

Cracking the UK Market: A US Entrepreneur's Guide to Self Sponsorship Success

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entrepreneurs looking to expand into the UK who fall outside the restrictive British visa system are taking advantage of an innovative legal

scheme which allows them to live and work in the UK as business owners.



Several American owned startups are already thriving in the UK using the Self Sponsorship immigration route, which was pioneered by London-based visa and immigration specialists [A Y & J Solicitors](#).

This little-known route allows overseas entrepreneurs to establish UK limited companies, which can legally be done from another country. Once the entity is established, the business owner can then sponsor themselves for a Skilled Worker visa to work in a role that qualifies under the flexible Skilled Worker route. The range of qualifying roles includes retail and wholesale managers, restaurant managers, IT directors, web designers, graphic designers, marketing and PR executives, financial advisers, importers and exporters, office managers, pharmacists and opticians.

Unlike other British visa routes, Self Sponsorship requires no minimum investment and allows the applicant to work for themselves as an employee of their company. The Skilled Worker visa route they are sponsored under gives the flexibility to bring family members and allows the applicant to use British state healthcare and education.

Recent changes in the UK immigration system have made it harder for some investors and entrepreneurs to gain access to British markets. In addition to the scrapping of the Investor visa, the Sole Representative Visa, which allowed representatives of foreign companies into the UK to establish subsidiaries, has also been cancelled and replaced with a more restrictive set of visas

that do not lead to settlement. Other visas for those establishing businesses such as the Innovator visa and the Start-up visa pose challenges for entrepreneurs who do not meet the rigid criteria.

The British government actively encourages US business investment. Addressing US investors in 2021, Lord Grimstone, who was the Minister of Investment at the time, wrote: “We are doing everything in our power to make it easier than ever before for investors to access the UK’s world-class offer – particularly in priority industries like net zero, life sciences, infrastructure and technology. Our enduring success as a global hub is down to our low-tax, highly skilled, globally competitive economy, our cutting-edge innovators, and our world-leading capabilities across areas like science, services, and research and innovation.

In 2019, there were 32,646 US-owned local business units in the UK, generating a turnover of £672.3 billion. US-owned businesses supported 1.48 million jobs across the UK, almost a third of which were employed in wholesale and retail trade. This was followed by 22% employed in scientific, technical and IT activities, 14% employed in the manufacturing industry and 9% in financial services, which was the largest industry in terms of turnover, with US-owned financial businesses turning-over £238.8 billion in 2019.

There were also 3,153 US owned arts, entertainment and leisure businesses and US-owned businesses in the fields of construction, energy and agriculture.

One of the first entrepreneurs to use the [Self Sponsorship route](#) through A Y & J Solicitors was Tennessee businesswoman Kate Corey, founder of travel firm 6 Degrees. She had tried for several years to move to the UK, but no visa routes were open to her. She is now based in London.

She said: “I never thought I would find a visa route. I own a small business and for years I’d been told by every solicitor under the sun that there wasn’t a visa for someone who was self-employed. I gave up on it for several years and I was then connected to Yash and A Y & J Solicitors.

“First, I established a limited company in the UK which was quick and easy. From there we applied for a sponsorship licence for the company. That was successful. From there we sponsored me and here I am. They changed my life.”

If you are an entrepreneur in the US and are looking to move to the UK and run your own business there, in the first instance contact A Y & J Solicitors to find out if Self Sponsorship is the right option for you.

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