technology Hub. Yola has raised a total of \$25m in Venture Capital and has offices in San Francisco & Cape Town. Vinny lives and works in San Francisco. Vinny was previously the founder & CEO of global search marketing experts, incuBeta and its subsidiary, Clicks2Customers. Incubeta's principal business is Clicks2Customers, with offices in the US, UK & Cape Town.

Ronald Mannak Country: Netherlands**Augusto Marietti Country: Italy**

Augusto is the CEO of Mashape, the first-ever marketplace for APIs. He is passionate about every hard technology that impacts people's lives. Usually he claims to transform the world in one click, but thankfully the co-founders pull him out of the sky when he is dreaming too high. During his free time Augusto can be found 3000 miles above Napa Valley, while he is Skydiving.

Ben Way**Country: United Kingdom**

Ben is one of the leading entrepreneurs in the UK, with well over a decade of business experience and nearly 15 years in technology. He is considered a leading voice on technology and innovation, being highlighted in the media spotlight for both his expertise and his pro social work that cover everything from developing new environmental technologies to appearing on television shows such as The Secret Millionaire.

Even with such a demanding schedule he stills finds time doing what he is best at; inventing and works personally with clients of the Rainmakers to make sure that they get his full expertise and ability to deliver complicated, demanding projects successfully.

Brian Wong**Country: Canada**

Brian is the founder of kiip (pronounced "keep"), a stealth startup focused on mobile in-game advertising, backed by True Ventures. Very recently, Techcrunch and the Wall Street Journal called him the "youngest person to ever receive funding by a venture capital firm". Last year, at only 18-years-old, he was an early Bachelors of Commerce graduate from the University of British Columbia, after skipping four grades in elementary and high school.

He was recently lauded in Mashable as one of "The Top 5 Young Entrepreneurs to Watch", and the Vancouver Sun called him "a budding internet visionary". He was also recently a recipient of the Top 20 Under 20 awards in all of Canada, and the Impact Young Entrepreneur of the Year award. He is also the youngest charter member of the C100, an invitation only Silicon Valley based organization of top Canadian entrepreneurs, executives, and venture capitalists.

Declined Interviews

We wanted to interview the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) as well as the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), the two main agencies responsible for visa issuance and territory admission besides the overseas embassies (Department of State). Both declined to be interviewed, here are the questions we wish we were able to ask them.

Questions for the Customs and Border Protection

(1) What is the CBP admission policy for Entrepreneurs on a B-1 visa? Context:

"Prospect entrepreneurs who will later apply for E-2, EB-5 or other visas (and possibly the prospect startup visa) need to enter the U.S. as visitor waivers or B-1 visas to establish the business, many of them feel on a edge situation as they logically usually don't have a job in their home country when they start their venture, don't have all the meeting dates yet on arrival or even a precise return date."

Sub-questions:

What are the recommendations of the CBP to those entrepreneurs?

What is the policy of the CBP regarding the inspection of those documents? What is the maximum amount of status time granted on entry on a B-1 visa by the CBP?

(2) Does the look of a job-offer or invitation-letter letterhead matter to the CBP? Context:

"Several entrepreneurs mentioned the CBP overly evaluating the merit of their documentation by the letterhead of the letters they have, is this true or a subjective perspective of the entrepreneurs?"

Sub-questions:

Is the CBP the authority on the admission of Canadians entering the US on visa/status? In the view of the CBP, is the TN status a proper status for entrepreneurs?

(3) What is the CBP stance on admission positions that are contrary to information entrepreneurs claim they received?

Context:

"An entrepreneur was advised by the US Embassy in Italy to simply conduct his business trip on a business waiver (a trip for a branch expansion), on admission, the position he got from the CBP was completely different and contradictory to the information he received from the US Embassy."

Sub-questions:

What does the CBP implements to help inform foreign entrepreneurs traveling to the US on what they need to do or prepare?

Several entrepreneurs stated "the admission officers often know little about technology startups when they review documents", CBP comment?

(4) We have reports of repeat secondary inspections for entrepreneurs. CBP Comment? Context:

"An overwhelming large portion of the entrepreneurs interviewed or who contacted us reported repeat, sometimes systematic secondary inspections, and reported wait times of over 90 minutes and/or elevated stress."

(5) Are entrepreneurs entering the country several times as a business visitors flagged?

Sub-question:

What about entrepreneurs managing several ventures and coming on different motive (different companies) for their trips, does the CBP make the distinction?

(6) In light of the current absence of a founder visa in the US Immigration System, is the CBP implementing any internal policies to lower entry burden or stress for entrepreneurs entering the US with the alternative employment visas options they may have?

Context:

"The Startup Visa is not law yet and no employment visa exist for founders (a "founder" here is an entrepreneur raising outside funding), as a result these entrepreneurs sometimes have to use alternative visas, i.e. TN, O-1 etc. for which they can often be just over the line of qualification. Once they receive those visa, their entry still depend on the CBP, does the CBP receive or evaluate the documentation of those entrepreneurs in any special way?"

Sub-question:

Similarly, in earlier venture stage or for entrepreneurs entering as non-employees, does the CBP implement any internal policies to lower entry burden or stress for entrepreneurs entering the US on business waiver or B-1 visas?

(7) Would the Startup Visa (also called "EB-6") enter law, how much time would CBP take to implement it for their part?

Context:

"Any training of officers required? Software update? Is it implemented by the CBP at all?"

Sub-question:

If CBP had to implement anything, how much time did it take CBP to implement entry procedure for the EB-5 visa of 1990?

Credits

Directed by

Tarik Ansari

Produced by

Basil Glew-Galloway

Associate Producer

Derek Dabkoski

Camera Operators

Chloe Nichols Kindrid Parker Basil Glew-Galloway

Sound by

Jake Atlas

Edited by

Kindrid Parker

Basil Glew-Galloway

Featuring

Tarik Ansari, Carlo Alberto Degli Atti, Yu-Kai Chou, Vinny Lingham, Ronald Mannak, Augusto Marietti Ben Way Brian Wong

Special thanks to

Massimo Sgrelli Brad Feld Robb Kunz Elizabeth U Stefania Francua Flippe Augusto Marietti Mike Shaver Carlo Alberto Degli Atti George H.

Alex Mark Pollard Jeremy Nulik Jason Putorti Hunter Owens Christian Owens Ethan Resnick Ben Reyes Dan Martell Gaurav Kishore César Salazar Nathaniel Whittemore Richard Tibbetts Alberto

Padilla Luengas Oza Klanjsek Philipp Berner Andreas M. Brændhaugen Justin Ip Vikrant Ramteke
Alejandro Corpeño Adrián Catalán

Kevin Hartz Matthew M. Gonzales Adam D'Augelli Mathias J. Holzmann Rouge Sur Blanc Purvi
Rajani Majid Fard Adam Wride Emily Nakano Co Joshua Chen Damir Zeki? Don Ryan Antonio
Evans Ben Way Niall Smart Kirin Kalia Edy Sulistyو Henry Liu Courtney Guertin Sebastian
Mortelmans Jacob Brody Dave Heal Azymnis Brian Wong Jonathan Jaeger Tim Rosenblatt Craig
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