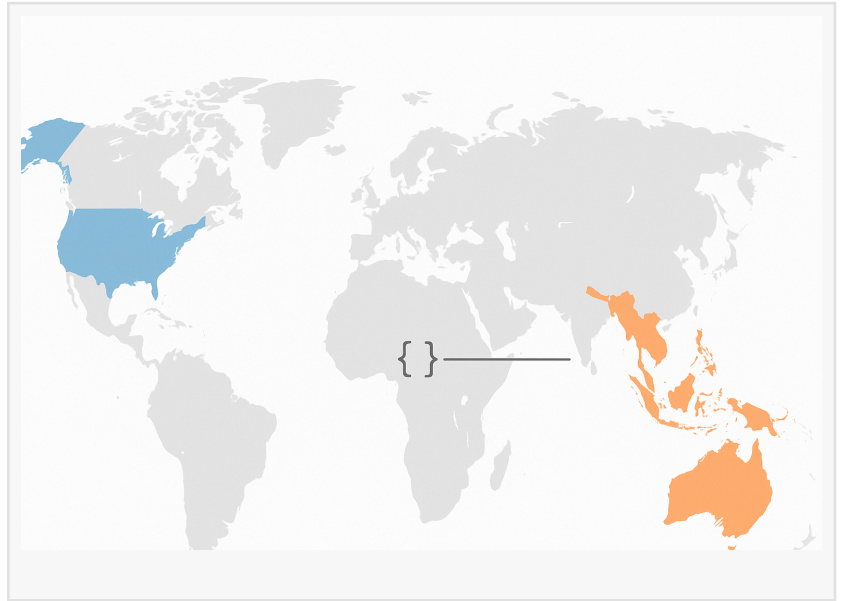


Startups Pivot to Southeast Asian Talent After \$100,000 H-1B Fee Announcement, Reports Second Talent

Tech Companies Explore Vietnam, Indonesia, and Philippines Markets as Alternative to Costly Visa \$100K H-1BT Sponsorship.

SAN FRANCISCO, CA, UNITED STATES, September 23, 2025 / EINPresswire.com/ -- [Second Talent](#), a global talent acquisition firm specializing in distributed teams, reported receiving inquiries from over 16 startups reconsidering their hiring strategies following the announcement of the new \$100,000 H-1B visa fee structure.



The dramatic fee increase, announced last Friday, has prompted technology startups to explore alternative international talent acquisition strategies, particularly in Southeast Asian markets, according to Second Talent.

"Since Friday's announcement, startup founders have been reaching out to discuss alternative approaches to building their engineering teams," said Elton Chan, Co-founder of Second Talent. "What began as crisis management conversations has evolved into strategic discussions about global talent distribution."

The Southeast Asian technology sector has experienced significant expansion over the past decade. Vietnam produces more than 50,000 IT graduates annually and maintains a professional technology workforce exceeding 500,000 professionals. Indonesia's ecosystem has produced approximately 14 unicorn companies, while the Philippines adds nearly 190,000 STEM graduates annually and supports over 1.3 million professionals in IT and business process services.

"One founder told us he had been attempting to sponsor H-1B visas for two years, lost the lottery twice, and spent \$15,000 on legal fees," the Second Talent spokesperson noted. "After

interviewing five engineers in Vietnam last weekend, he indicated he could proceed with hiring two candidates immediately."

The new \$100,000 H-1B petition fee represents a significant change in cost structure for early-stage companies. For the same amount, startups can engage one to two experienced developers in Southeast Asia for a full year, according to Second Talent's analysis.

"The H-1B system presented challenges for startups even before this fee increase," stated the Second Talent representative. "The lottery system created uncertainty, processing times caused delays, and legal complexity added costs beyond filing fees."

Processing Time Advantages

Second Talent reports that startups typically complete the hiring process with Southeast Asian developers in under two weeks, compared to six to twelve months for H-1B processing. This timeline difference represents a significant advantage for early-stage companies managing limited runway.

The firm notes that many Southeast Asian developers have experience working with international clients, understand agile methodologies, and bring diverse perspectives to product development teams.

Industry Response

While large enterprises are expected to absorb the increased fee as part of their operating costs, seed-stage startups face different calculations. For companies with eighteen-month runways, the \$100,000 fee represents substantial opportunity cost that could otherwise fund product development or extend operational timelines.

"Remote work has demonstrated that technical collaboration doesn't require geographic proximity," the spokesperson explained. "Engineers in Ho Chi Minh City use the same tools, follow the same processes, and deliver comparable quality code to their counterparts in San Francisco."

Second Talent emphasizes that building distributed teams requires intentional effort around cultural differences, time zone coordination, and team cohesion, but notes these challenges are manageable with proper planning and processes.

About Second Talent

Second Talent specializes in helping technology companies build distributed engineering teams across global markets, with particular expertise in Southeast Asian talent acquisition.

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