

Meet Centuro Global, the platform revolutionising international expansion

As part of our quick founder questions series - or QFQs - we spoke to Zain Ali, cofounder and CEO of Centuro Global about building a new category for global expansion services and the related compliance and regulatory issues.

Temps de lecture : minute

16 August 2023

The genesis of Centuro Global was my experience as a lawyer at an international law firm. Handling cross-border cases for various multinational companies, I repeatedly faced the challenge of navigating complex global regulations.

I collaborated with local firms in different jurisdictions, managed data using spreadsheets, and engaged in multiple rounds of communication with clients to explain technical requirements. However, the companies still required support from various departments within my firm and external providers in areas such as tax, accounting, immigration, and relocation. This process was very expensive and often caused delays.

My co-founder and I saw the need for a streamlined solution. We created a single platform that empowers companies to operate anywhere successfully, compliantly and efficiently.

Tell me about the business - what it is, what

it aims to achieve, who you work with, how you reach customers and so on?

Centuro Global offers comprehensive services for companies expanding globally. From tax and legal assistance to immigration and relocation, our innovative platform provides a centralised hub for accessing the expertise and services of our global team. With our approach and three-step process, clients can easily and compliantly establish their presence in different countries.

First, we have an extensive database of compliance information for over 170 countries which we have used to build a variety of tools to help companies access reliable and up-to-date information at the click of a button. This saves time and money, helping them make quick decisions or put high level plans in place before speaking to an expert.

Second, we act as a one stop shop for all global expansion services in every country, so clients no longer need to source and manage multiple providers. Our team of on the ground experts across HR, tax, accounting, immigration and more are on hand to deliver high quality advice.

Third, we have a proprietary centralised dashboard and case management system that allows companies to track all cases and manage their global operations. All cross-border projects, from entity setup to tax matters, can be tracked in one place.

How has the business evolved since its launch?

We set out to build a global expansion management platform in January of 2020, launching an MVP product 1 year later. This first version of the platform was essentially a “Wikipedia” for global expansion. During this

year, we serviced clients as a traditional consulting firm and once the MVP was ready, we started onboarding existing clients to get their feedback.

Throughout 2021, we constantly built on the product, launching a variety of tools, features and functionality and then launching a client facing case management experience, officially releasing this version of the product to the public in January 2022. We have experienced remarkable growth in that time.

Constant client feedback has enabled us to consistently and quickly enhance our technology to provide a world class user experience. We've also built several strategic partnerships, and developed our positioning as the 'go-to' platform for global expansion.

In the past 18 months our team has tripled in size. We have supported clients with entity set ups in over 100 countries via our platform and in Q1 and Q2 of 2023 alone, we processed over 1,000 visas for our clients.

Another highlight has been putting on the Centuro Global Expansion Conference for the past two years running. These events have attracted speakers from some of the world's largest brands and businesses, sharing insights on the difficulties of scaling internationally and developing purpose-led businesses.

Tell us about the working culture at Centuro Global

Building a tech startup is hard. Providing global professional services is hard. Put those two together to try and build a new category and you end up with a significant challenge.

We therefore take pride in embracing this challenge and it drives us to excel and innovate. Our culture is deeply rooted in several core values

that have shaped our team and made us stand out in the industry.

First and foremost, hard work is the foundation of our success. We understand that in order to pioneer a new category and achieve greatness, we need to put in the effort and go the extra mile. But it's not just about individual effort; we believe in the power of collaboration. We foster an environment where every team member's voice is heard and valued. Ideas can come from anyone, regardless of their role or seniority, and we encourage open discussions that lead to creative solutions. We foster a sense of camaraderie and unity which fuels our determination to overcome obstacles and achieve our goals.

Diversity is a key aspect of our team, and we celebrate it wholeheartedly. With a 50% female-to-male ratio across the entire team, as well as the leadership team, we strive for gender equality and inclusivity. Our team members come from various nationalities, ethnic backgrounds, and locations worldwide, creating a rich tapestry of perspectives and ideas. This diversity of thought is our secret sauce, enabling us to approach problems from multiple angles and find unique solutions.

Trust is the bedrock of our culture. We operate on a foundation of mutual trust, giving our team the autonomy and flexibility they need to thrive.

Finally, beyond work, we emphasise the value of building long-lasting relationships. Our friendly and social environment enables us to forge strong connections with each other, our clients and partners. These relationships not only make the workplace enjoyable but also strengthen collaboration and teamwork.

How are you funded?

We are a venture-backed company. We bootstrapped the business initially but recently raised £3.3M in funding.

What has been your biggest challenge so far and how have you overcome this?

The legal and consulting sectors have a way of doing things and that's how things have been done for a very long time. Our approach is completely new and innovative and given that we are effectively building a new category/ industry we have had to put in time to educate potential clients and partners to build up trust in our methodology. Even when people love the idea of a solution, it can be scary to drop what you've been used to doing for years and try something novel and untested.

We also decided to offer end to end services in over 170 countries at launch, which has been a mammoth task.

To overcome both those challenges was no mean feat, and the secret sauce shall remain secret for now!

How does Centuro Global answer an unmet need?

McKinsey reports a staggering 80% of international ventures fail due to compliance and regulatory issues. Our focus at Centuro Global is to tackle this alarming failure rate with tech-empowered global expansion solutions and compliance tools.

Our holistic approach to global expansion is novel in the industry. Most existing players offer either one or a selection of siloed services, they create marketplaces to fill the gap (which come wrought with issues) and very few providers have effective client facing tech solutions.

This results in fragmented service delivery, inefficiencies for both clients and service providers in undertaking effective work and excessively high

costs.

The Centuro solution is the only solution that brings together all services under one roof, uniting not just the myriad of service providers but also internal teams within a company from HR to in house legal, accounting, commercial, procurement and operations.

What's in store for the future?

Our focus for growth are two key factors in the business: people and technology. We are looking to increase our headcount and invest heavily in technology that will enhance our use of generative AI to build advanced compliance tools for immigration, remote work, legal and entity setup.

Our ultimate mission is to create a borderless world where any business can thrive and make a positive impact on local economies.

We aim to democratise access to global markets, and level the playing field for entrepreneurs and businesses wherever they may come from. In this way, we can boost local economies, create more jobs and create a more diversely successful world.

What one piece of advice would you give other founders or future founders?

There's a fine line between not giving up and knowing when to move on. Building any company is incredibly hard and you need resilience to push through. It is a rollercoaster of emotions, every day is stressful in a different way and you need to adapt and overcome whatever is thrown your way.

Your ability to sustain yourself through the challenges will get you a lot further along the journey to success than many others. I'm a big believer

that the biggest and best growth happens the more out of your comfort zone you are and so learning to face this discomfort head on is a great skill for success.

That being said, there are times when things aren't working and you need to master the art of the pivot / not spending too long on something that takes you down a rabbit hole. It is therefore also important to know when you should let something go and move on with a plan to redirect.

And finally, a more personal question! What's your daily routine and the rules you're living by at the moment?

Every single day is different so I don't really have a daily routine.

When it comes to rules that I live by, I firmly believe that no one can control every aspect of life or business. There will always be variables and factors beyond our control. However, I embrace this reality and focus my energy on what I can control. Whether it's a project, a task, or a challenge, I give my absolute best to make it a success. This attitude empowers me to take charge of the things that matter and invest my efforts wisely.

This also means that it's essential to acknowledge that not everything will always go according to plan. Life is unpredictable, and the same goes for the dynamic world of startups. But rather than being discouraged by unexpected turns, I see them as opportunities to learn, grow, and evolve. It is important to ride the waves of uncertainty and be adaptable in the face of change.

And the most important rule of all is to enjoy the journey! No matter how hard things get I try and work with a smile on my face, a sense of humour and make sure those around me, be it at work or at home, are having fun.

Zain Ali is the cofounder and CEO of *Centuro Global*.

Article by Zain Ali