

## Silicon Valley Business Journal

<http://www.bizjournals.com/sanjose/news/2013/08/21/how-immigration-helps-build-champion.html>

Aug 27, 2013, 4:06pm PDT

# Commentary: How immigration helps build champion teams



Courtesy

Zack Rinat is rallying for immigration reform as politicians in D.C. dither.

By Zack Rinat, Commentator

As an innovator and entrepreneur, I appreciate the value in building a winning team. Attracting the right people helps any organization become successful, and also lifts the entire economy.

So it is with immigration. Encouraging the right people to stay in the United States can only help the U.S. become more successful and more competitive. If we want to continue to have “champion” businesses, we need to recruit highly-skilled workers from around the globe, who will help build companies, bring in new skillsets, and generate jobs.

Take for example the San Antonio Spurs. As I watched the NBA finals last season, I was fascinated to learn that [nine out of their 15 players](#) are from outside the United States. Each of these players was brought in to fill a unique position, drawing upon their talent and backgrounds. And in building one of the best two teams last season, the San Antonio Spurs raise the competitive level within the NBA, making the entire league better.

There seems to be a fear of lost opportunity in embracing outside skill and talent. I've found the opposite to be true. In my experience, those with unique skillsets add value to business and are valued by their colleagues and "teams." Spending time and working together invites a natural process of exchanging expertise and insights to one another, advancing the entire group.

American universities are a breeding ground for such exchange and team building. Like many, I came to the United States to take my chance at the American dream. My mother encouraged her children to pursue the best education possible, so both my sister and I set goals to come here for advanced degrees, which we did.

After graduating from Harvard, I was surprised when some of my most talented classmates from around the globe with degrees in business, math, science, engineering and technology couldn't obtain work visas due to immigration quotas and moved back to their home countries. Many of them went on to build highly successful, multi-national companies, generating thousands of jobs and millions of dollars in their local economies instead of in the United States.

Fortunately, I was able to stay after graduating and fulfill my dream as an entrepreneur. Since then, I've helped build four successful companies.

The United States attracts and educates the best and brightest from around the world, yet isn't fully able to grant them the documents necessary to stay and build this nation. Those with advanced degrees and skillsets should be provided with the opportunity to contribute to this economy and to become entrepreneurs. Global citizens can draw upon their unique experiences and diverse perspectives to help the U.S. excel in an increasingly competitive global economy. These individuals have often had to overcome daunting adversity to get here in the first place, further strengthening their resolve to succeed and resulting in an unusually high ratio of success.

In fact, the Fiscal Policy Institute published a report in June 2012 that found 18 percent of all small business owners in the United States are immigrants. A 2011 study reported that 18 percent of Fortune 500 companies had an immigrant founder. And, **the National Foundation for American Policy found that nearly half of America's 50 top venture-funded companies were started by immigrants.**

Each of the successful companies I've founded has a large number of highly skilled immigrants as core management and staff. When we started Model N in 1999, the founding team included immigrants from Turkey, Hong Kong, and Israel, as well as brilliant, highly skilled American-born colleagues. I am proud to say that we took the

company public on March 20, 2013, and we are now traded on the New York Stock Exchange under the symbol MODN.

The immigrant members of our founding team all came to the United States at different times, but our commonality was our championship spirit, strong educational backgrounds attained in the United States, and unique skillsets. While the majority of Model N's employees are Americans, we have benefited from those outside the U.S. who could not stay here after their education due to antiquated quotas.

At Model N, we now have over 600 employees globally and thousands of partners, systems integrators, and others worldwide who support and drive our company. I feel we have a dream team we couldn't have been able to build anywhere else in the world. We need to make it easier for entrepreneurs everywhere to build their dream teams right here.

It is unfortunate that recruiting top notch team members graduating from American universities to work in the United States can be so difficult because of quotas. Although we need the skills here, we often hire them in their local countries, or partner with businesses they create to accomplish our goals. In many cases we try to get them to come to America to work for short time periods to contribute their knowledge and skills with our other employees.

Now that a key piece of legislation has passed in the Senate, I hope we will work toward a more real-world approach for enabling highly-skilled workers to get hired and stay in America after receiving their education. In doing so, we will attract the right players who are the best at what they do. These individuals fill a unique position in our economy. Their insights and energy lift the entire playing field to a new level, continuously advancing team USA, making the United States more competitive, and securing our status as the envied workplace of choice for entrepreneurs everywhere.

*[Zack Rinat](#) is a Model N founder and has served as the chairman of the board of directors and as CEO since its inception in December 1999. Previously, Mr. Rinat co-founded and ultimately served as president and CEO of NetDynamics Inc., an application software company, before its acquisition by Sun Microsystems in 1998, when he served as the VP and general manager of the NetDynamics business unit. From 2005 to 2012, he also served on the board of Conduit Ltd., a provider of cloud-based solutions for Web publishers, and as the chairman of the board from 2005 to 2011. Previously, Mr. Rinat held senior management positions in operations, marketing, and engineering at Silicon Graphics Inc., and at Advanced Technology Israel. He holds an MBA from Harvard Business School and a BA in computer science from the Technion (Israel Institute of Technology).*