

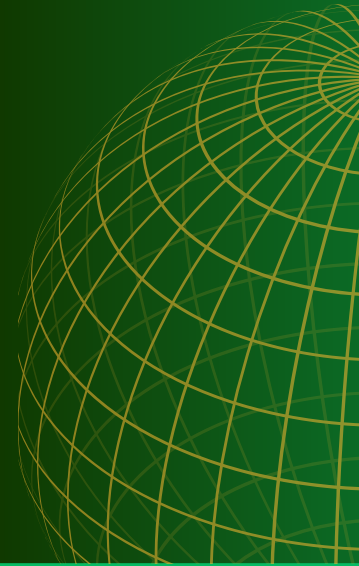
# Boots on the Ground

What Startups Actually Need to Know About Moving and Hiring People Overseas



A realistic guide from people who have *been there, done that*

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Hiring talent at an early stage is hard enough. Don't make it harder by limiting your talent pool. Find the best person, get them in the seat. That's all that matters.

**Kevin Park, CEO & Co-founder, Concord Visa.**  
*Previously SVP Growth at Crimson Education, Co-founder of Crimson Global Academy, and CRO at Hectre.*

# **Why you *need* this guide**

### **A quick word on why we've written this guide:**

Our founding team are builders and entrepreneurs who've been the decision-makers on global mobility at companies like Crimson Education, Tracksuit, Hectre, and Snowball Effect.

We've literally lived this pain. The last-minute visa emergencies, the payroll surprises, the midnight panic when you realise you've forgotten to send a document... and we wanted to share what we've learned so you don't have to figure it all out from scratch, alone.

We're also always here for a chat if you want to run a visa query past someone on the team!

### ***Global mobility is one of the most underrated growth levers available to a fast-scaling startup.***

Done well, it's genuinely transformative: it lets you seed your culture in new markets from day one, hold onto those early hires brimming with institutional knowledge before they get restless, and put the right people on the ground at the exact moment it matters most.

Think about it. Your GTM strategy in a new market often needs a founder or founding-level person physically present. Market research from overseas only gets you so far. Customer discovery over Zoom is better than nothing, but it's not the same as being in the room. Those first few boots on the ground can make or break a market entry. International fundraising? That's so much easier when you're actually having dinner with investors.

And yet global mobility is genuinely hard to navigate when you're also trying to hire, close deals, and ship product. If you've found yourself staring down a visa request that needed to be processed yesterday, you'll know exactly what we mean.

Here's the other problem: if you spend any time Googling "global mobility for startups," you'll find dozens of guides urging you to develop a comprehensive global mobility policy, complete with tier frameworks, shadow payroll, equity treatment across jurisdictions, and repatriation clauses. That's great advice... eventually. But right now, you probably need something that fits on a page and actually reflects your reality.

You don't need a full-blown global mobility program at your current size. What you do need is to align on a handful of high-value things and execute them well, so that your international moves achieve the outcomes you're hoping for and don't turn into a compliance headache six months later.

**So here's what we recommend getting right from the start**

# **01. Identify the right *opportunities***



At Snowball Effect, we supported many companies on their expansion journeys, and one consistent predictor of success was their appetite to send people overseas. The companies that were willing to make the investment to actually put their people on the ground were the ones that gained real traction in new markets.

**Ben Tan, CTO, Concord Visa**

*Previously Head of Product at Snowball Effect & Orchestra (acquired by Sharsies)*

There are more reasons to move people internationally than most startups realise. Here are the scenarios where we see it create the most value:

### 01. First GTM (e.g. Sales) relocation on the ground.

Closing enterprise or partnership deals is much harder when you're pitching across a 12-hour time zone gap. A local, stable presence gets significantly better results. Don't discount the product-market fit dimension either. Finding it in a new market can be as hard as the first time, and talking to customers in person is a qualitatively different experience from remote research.

### 03. Scaling fast after product-market fit.

You've found it! Now it's time to scale and you can't afford to slowly hire into a new market and risk someone not working out despite the huge investment. Better to send a proven performer from a smaller market to a larger one and get that momentum going. It's especially powerful if that employee was already keen for an overseas experience (p.s. it doubles as a retention strategy.)

### 05. Launching a new operating region.

Someone needs to establish and lead the culture, represent the legal entity, build local senior relationships, and figure out what works and what doesn't. This is rarely a job you can recruit for externally — the person setting up your new region needs to deeply understand how your company operates, what good looks like, and where the boundaries are.

### 02. Founder or executive presence for major commercial milestones.

Big deals, strategic partnerships, and hiring campaigns all benefit from in-person presence. If you're targeting US or UK investors, face time matters enormously and it'll always take more intro meetings and due diligence than you expect. It's very rare we hear "oh, the round went perfectly and we met our eventual investor early."

### 04. Difficult roles to hire.

Some functions are perpetually hard to fill, whether it's a unique piece of tech stack, a niche specialism, or some novel way one country does things that the other doesn't. Sending over existing talent keeps momentum and growth from stalling while you figure out the local hiring landscape. When the alternative is leaving a critical seat empty for months, relocation starts to look like the obvious move.

### 06. Retention of a key staff member

Sometimes your best people tell you they're leaving, not because they're unhappy, but because they want to live somewhere else or try something new. Offering a transfer to a new location can be far cheaper than losing them. Replacement costs for senior hires regularly run to six figures once you factor in recruitment, ramp-up time, and lost institutional knowledge.

# **02. Identify the right *people***





At this stage, you'll likely handle moves on a case-by-case basis rather than running candidates through a formal framework, **and that's fine.**

But as you go, keep notes on what made each move successful (or not). You're building the institutional knowledge that will eventually turn into proper criteria.

In the meantime, we've compiled the traits we've found most predictive of success for those making an international move to a startup.

### Case Study:

David @ a16z

With a track record of launching global founder networks from NZ to SF, David was a safe bet for a16z

[Learn More](#)



The people you send in the early days need to be consistently high performers (emphasis on consistently) but low ego. They might be your top salesperson, but as the first boots on the ground they could also find themselves searching for office space or sitting in on cultural interviews for other teams. They need a sense of ownership and stewardship over your culture, not just their own function. Get that combination right, and you'll thrive.

**Christine van Hoffen, Head of People & Growth Ops, Concord Visa.**  
*Previously Head of People at Tracksuit.*



### **They're a high performer, full stop.**

International relocations are intense. Even for excited, willing employees, the personal disruption of moving countries can knock performance while they're finding their feet. You need someone with a strong enough baseline that a temporary dip doesn't become a problem — for them or for the business.



### **They're a culture carrier.**

Your early international transfers set the tone for how your company shows up in that market. Look for people who genuinely embody what your company stands for, not just technically capable operators. They'll be making decisions about local hires, partnerships, and working norms that shape your brand long before you have formal policies.



### **They tend to be mid-level to senior.**

Early market moves usually require a level of autonomy and credibility that comes with experience. Visas can also be difficult for early-career staff who may not meet salary or experience thresholds. That said, there are always exceptions - some of the biggest companies were built by graduates and dropouts.



### **They've got itchy feet.**

Most people in their twenties and early thirties want to experience a global city. If they're working for a high-growth company, offering them the opportunity to relocate can be a huge retention play - otherwise, they're going to leave anyway. They also tend to be extremely loyal afterwards.



### **Bonus points for leadership potential and an entrepreneurial mindset.**

Your first person on the ground will often need to make judgment calls without a manager in the same timezone. They'll wear multiple hats — hiring, office setup, client meetings — so look for someone who thrives on ambiguity rather than someone who needs structure to perform.

"People who have lived and worked internationally tend to be more resilient, more motivated, and more ambitious - and those are exactly the kind of people you want building your company.

When we were scaling Crimson from a small team to hundreds of people across multiple countries, that global mindset was one of the strongest predictors of who would thrive in our culture of hustle and high performance.



**Jamie Beaton**

*Co-founder, Concord Visa  
& CEO, Crimson Education.*

# **03. Align on what you can *afford***

**Have this conversation amongst leadership early, ideally before you've made any commitments to the employee.**

You won't always be able to cover everything. That's okay. What matters is being transparent about what you can offer so the employee can make an informed decision.

The key components to think through:

## 01. Visa and immigration costs

Will the employee need employer-sponsored visa support? Sponsorship fees, legal costs, and processing timelines vary significantly by country and visa type. You may want to differentiate between employer-initiated and employee-initiated moves, and split costs accordingly.

Get a realistic quote upfront rather than discovering the number after you've told someone they're moving.

## 02. Relocation support

Are you contributing to flights, shipping costs, temporary accommodation, or a settling-in allowance? You don't have to cover everything, but being clear upfront about what you will and won't cover avoids awkward conversations later. A small, defined allowance (even \$2,000–5,000) goes a long way in goodwill, even if it doesn't cover everything. You can revisit your approach as you grow and can unlock more financial support.

If you can't afford much, consider non-financial support instead, such as offering to connect the employee with a network in their new city - we can support with this.

## 03. Compensation adjustments

Most startups choose to update the employee's salary to reflect local market benchmarks in the new location - particularly relevant if they're moving from a lower-cost market to a higher-cost one (or vice versa). Remember that you're dropping this person into a shiny new market, and you're investing in the move, don't cheap out on the salary. If you need benchmarking advice we can support.

This is worth thinking through before the conversation with the employee, not during it. Make sure you also consider any implications for equity or bonuses.

## 04. Family moves vs. solo moves

If the employee has a partner and/or children, the complexity (and cost) of the move increases substantially.

Dependent visas, schooling, spousal employment rights, medical insurance - all worth factoring in early to avoid misalignment or disappointment.



That \$5-10k you're nervous about spending on a relocation could unlock \$5-10M in valuation a year or two down the line — because you hired the best talent for the job, not the easiest. It feels like big money now, but trust me, you'll have much bigger numbers to worry about later.

**Kevin Park, CEO & Co-founder, Concord Visa.**  
*Previously SVP Growth at Crimson Education, CEO of Crimson Global Academy, and CRO at Hectre.*

# 04. *Know your timelines*



One of the most common mistakes we see is founders assuming a move can happen in a few weeks. It almost never can. Visa processing, entity setup, payroll registration, and the employee's own personal logistics all take time, and they tend to compound rather than run in parallel.



I had an incredible offer at a prominent company. Everything I had worked towards. But their accreditation process was stuck and nobody could tell me when or if it would move. Every week felt like another piece of my future slipping away. Then Concord Visa reached out and everything changed. Simple. Fast. Clear. A team that moved with urgency and got me exactly what I needed. I am now on my way to permanent residency. What took another company months, Concord resolved in days. I cried when it came through. My career and my life depended on it.

**Julia Lustig, Country Manager ANZ, Concord Visa**

*Previously Sales Engineering Leadership across EMEA and APAC at Seismic*

#### As a rough guide:

- **Short visits and business travel** aren't always quick. A New Zealander can fly to the US on ESTA tomorrow, but a team member without ESTA access may wait 1 to 6 months just for a consulate interview. For some nationalities, a US visitor visa isn't practically obtainable at all.
- **Standard sponsored moves** (e.g. Australian to the US on an E-3, or NZ to UK on a Skilled Worker visa): *2 to 4 months*. The E-3 is one of the faster routes, but half the timeline is often just waiting for a consulate interview slot.
- **Complex moves** (e.g. new US entity setup plus E-2 or O-1 visas, or moves with dependants): *3 to 6+ months*. Heavy documentation, government queues, and multiple moving parts all compound.

With the right advice, you can also layer pathways to get people productive faster. An employee might enter the US on ESTA or Australia on a Subclass 400 and start work immediately, while a longer-term visa is prepared in the background.

That's the difference between "wait six months" and "on the ground next week while we sort the rest."

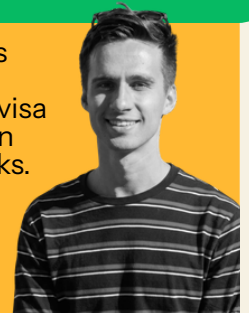
In a nutshell, if you want someone in a new market by Q3, start the immigration conversation in Q1, not Q2.

#### Case Study:

##### Joe @ Tracksuit

With Concord's support, Joe's Australian 482 visa was approved in under two weeks.

[Learn More](#)



**Smart moves can dramatically cut timelines, but only with planning.**

**Becoming an Accredited Sponsor in Australia takes visa processing from months to days, but the accreditation needs to be in place before you need it.**

# **05. Have the *conversation well***

This is the part that most guides skip entirely, but it's where moves are won or lost: the actual human conversation with the employee.

A relocation isn't a job offer. It's asking someone to uproot their life, and possibly their partner's and children's lives, for the company. For the best outcome we recommend a thoughtful, honest conversation, rather than a casual mention at the end of a 1:1.

### **Before you have the conversation, get your house in order.**

Know what visa route you're likely pursuing, what the realistic timeline looks like, what you can offer financially, and what you can't. Nothing erodes trust faster than saying "we'll figure it out" and then coming back weeks later with bad news. **Crucial:** make sure that whoever you are sending hasn't prematurely booked flights or sold their house prior to securing a visa. If you do draft a short policy, we recommend that you make it clear that **no** travel arrangement should be made prior to visas being approved.

### **Be honest about what the role actually looks like on the ground.**

If they're your first person in a new market, they're not just doing their day job - they're also finding office space, setting up local processes, hiring the first few people, and being the face of the company. Some people find that exhilarating. Others don't. Better to find out now.

### **Talk about what happens if it doesn't work out.**

This doesn't need to be a formal repatriation clause at this stage, but you should both have a shared understanding. If the employee is miserable after six months, or the market strategy shifts, what's the plan? Can they come back to the home office? Is the role permanent or assignment-based? Having even a loose understanding of this upfront avoids a much harder conversation later. KPIs or metrics they can work towards are ideal.

### **Don't forget the partner (or family).**

If the employee has a partner, that person's experience will heavily influence whether the move succeeds. Are they able to work in the new country? Will they need a visa of their own? Do they have a career that can transfer, or will they be starting from scratch? The employee might be thrilled about the opportunity, but if their partner feels sidelined or stuck, the move is at risk.

### **Set expectations and provide support for the settling-in period.**

The first three months in a new country are hard, even for motivated people. There's a lot to set up, and it can be distracting from their work. Acknowledge this and actively help them ramp to full performance — whether that's connecting them with a realtor, providing a reference for a rental application, or giving them a preloaded card to cover essentials before their bank account is set up. Any way you can soften the landing shortens the ramp time to performance. At Concord we've built a strong network of people who've been through the relocation process and are happy to talk your employee through what life is actually like in the new market - from opening bank accounts to securing accommodation to finding the right tax adviser.

# **06. Keep compliance *airtight* but simple**



Compliance is the part that can catch startups off guard because we're often working in chaos and ambiguity - a state that doesn't really work when it comes to immigration.

Unfortunately, visa conditions don't end at approval. Ongoing requirements like maintaining salary thresholds, ensuring the employee is genuinely performing the sponsored role, and meeting reporting obligations need active monitoring. A single unmet condition can put the employee's right to work at risk and expose the company to penalties.

You don't need an enterprise HRIS to stay on top of this. A simple Notion table (or even a well-structured spreadsheet) tracking each mover's key compliance milestones works perfectly well when you're doing a handful of moves a year.

**At minimum, you'll want to track:**

- Visa type, start date, and expiry date
- Any renewal windows or application deadlines
- Right-to-work documentation

Set calendar reminders well ahead of expiry dates. Visa processing times have a habit of being longer than you expect, and an employee who can't legally work because their renewal is stuck in processing is a bad situation for everyone.

There are other important compliance steps too: office moves, changes in title and salary, directorship changes to notify the relevant authorities. But these usually don't carry the same immediate consequences as getting the visa and right-to-work pieces wrong.

**We felt this pain and will have a solution for you soon**

# **07. Assign clear *ownership***



## Case Study:

### Tracksuit's People Team

Concord handled the visas so Tracksuit's People Team could focus on what they do best: employee experience and growth.

[Learn More](#)



Immigration and compliance processes tend to fall through the cracks when nobody owns them. In the early days, it's common (and fine) to ask the employee themselves to manage their own process, especially if they're motivated and organised.

But as you scale beyond a couple of international moves, you'll want a single internal point of contact: an ops lead, a People person, or a founder who's designated themselves the immigration owner.

That person doesn't need to be an immigration expert. They need to know enough to ask the right questions, maintain the compliance tracker, and manage the relationship with your immigration adviser or visa provider. Speaking of which - for anything beyond straightforward cases, get professional legal advice.

The cost of an immigration lawyer or specialist provider is almost always worth it compared to the cost of getting it wrong.



# **Final *Thoughts***

A close-up, grayscale image of a Visa credit card, showing the embossed 'VISA' logo and the fine details of the card's security features.

**The startups that figure out global mobility early don't just avoid compliance headaches. They build a genuine competitive advantage.**

They get the right people into the right markets faster than their competitors.

They retain ambitious talent that would otherwise leave for a company that can offer them the world - literally. And they build a culture that's global from the start, not one that has to be retrofitted later.

This stuff isn't easy. But it's worth it. And the sooner you treat international moves as a strategic capability rather than an administrative hassle, the sooner you'll start seeing the returns.

If any of this resonated and you want help with your next move (whether it's your first or your fifteenth) we're here. Concord was built by people who've sat in your seat, made these decisions, and learned the hard way what works.

We'd love to help you skip a few of those lessons.

### **A note on when to graduate to a full policy**

If you're doing more than three or four international moves a year, or you're starting to see patterns emerge (the same visa types, the same destination countries, the same questions from employees), that's usually the signal to invest in a more formal global mobility framework.

At that point, it's worth bringing in an adviser to help you think through policy tiers, shadow payroll, tax equalisation, and the other elements that make the process more scalable and fair as your team grows.

But until then, keep it practical, keep it documented, and focus on doing a small number of moves really well. We're always here to help, whether it's 1 visa or 100.



## About Concord

Concord is reimagining global mobility for the world's most ambitious and talented people and companies. We help founders, operators, researchers, innovators and high-growth companies expand across borders - from US O-1A and E-2 US visas to Australian SID482 and UK Skilled Visas - powered by modern technology and delivering exceptional customer experience.

We're building the world's first AI-global immigration firm and platform, being used internally already and planned to publicly launch in the very near future. Our clients already include leading startups and funds like Andreessen Horowitz, Tracksuit, Ideally, Paraform, Icehouse Ventures, and more from 10+ different countries - and we're just getting started.

Concord is the natural extension and exclusive Immigration partner of [Crimson Education](#), our parent company.

Crimson Education supports ambitious students beyond college and university admissions and into long-term success. Crimson Education has built a global reputation for guiding students into the world's most competitive colleges and universities;

Concord continues that journey by preparing their immigration pathways for future careers, global opportunities, and lasting impact.

3,250+

Successful US Visas supported

170+

Client nationalities

99%

Success rate

# Our Founders & Executives



**Dr. Jamie Beaton**  
*Co-founder*



Jamie Beaton co-founded Crimson Education at 18, growing it into a global company across 25+ countries with 3000+ employees. He raised his first \$1M in seed funding at Harvard and has since led over \$89M in fundraising — building the kind of cross-border operation that gives Concord its deep understanding of moving talent internationally.

Jamie graduated magna cum laude from Harvard, earned an MBA from Stanford as an Arjay Miller Scholar, a DPhil from Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar, a JD from Yale, and degrees from Tsinghua, UPenn, and Princeton. He was also the youngest analyst ever hired at Tiger Management.



**Kevin Park**  
*CEO, Co-founder*



Kevin has led and scaled ventures across education, technology, and venture capital. At Crimson Education, he helped grow the company from under 40 staff to over 1,000 globally, driving expansion into the U.S., Canada, Brazil, South Korea, Japan, and the UAE, and launching Crimson Global Academy, now a global online high school.

He later served as CRO and VP of Sales at Hectre, an AI agri-tech leader active in 20+ countries, led the Vodafone xone startup accelerator, and held key roles at Icehouse Ventures, New Zealand's leading VC firm. Kevin is known for building high-performing teams and scaling early-stage ventures into global businesses.



**Ben Tan**  
*CTO*



Ben Tan is Concord's CTO, leading the engineering and product team from Auckland. Before Concord, he was Head of Product at Snowball Effect, New Zealand's pioneering equity crowdfunding platform turned investment marketplace, where he helped build the technology that opened up investing to everyday New Zealanders.

Ben holds a Bachelor of Engineering (Hons) in Mechatronics from the University of Auckland. As an engineer turned product and technology leader, he thinks across systems, which is exactly what you need when you're building a platform at the intersection of immigration law, compliance, and fast-moving startup clients.



**Christine van Hoffen**  
*Head of Growth Ops*



Christine van Hoffen heads up Growth Operations from Auckland, NZ. Before Concord, she was Head of People at Tracksuit - a brand tracking startup where she joined as employee number twelve and helped scale the team to over 200 people across New Zealand, the US, Australia, and the UK. She's lived the complexity of building teams across borders and knows how much getting the visa piece right matters when you're growing fast.

Prior to Tracksuit, Christine worked at Crimson Education during a period of rapid international growth, supporting teams scaling into new markets. She holds an MBA from University College London.

# Meet Our Customers



## Paraform

Paraform, a San Francisco recruiter-first marketplace, raised a US \$20M Series A in 2025 and partnered with Concord to relocate its growth team to the US.



## Tracksuit

Tracksuit is a Kiwi brand tracking startup, with offices in AKL, SYD, LDN and NYC, and over 200 employees. Tracksuit partners with Concord to support its global team.



## Let's talk

If you're sponsoring visas in Australia or planning a U.S. expansion, we're happy to walk through your options.

[concordvisa.com](https://concordvisa.com)

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