THE H-1B TALENT CRUNCH 2025

How The $100K Visa Fee Is Reshaping U.S. Tech Hiring For Enterprises

athyna.

A Policy Shock That Redefines the Game

The news hit like a thunderclap.

Starting September 21, 2025, U.S. companies filing new H-1B visa petitions must pay an additional $100,000 fee per worker.

The White House says the change will help protect American jobs and discourage abuse of the visa system.

But in practice, it's a seismic policy shift that reshapes how enterprises hire skilled global talent.

For decades, the H-1B program has been the backbone of U.S. innovation. Big tech and Fortune 500 companies have long used it to fill roles that keep their engines running, software engineers, data scientists, AI researchers, and cybersecurity experts.

Now, *that pipeline just got priced out*.

This eBook unpacks:

- What the new rule means and who it impacts.
- The deeper problem behind U.S. talent shortages.
- Why remote global hiring, especially from Latin America, is becoming the logical alternative.

The H-1B Program

America's Lifeline for Tech Talent

1. The Program at a Glance

The H-1B visa allows U.S. employers to hire skilled foreign professionals for specialized roles, usually requiring at least a bachelor's degree.
Historically, the process was expensive but manageable. Now it's just brutal.

Here's what changed:

- Any new H-1B petition filed after **September 21, 2025** (**12:01 a.m. ET**) must include a **$100,000 payment.**
- The rule **does not apply** to renewals or existing visa holders.
- There is a **"national interest" exception** for rare cases approved by the Department of Homeland Security.

In other words, it's a direct hit to enterprises planning to bring new international talent into the U.S.

2. The Tech Industry's Heavy Reliance on H-1B

According to Pew Research (2025), **65% of all H-1B approvals are for computer-related occupations**, including software, AI, data science, and systems engineering.

The share of H-1B holders with master's degrees has also grown sharply, rising from **31% in 2000 to 57% in 2021**.

Large enterprises such as **Amazon, Microsoft, Google, and Apple** sponsor thousands of H-1B workers each year.

As of the latest **USCIS report**, there were over 580,000 H-1B professionals legally employed in the United States.

For an industry already starved for skilled professionals, this new fee introduces a different kind of scarcity, driven not by economics but by regulation.

What the $100K Fee Really Changes

1. The Math No Longer Works

On top of legal fees, filing costs, and compliance expenses, the **$100,000 surcharge per new petition** redefines what *global talent acquisition* looks like.

For startups and mid-sized tech firms, that price point is out of reach. Even large enterprises will think carefully before sponsoring new visas.

The White House confirmed it's a **one-time surcharge** (not annual) for new petitions only (Axios). Still, it's enough to reshape hiring decisions overnight.

2. Who Gets Hit Hardest

Large Enterprises: The H-1B program is overwhelmingly driven by major corporations. In 2024, **Amazon** led with over **10,000 H-1B approvals**, followed by **Infosys (8,100)**, **Cognizant (6,300)**, **Google (5,300)**, **TCS (5,200)**, **Meta (4,800)**, and **Microsoft (4,700)**. Together, these companies account for a significant share of all H-1B petitions filed in the U.S., showing how deeply the program supports enterprise-level hiring. For them, the new $100,000 fee introduces serious financial and operational friction in maintaining international pipelines.

Startups and SMBs: Smaller firms represent only a small fraction of H-1B sponsors, and most lack the legal or financial capacity to absorb the surcharge. Those who previously relied on one or two visa hires a year will likely step back completely.

According to **USCIS and Pew Research data**, over **70% of H-1B approvals go to companies with more than 500 employees**, confirming that this policy primarily impacts large enterprises.
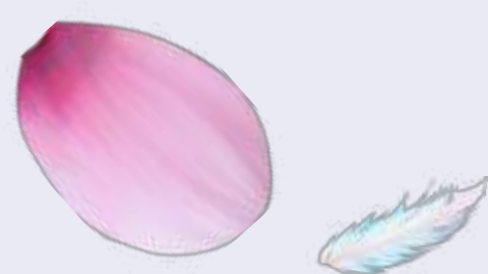
3. The Ripple Effects Across Tech

Reuters reports that several Silicon Valley firms are pausing international hiring or shifting plans toward **offshoring and remote hiring** instead.

Legal experts have described the new surcharge as "the most consequential immigration change for tech in decades".

The uncertainty created by lawsuits, unclear exceptions, and shifting interpretations is already pushing companies to look elsewhere for skilled talent. According to Business Insider, some major employers, including Intuitive Surgical and several Fortune 500 firms, have paused all H-1B sponsorships until further notice.

Bottom line: for most enterprises, the H-1B door is closing, and global hiring alternatives are becoming the new norm.

From Visa Dependency to Remote Agility — The New Hiring Strategy

1. Remote Is No Longer Plan B

When global talent can't move to the U.S., companies must move the work to global talent. This isn't outsourcing in the traditional sense. It's integration, building distributed teams that combine local leadership with specialized talent wherever it's found.

Remote hiring eliminates visa friction, shortens time-to-hire, and significantly lowers costs while maintaining enterprise-grade quality.

A senior AI engineer in São Paulo or Bogotá typically earns **40–60% less** than a U.S. hire, even before factoring in the new $100,000 visa fee.

2. Why Latin America Is the Logical First Step

Latin America checks every box for U.S.-based teams:

Time-zone alignment: Collaboration happens in real time, not on a 12-hour delay.

Strong tech education: Countries like Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, and Chile graduate tens of thousands of engineers every year from globally ranked universities (USP, UNAM, UBA, PUC).

English proficiency: Among the highest in emerging markets, especially in Argentina and Colombia.

Cultural compatibility: Shared work rhythms and communication styles make integration seamless.

Cost efficiency: Hiring senior technical talent in Latin America can save 40–60% compared to U.S.-based roles, while maintaining the same performance and output standards.

3. Building the Bridge From H-1B to Remote

- **Start with critical roles** where global talent is hardest to find domestically (AI, data, backend).
- **Develop hybrid models** that combine U.S. leadership with remote LatAm execution.
- **Adopt remote-first workflows** for communication, onboarding, and performance tracking.
- **Partner smartly** by working with vetted platforms that manage recruitment, compliance, payroll, and candidate verification, so teams can scale without friction.

Common Concerns (and Why They're Outdated)

"Remote teams won't feel integrated."

→ With overlapping time zones and clear communication rituals, distributed teams in LatAm operate like an extension of your HQ, not a satellite.

"Quality won't match U.S. standards."

→ LatAm is home to globally ranked institutions such as USP, Unicamp, UNAM, UBA, and PUC Chile, producing thousands of highly skilled graduates every year.

"Legal and payroll compliance sounds messy."

→ Partner with companies that manage contracts and cross-border payroll safely and seamlessly, so you can focus on building your team.

"Different time zones make collaboration tough."

→ Most LatAm cities are within one to two hours of U.S. Eastern Time. Real-time standups, async sprints, and smooth handovers are all possible.

The Bigger Picture: What This Means for the Future of Work

The $100K H-1B fee is more than a policy change. It's a clear signal that the old system of talent mobility is breaking.

Enterprises that depend on visas to fill skill gaps will find it harder to compete.

Those that adopt remote, global, and distributed hiring will move faster, accessing diverse talent, scaling efficiently, and staying resilient through policy shifts.

Latin America is emerging as the most strategic region for companies ready to build globally, not just locally.

Your Strategic Partner in the New Talent Economy

The new H-1B reality isn't the end of global hiring. It's a reset.

Athyna helps companies adapt quickly by connecting them with pre-vetted, world-class professionals across Latin America who meet the technical and cultural standards of leading U.S. teams.

Hiring globally is no longer an alternative; it's the new advantage.

What We Bring to the Table

- **Curated Talent Pools:** Deep networks of engineers, analysts, and AI experts from leading Latin American universities.

- **Rigorous Vetting:** Every candidate is screened for technical excellence, English fluency, and cultural fit.

- **Speed and Scale:** Interview candidates in days, not months. Scale from one engineer to fifty as needed.

- **Legal and Compliance Confidence:** We manage contracts, payroll, and ongoing support.

- **Retention-Focused Model:** Engagement and benefits programs built for long-term loyalty.

    For CTOs, Hiring Managers, and People leaders, that means less red tape and more time to focus on building what matters most.

Conclusion

From Crisis to Competitive Advantage

The message is simple:

The H-1B pipeline is shrinking, but opportunity isn't.

Leading enterprises are already redirecting budgets from visa sponsorship toward building global remote teams, tapping into the next generation of engineers, designers, and data experts across Latin America.

Athyna helps bridge that shift.

From sourcing AI-ready developers to integrating entire remote squads, we make distributed hiring simple and reliable, so your company can keep growing, innovating, and leading.

No visas. No $100K fees. Just world-class talent, on your team.

athyna.

Want to learn more?

Reach out to us at **hello@athyna.com**

www.athyna.com