

THE FOUNDER'S GLOBAL PLAYBOOK

WHAT TO KNOW BEFORE EXPANDING
INTO YOUR NEXT MARKET

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Foreword

E-commerce businesses are scaling faster and more globally than ever before. What once took years now happens in months, with founders launching into new markets earlier, testing demand quickly, and reaching customers worldwide with ease.

This is an exciting shift, driven by better technology, global marketplaces, and modern fulfilment networks. However, the environment in which businesses are expanding has also become more complex. Founders are navigating economic uncertainty, tariffs, shifting trade relationships, and increasing regulatory scrutiny, while governments have become far more advanced in enforcing tax and compliance obligations for cross border businesses.

As a result, global expansion is no longer just a growth decision. It is a risk decision.



At Yonda, we work closely with fast growing e-commerce and technology companies and see both the opportunity and the challenges that come with international growth.

Too often, issues arise when businesses scale faster than their operational and compliance foundations can support.

This playbook exists to help founders expand with clarity and confidence. By bringing together expertise across payments, finance, fulfilment, returns, market entry, and tax, our aim is to help growth feel deliberate rather than reactive.

Thank you to Airwallex, Daily Mentor, Ecom CPA, Reveni, J&J 3PL, and US Expansion Partners for their valuable contributions.

Gareth Kobrin

Co-Founder, Yonda Tax

Table of Contents

Introduction		4
Picking the Right Market First: Strategy, Setup, and Avoiding False Starts		5
The Three Foundational Pillars for Seamless International Expansion		8
Your Numbers Need to Travel Well: Finance Foundations for Global Scale		11
How Ecommerce Communities Accelerate Global Expansion		14
Returns Are Not a Cost Centre: They're a Growth Strategy (Especially Internationally)		17
Shipping Fast Without Breaking Ops: Fulfilment Decisions That Make or Break Expansion		20
The Tax Reality of Global Expansion: What Founders Must Set Up Before It Gets Expensive		23
Conclusion		26

Introduction

Expanding into a new market is one of the most important decisions a founder will make. Done well, it can unlock new customers, new revenue streams, and long term growth. Done poorly, it can introduce risk, complexity, and cost that slows the business down at exactly the wrong moment.

In today's e-commerce landscape, the challenge is not access. Founders can launch into new markets faster than ever through marketplaces, global payments, and international fulfilment partners. The real challenge is readiness. Growth now moves faster than the systems, processes, and compliance frameworks that support it.

This playbook was created to help founders bridge that gap.

The purpose of this guide is simple. To give you a clear view of what needs to be in place before you expand into your next market, and to help you avoid the most common mistakes we see businesses make as they scale internationally.

Rather than focusing on theory, each chapter is written by practitioners who work daily with fast growing e-commerce companies. Together, we cover the core building blocks of successful expansion, from choosing the right market, setting up payments and financial reporting, managing fulfilment and returns, through to understanding the tax and compliance realities that often catch founders out too late.

This is not a checklist to slow you down or discourage ambition. It is a framework to help growth feel intentional rather than reactive. You do not need everything to be perfect, but you do need clarity, ownership, and systems that can scale as volume increases.

If you are considering entering a new market, testing international demand, or preparing for a phase of accelerated growth, this playbook is designed to help you make better decisions earlier and scale with confidence.

Picking the Right Market First

Strategy, Setup, and Avoiding False Starts

By David Rose, CEO of US Expansion Partners

Over the past several years, I have worked alongside dozens of UK and EU technology companies as they take their first steps into the US market. Some execute well and build real momentum. Many struggle to find their footing. A few fail in ways that are both expensive and avoidable. Having launched and scaled multiple companies in the US myself as a founder and CEO, raising venture capital, building teams, and operating through the realities of American business, I have seen clearly what separates successful expansion from costly missteps.

The US represents the single largest growth opportunity for European technology and e-commerce companies pursuing category leadership. With more than 330 million consumers, a GDP of over 27 trillion dollars, and more than half of

global total addressable market for many tech categories, the upside is undeniable. For SaaS and AI businesses, the US attracts hundreds of billions of dollars in venture capital each year. For e-commerce brands, American consumers spent more than one trillion dollars online in 2025 alone.

“Yet scale does not guarantee success.”

Research consistently shows that a significant proportion of international expansions either fail outright or are delayed by twelve to twenty four months. In highly competitive markets, those delays are often fatal. Momentum is lost, burn increases, and confidence erodes both internally and with investors. The opportunity remains enormous, but ambition without preparation becomes very expensive education.

One of the most important questions founders must answer is why they are entering the US in the first place. Companies typically expand through one of two paths. Some experience genuine pull from the market. US customers find the product organically, deals close without dedicated US effort, and revenue builds naturally. When a business has five to ten paying US customers without a local team, that is a strong signal of real demand.

Others expand through push. Funding is raised, growth targets are set, and the US becomes a board level expectation based on the size of the opportunity rather than proven traction. This approach can work, but it carries significantly more risk because hiring and spend often happen before the model is validated. The critical question founders should ask is whether they are responding to demand or trying to create it.

Execution discipline matters far more than enthusiasm.

“One of the most common early mistakes is choosing the wrong location.”

Founders often default to familiar names like Silicon Valley or New York without assessing whether those markets support their operational needs. Time zone alignment is frequently overlooked, yet it has an outsized impact on early success. Locating outside the Eastern Time Zone reduces daily overlap with UK and EU teams, slowing decisions, customer support, and sales execution at exactly the moment speed matters most.

Talent availability is equally important. Different US regions specialise in different skills. Hiring AI engineers, enterprise sales professionals, or experienced go to market leaders is far easier in some cities than others. Hiring the wrong profiles in the wrong market adds months to the expansion timeline and burns capital without progress.

Budgeting mistakes compound these challenges. Many European companies build expansion budgets before conducting site selection, leading to projections that miss by hundreds of thousands of dollars. Salary expectations, healthcare costs, marketing spend, and compliance obligations vary widely by state. That variance alone can determine whether expansion extends runway or shortens it.

Another frequent trap is hiring senior US executives too early. Experience does not automatically translate into execution.

Founders must personally lead early customer acquisition, close the first deals, and deeply understand US buyer behaviour before delegating responsibility. Scaling teams before validation is one of the fastest ways to burn capital.

Operational complexity is also widely underestimated. Tools like Stripe Atlas provide a helpful starting point, but they cover only a fraction of what is required to run a fully compliant US subsidiary. Beyond incorporation, companies must establish payroll, benefits, tax registrations, bookkeeping systems, and ongoing compliance across multiple states. These requirements often surface months into operations, when fixing gaps is far more costly.

The US market rewards preparation and punishes shortcuts.

Companies that validate demand, choose locations strategically, budget realistically, and understand operational requirements enter the market with confidence. The opportunity is real. The risks are manageable. But only if founders understand what they are actually signing up for.



David Rose
CEO, US Expansion Partners

US Expansion Partners supports UK and EU venture backed technology companies expanding into the US.

David is a three time CEO with extensive experience launching and scaling US operations. Learn more at www.usxp.co.

The Three Foundational Pillars for Seamless International Expansion

Expanding internationally is a defining milestone for any eCommerce business, but it does not need to become a burden. It signals that a brand has outgrown its home market and is ready to compete on a global stage. However, the gap between ambition and execution is often where businesses struggle. Without the right infrastructure in place, what looks like a major growth opportunity can quickly turn into operational drag.

From navigating complex local regulations to managing cross border payments, the systems you build early will shape your ability to scale later. International expansion is not about launching in one new market. It is about creating a foundation that allows for efficient, repeatable growth across many markets. To do this well, businesses must focus on three connected pillars: operational readiness, localisation, and financial infrastructure.

The Operational Pillar: Why Simplicity Scales Better Than Complexity

Before launching into a new territory, the operational foundation must be solid. Many brands focus on hiring or logistics, but the real differentiator lies in backend decisions that rarely get attention. These decisions determine whether systems hold up under pressure or fail when demand peaks.

One counterintuitive insight is that real time data can sometimes create risk. When large volumes of customers check out simultaneously, complex middleware attempting to synchronise inventory across global warehouses can introduce latency and errors. In high volume moments, this can cause system failures.

High performing brands often take a simpler approach. Inventory relationships are kept one to one, such as a UK warehouse supporting only the UK storefront. Some businesses even reduce or disable inventory synchronisation during peak trading periods to prevent errors. Effective operational infrastructure is not about layering complexity. It is about removing friction so systems remain stable when demand surges.

The Localisation Pillar: Creating Local Relevance at Scale

Modern consumers expect a seamless shopping experience, regardless of where a brand is based. True localisation goes beyond language translation or displaying prices in local currency. It requires alignment with local culture, habits, and timing.

The strongest global brands do not rely on a single sales calendar. Instead, they create multiple peak moments throughout the year by tapping into regional events. While Black Friday dominates in Western markets, other regions respond to different cultural moments such as Singles Day in China, Diwali in India, or seasonal buying cycles tied to travel and weather.

Localisation also extends to checkout

Many brands accidentally expand internationally without the right payment methods in place. In regions such as Southeast Asia or Brazil, local payment options are essential for conversion. When checkout and payment preferences are ignored, even strong demand can fail to convert. Aligning sales timing and payment infrastructure with local expectations helps a brand feel native rather than foreign.

The Financial Pillar: Fixing the Leaky Bucket

Financial infrastructure is where margins are most quietly eroded. This often happens through fragmentation rather than obvious fees. Many businesses rely on separate tools for revenue collection, supplier payments, and marketing spend, creating disconnected systems that are difficult to manage at scale.

This fragmentation leads to data silos. Marketing teams may celebrate record traffic while finance teams are unaware of delayed settlements, or operations struggle to pay suppliers quickly enough to restock. Without a unified view, problems emerge late and decisions become reactive.

A consolidated financial setup brings these functions together.

It allows teams to see performance clearly, manage cross border payments efficiently, and maintain control as complexity increases. Replacing a patchwork of tools with a unified platform gives businesses the visibility needed to protect margins and move faster.

Real World Success: The GOAT Example

The global sneaker marketplace GOAT illustrates these principles in action. Operating a two sided marketplace across borders requires coordination between buyers, sellers, payments, and currencies. By strengthening its financial infrastructure, GOAT was able to manage global payouts while accepting payments worldwide with minimal friction.

This foundation did more than reduce costs. It revealed hidden profitability by minimising foreign exchange risk and streamlining cross border transactions. In doing so, it supported long term, sustainable global growth.

Building a Lasting Competitive Edge

International expansion is a long term strategy. Success depends not only on entering the next market, but on being able to enter the five after that with confidence.

By focusing on operational simplicity, meaningful localisation, and unified financial visibility, businesses give themselves the ability to scale repeatedly without rebuilding foundations each time.

The right infrastructure does not just support growth. It makes continued expansion possible.

Airwallex is a global financial platform helping businesses manage international payments, treasury, and financial operations at scale. By providing multi currency accounts, local payment methods, and unified financial visibility, Airwallex enables companies to expand internationally with speed and control.

Learn more at www.airwallex.com

Financial Foundations for US Expansion

Why Structure and Compliance Matter Early

By Jeremy Allen, CEO of Ecom CPA

For many international ecommerce brands, expanding into the United States represents the single largest growth opportunity available. The scale of the market is enormous, and for businesses pursuing global leadership, the US is often the next logical step.

The numbers explain why. American consumers spent more than \$1 trillion online in 2025, and the US ecommerce market is expected to grow from roughly \$1.38 trillion in 2026 to over \$2.2 trillion by 2031, with annual growth of more than 10 percent.

Yet opportunity does not remove complexity. Expanding into the US introduces a network of regulatory, financial, and operational obligations that many international brands underestimate in their early planning.

Entity Structure Shapes Everything

One of the most important early decisions founders make when entering the US is entity selection. Choosing between structures such as an LLC or a C Corporation determines how profits are taxed, who can own shares, and what reporting obligations apply.

This decision influences everything from how revenue flows through the organisation to how investors evaluate the business in the future. For venture backed companies in particular, the wrong structure can create unnecessary complexity or limit financing options later.

In many cases, the most expensive mistakes in US expansion originate from decisions made during the first few months of entry.

The Sales Tax Complexity Most Founders Do Not Expect

Sales tax in the US is not a single national system. Instead, it is a patchwork of state level rules and thresholds that create a complicated compliance landscape.

Today, 45 US states impose sales tax, each with its own economic nexus thresholds, filing schedules, and reporting requirements.

This means that as ecommerce brands grow across state lines, they may quickly trigger obligations in multiple jurisdictions. For founders used to the relative simplicity of VAT systems, the fragmented nature of US sales tax can come as a surprise.

Ignoring these triggers rarely makes them disappear. It simply pushes the problem further down the road.

The First 90 Days Determine Long Term Risk

One of the most consistent patterns seen with international expansion is that the early setup phase determines the long term outcome.

During the first 90 days, companies typically establish their US entity, open bank accounts, implement accounting infrastructure, and begin hiring or transacting locally. If these steps are handled correctly, businesses create a stable foundation for growth. If they are rushed or incomplete, operational risk compounds as volume increases.

Federal reporting requirements alone can carry penalties of up to \$25,000 per violation, making early compliance decisions particularly important for founders who plan to scale quickly.

Building a Financial Infrastructure That Can Scale

Successful international expansion requires more than just registering an entity. It requires a financial infrastructure that supports real time visibility, accurate reporting, and consistent compliance.

This includes accounting systems capable of handling multi state obligations, processes for managing sales tax nexus, and financial reporting that gives founders clarity across markets. As ecommerce businesses scale into the US, fragmented systems quickly become difficult to manage.

Founders who treat financial infrastructure as core operating architecture rather than administrative overhead are better positioned to scale sustainably.

Turning Complexity Into a Strategic Advantage

The US market rewards preparation. While regulatory complexity can appear intimidating at first, it becomes manageable when founders build the right financial and tax foundations early.

Companies that approach expansion with a clear entity structure, strong reporting systems, and a proactive compliance strategy are able to move faster and with greater confidence.

For ecommerce brands pursuing global scale, the difference between a smooth US launch and a costly course correction often comes down to the decisions made before the first order is even placed.



Jeremy Allen, CEO of ECOM CPA

Ecom CPA provides specialised accounting, tax planning, and financial advisory services for high growth ecommerce businesses. Working with seven and eight figure brands, the firm helps founders build financial infrastructure that supports international expansion, investor readiness, and long term profitability.

Learn more at ecomcpa.com.

How Ecommerce Communities Accelerate Global Expansion

By Morgan Buckley, Growth Mentor

There is a quiet advantage that many successful ecommerce founders rely on when expanding internationally. It is not just software, funding, or consultants. It is community.

At Daily Mentor, we see how powerful founder communities become during international expansion. Many brands view communities as support networks. The strongest operators use them as expansion multipliers.

Global growth is rarely limited by ambition. It is limited by blind spots. Communities reduce those blind spots before they become expensive.

Communities as Expansion Multipliers, Not Just Support Networks

A strong ecommerce community is more than a forum for troubleshooting. It functions as a live intelligence network. When founders share wins, losses, experiments, and supplier experiences, others gain insight without repeating the same mistakes.

Founders who engage consistently in peer networks adopt new strategies earlier and resolve operational challenges faster. Instead of navigating expansion alone, they benefit from collective experience.

When one brand refines US fulfillment or improves checkout conversion in Southeast Asia, that lesson can be applied across dozens of businesses immediately. Shared knowledge compounds.

Learning Global Nuance Before You Launch

International expansion is rarely about copying and pasting your domestic strategy. Customer expectations, payment preferences, logistics norms, and marketing channels differ across regions.

Communities surface these nuances before launch.

Within active ecommerce networks, founders discuss what actually worked in the US, what failed in Germany, how returns behave in Australia, or why paid media performance varies by region. These insights do not usually appear in official guides. They come from lived operational experience.

Learning this nuance before committing budget saves time, protects margin, and reduces unnecessary trial and error.

Faster Iteration Across Markets

Speed matters in competitive markets. Communities accelerate iteration by shortening feedback loops.

If a founder tests local currency pricing and sees conversion improve,

others can test quickly.

Iteration becomes collaborative rather than isolated. The cost of learning is distributed across the network, and brands reach product market fit faster in new territories.

Shared Solutions to Shared Problems

Every ecommerce brand entering a new market faces similar friction around fulfilment, payments, compliance, customer support, and localisation.

Communities turn those friction points into actionable conversation. Founders compare 3PL providers, recommend payment solutions, highlight regulatory challenges, and share realistic timelines for setup.

The value lies in specificity. Instead of generic advice, founders receive recommendations from peers who have recently solved the same problem. That practical detail can shorten months of uncertainty into days of clarity.

Using Community Insight to Inform Strategy

Community participation should shape strategy, not just solve operational issues.

When founders engage peers before entering a new market,

they gain perspective that sharpens decision making. Community feedback can validate expansion plans or surface risks that internal teams may overlook.

It also builds accountability. Sharing goals within trusted networks often improves focus and discipline, particularly when scaling into complex markets.

The Competitive Edge

Digital communities have fundamentally changed how ecommerce brands scale. In an environment where margins are tight and operational mistakes compound quickly, access to peer knowledge reduces risk.

Networking is no longer optional. It is infrastructure.

Global expansion is complex, but it does not need to be isolating. Brands that leverage strong communities expand with more context, more confidence, and fewer surprises.



Morgan Buckley, Growth Mentor

Daily Mentor is a community platform supporting ambitious ecommerce founders with peer insight, practical knowledge sharing, and strategic discussion. By connecting operators across markets, Daily Mentor helps brands expand faster and make smarter decisions at every stage of growth. Learn more at dailymentor.co.

Learn more at www.dailymentor.co

Returns Are Not a Cost Centre:

They're a Growth Strategy

When we started talking to brands about their operations, returns kept coming up as this thing that everyone knew was broken but nobody quite knew how to approach. It was treated as a necessary cost, something to manage and minimise rather than something to actually fix.

What struck us was how much worse that problem gets internationally. When you're selling in a new market, customers don't have the same relationship with your brand that your home audience does. They're taking a chance on you. And if the first time something goes wrong; a sizing issue, a change of mind, a damaged product, they hit a slow or confusing return process, that's probably the last interaction they'll have with you. Our data shows that 91% of customers won't shop with a brand again after a bad return experience. In a new market, where you're still earning your place, that number should give every brand pause.

But the impact doesn't stop at churn. A poor returns experience today doesn't just lose you one customer, it can damage your reputation in that market before you've even established it. We increasingly make purchase decisions guided by the opinions of others. Reviews, social media conversations, and public feedback shape trust. A frustrated customer who shares a negative experience online can create friction for dozens of potential first-time buyers.

The opposite is equally powerful. A satisfied customer who leaves a positive review about a smooth, fast return is not only significantly closer to purchasing again, but also actively lowering the barrier for new customers. In international expansion, where trust gaps are real, reputation compounds quickly. Returns are no longer just an operational process, they are a visible part of your brand story.

As Chris Fuller, Head of E-commerce at Bella Freud, puts it:

“Since switching to Reveni, Bella Freud has turned a pain point into a reason for customers to keep coming back.

Customer service calls dropped by 20 per cent because there were fewer refund-chasing queries. The brand’s Trustpilot rating climbed from 4.3 to 4.8, with customers repeatedly praising the speed and ease of refunds and exchanges.”

That shift is strategic. Fewer operational tickets. Stronger public reviews. Higher repeat intent. A return experience that actively reinforces trust rather than eroding it.

What's interesting is that customer expectations don't change just because the operational complexity does. A shopper in Germany expects the same speed and clarity as one in Spain or the UK. They want their money back, or their new size, fast. And in markets like Germany, where return rates in fashion run close to 50% on platforms like Zalando, largely driven by bracketing, brands that can't handle that volume efficiently are going to struggle.

But the same data that reflects consumer return behaviour in markets like Germany also tells you something more useful:

why customers are returning, which sizes don't translate, which products generate the most friction. When sizing issues consistently appear in a specific country, that's not just a logistics issue, it's a product intelligence signal. International returns data can directly inform production decisions, including the need to adapt sizing frameworks per market. In some cases, brands may need to develop country-specific size calibrations or adjust grading to reflect local body standards. That feedback loop between returns and production is often overlooked, yet it can significantly reduce future friction and margin erosion.

Instant exchanges are a good example of where expectation and opportunity meet. 88% of customers told us they'd prefer an exchange over a refund when the issue is sizing. But most brands make that process slow enough that customers give up and ask for a refund instead, and then buy from someone else. When you remove that friction, you don't just keep the sale. You keep the customer. Brands using Reveni have seen repeat purchase rates increase by up to 37% as a result.

The brands doing this well aren't just thinking about returns defensively. They're using them proactively, as a retention tool, as a loyalty driver, as a way to remove the hesitation that stops someone from placing a first order in a market they've never bought from you in before.

A generous, fast return experience is one of the most effective marketing tools available to a brand expanding internationally. It lowers the barrier to that first purchase, protects brand reputation, and strengthens customer lifetime value.

That's really what Reveni came from. Not a grand vision, just a frustration with how unnecessarily difficult this part of the experience was, and a belief that if you got it right, with truly instant operations, it wouldn't just reduce complaints. It would actually drive instant and long-term growth.

All of the stats referenced are from our returns report (*except for the Zalando one*)



Andy Meeson, VP of Logistics



Shipping Without Breaking Ops:

Fulfilment Decisions That Make or Break Expansion

By Ben Nutley, Senior Fulfillment Consultant at J&J Global Fulfillment

For many founders, fulfilment feels like a problem you can solve later. In reality, fulfilment decisions often determine whether international expansion scales smoothly or creates ongoing friction across the business.

At J and J 3PL, we work with fast growing eCommerce brands every day, supporting them as they expand into new markets and increase order volume. The pattern is consistent. Brands that treat fulfilment as a strategic function scale faster, retain customers more effectively, and avoid costly operational resets. Brands that treat it as a tactical afterthought usually pay for it later.

When to Move From Cross Border Shipping to Local Warehousing

Cross border shipping is often the right starting point. It allows brands to test demand in a new market without committing inventory or operational resources too early. However, it stops working once volume increases and customer expectations change.

The tipping point usually appears when delivery times start to affect conversion and repeat purchase. Customers in many regions now expect delivery within a few days, not weeks.

When shipping times stretch, cart abandonment increases, customer service tickets rise, and return rates often follow.

Local warehousing becomes the right move when demand is consistent, order volume is predictable, and margin can support faster delivery. The mistake we see most often is moving inventory locally too early, or doing it without proper forecasting. Both lead to inefficiency, stock imbalance, and unnecessary cost.

Inventory Placement and Regional Expectations

Inventory placement is one of the most important decisions in international fulfilment. Different regions have different delivery expectations, and those expectations directly influence buying behaviour.

In the US, two to three day delivery is increasingly the baseline. In parts of Europe, speed still matters, but reliability and cost transparency can be just as important. Placing inventory closer to customers reduces delivery time, lowers shipping costs, and improves the overall experience, but it also

introduces complexity around forecasting, replenishment, and compliance. Strong inventory placement strategies are built on data, not assumptions. Brands need clear visibility into regional demand, seasonality, and returns behaviour before committing stock to new locations. Without this, inventory either sits idle or runs out at the worst possible moment.

Fulfilment and the Customer Experience

Fulfilment is not just an operational function. It is a core part of the customer experience.

Delivery speed, packaging quality, tracking visibility, and returns handling all influence whether a customer comes back. A great product with poor fulfilment will struggle to retain customers in competitive markets.

We regularly see brands invest heavily in acquisition, only to lose repeat customers due to slow delivery, delayed returns, or inconsistent communication. These issues are often symptoms of fulfilment processes that were not designed to scale internationally.

Common Pitfalls That Disrupt Growth

The most common fulfilment challenges we see during expansion include stockouts caused by poor forecasting, long delivery times due to inventory being held too far from customers, and slow or inconsistent returns processing.

Returns are particularly underestimated. International returns require clear workflows, local handling where possible, and fast refund processing. When returns are slow or confusing, customer trust erodes quickly.

Another common issue is overcomplicating fulfilment operations too early. Adding too many warehouses, carriers, or systems before demand is stable creates unnecessary complexity and makes issues harder to diagnose.

What Good Fulfilment Looks Like in Practice

Good fulfilment is predictable, transparent, and scalable. Orders are processed quickly, delivery times meet regional expectations, inventory levels are balanced, and returns are handled efficiently.

Operationally, this means clear ownership, reliable forecasting, strong communication between teams, and fulfilment partners who can flex as volume changes. It also means building systems that support growth without constant manual intervention.

The brands that scale best are not the ones with the most complex fulfilment networks. They are the ones with the clearest processes and the discipline to expand fulfilment capacity only when the data supports it.



Ben Nutley, Senior Fulfillment Consultant at J&J

J&J Global Fulfilment supports high growth eCommerce brands with fulfilment, warehousing, and logistics solutions designed to scale internationally. With deep operational expertise and flexible infrastructure, J and J helps brands deliver faster, reduce friction, and build fulfilment foundations that support long term growth. Learn more on our website.

The Tax Reality of Global Expansion:

What Founders Must Set Up Before It Gets Expensive

By Gareth Kobrin, Co-Founder at Yonda

If there is one part of global expansion founders consistently underestimate, it is tax.

Not because founders do not care, but because indirect tax rarely causes problems immediately. It creeps up quietly while the business is busy doing more exciting things like selling, hiring, and launching into new markets. Then, at exactly the wrong moment, it becomes urgent.

At Yonda, we see this pattern constantly. Expansion feels successful on the surface, revenue is growing, customers are coming in, and the team is moving fast. Underneath, obligations are building that nobody has quite mapped yet. This is where global growth starts to get expensive.

The Indirect Tax Triggers Founders Miss Most Often

The most common misconception is that tax obligations only matter once revenue is meaningful. In reality, many indirect tax triggers are operational, not revenue based.

For eCommerce businesses, the biggest triggers we see missed are VAT registration requirements in the EU, sales tax nexus in the US, and inventory presence in foreign markets. Holding stock locally, even through a third party fulfillment partner, can create tax obligations before a single sale is made. Hiring employees, using local warehouses, or crossing relatively low transaction thresholds can all trigger requirements faster than founders expect.

These triggers do not come with warning signs. They simply exist, and ignoring them does not make them go away.

Marketplace Myths and Where Liability Still Sits

One of the most persistent myths we hear is that marketplaces handle everything.

Marketplaces do simplify parts of the tax process, but they do not remove responsibility entirely. In many cases, founders are still required to register, file returns, maintain records, and respond to audits even if tax is collected at checkout by a platform.

We often see founders assume they are covered, only to discover later that filings were still required, or that obligations differed by country, product type, or fulfillment setup. The liability ultimately sits with the seller, not the platform.

Assuming otherwise is one of the fastest ways to accumulate compliance debt.

Why Compliance Debt Is So Dangerous for Scale Ups

Compliance debt is what happens when a business grows faster than its tax and reporting setup.

It usually starts small. A missed registration here. A delayed filing there. A spreadsheet tracking obligations that nobody quite trusts. Over time, volume increases, markets multiply, and those small gaps turn into material risk.

The danger is not just fines or penalties. Compliance debt shows up during fundraising, due diligence, audits, and even acquisitions. It slows deals down, creates uncertainty, and forces founders to spend time fixing historical issues instead of focusing on growth.

In our experience, fixing compliance after the fact is always slower and more expensive than setting it up properly at the start.

Why Automation Matters Earlier Than You Think

Founders often associate automation with scale, assuming it becomes relevant once the business is already complex. In reality, automation is most valuable before complexity sets in.

Automation brings accuracy, speed, and consistency. It creates audit trails that regulators expect. It reduces reliance on manual processes that break under growth. It gives founders confidence that obligations are being tracked properly across markets.

Manual tax management does not fail all at once. It fails gradually, then suddenly. Automation prevents that moment.

Building a Repeatable Compliance System Across Markets

The goal is not perfection. The goal is repeatability.

Good global compliance systems are built around clear ownership, centralised data, automated tracking, and expert oversight.

Founders should know where obligations exist, when filings are due, and what happens when the business enters a new market.

When compliance is treated as infrastructure rather than admin, it stops being a blocker. It becomes something the business can rely on as it scales.

Global expansion should not feel like a guessing game. With the right setup, tax becomes predictable, manageable, and largely invisible. That is exactly how it should be.



Gareth Kobrin
Co-Founder, Yonda Tax

Conclusion:

Expanding With Confidence, Not Guesswork

Global expansion has never been more accessible for ecommerce founders. Technology, marketplaces, and global logistics networks allow brands to reach international customers faster than ever before. Testing demand in new markets is easier, but scaling successfully still requires preparation.

As this playbook highlights, expansion is not driven by a single decision. It depends on the alignment of strategy, payments, financial reporting, fulfilment, community insight, and tax compliance. When these foundations are in place, new markets become growth opportunities rather than operational distractions.

The most successful companies approach expansion deliberately. They validate demand, build infrastructure that can scale, and avoid rushing decisions that create complexity later.

At Yonda, we see this difference clearly. Businesses that prepare early expand with confidence. Those that do not often find themselves fixing problems after growth has already accelerated.

Global expansion should feel like momentum, not chaos.

With the right foundations in place, founders can focus on what matters most. Building great products, serving customers well, and scaling into new markets with clarity.

Prepare properly. Learn from those who have done it before.

Then scale.

**THANKS TO ALL OF OUR PARTNERS
FOR MAKING THIS ARTICLE
POSSIBLE.**



www.yondatax.com