

Developing an international growth strategy

29 July 2019 by Calum Di Lieto

Scott Cullather, co-founder and CEO of INVNT, describes the New York-based agency's global expansion plans.



How was INVNT first born?

Kristina McCoobery and I recognised the industry was becoming very uninventive and was in need of a shake-up. We wanted to provide our clients with a new kind of agency model, attitude, agency culture and results-driven approach to 'live brand storytelling', so they could engage their audiences in more compelling ways and exceed their objectives.

INVNT was established in the summer of 2008 – at the height of the global recession – and we haven't looked back. We now operate across eight offices and six time zones in

five countries.

What challenges came with opening the first international office?

We opened in London in 2012 with the strategy of growing the business organically rather than through acquisition.

We faced two primary challenges. The first was to find the right person for INVNT, one who would be comfortable joining our new operation with the condition that in the early months it would only be them, their dog and their kettle.

It takes a certain kind of person with special talents, along with a healthy dose of courage, to take that on.

The second was building brand presence and recognition in a market where we were unrecognised.

Has it become easier since?

When it comes to the launch of a new office, we'll draw on what we've gained from our previous experiences – we've now got a proven formula and process in place.

Also, the more established we've become, the more events we've been delivering across the globe. Thus, when it comes time to launch a new office, we're already familiar with the local culture and have worked with freelance talent and suppliers on the ground already.

What's most important about growing globally?

Employ teams who live and breathe the local culture. That way you can curate a global team who know an account inside out and are able to deliver events on-brand and on-message, ensuring they are delivered in localised ways and create real impact.

How do you maintain your 'tribe' culture globally?

We have created an operational structure and culture that enables us to be a big-small agency. We have more than 100 full-time staff in our global 'tribe', and yet they are all connected.

This is made possible as all of our offices operate on the one profit and loss statement – we'll review a client brief and then curate the best team for the job based on their expertise rather than location.

By adopting this approach, we're producing the best quality work and it ensures we don't operate in silos. We created our vision to be the best live brand storytelling agency in the world when we launched, and communicate this to our employees in relatable, meaningful and actionable ways, which has created a real sense of unity as employees know they are all working towards a common goal.

We also have a strong people strategy in place, which involves initiatives that put our employees at the heart of our business – they are our most valuable asset.

We advocate for a top-down and back up again feedback culture and modern, open-plan work spaces where we all sit together regardless of seniority. We also host various virtual and face-to-face meetings to celebrate successes and bring our teams together.

These include Tribe Live, a quarterly conference call where we reflect on recent achievements, and our annual company meeting, which brings everyone together in New York to connect face-to-face.

What's next for INVNT?

With the demand for experiences that are live and in the moment increasing, we are focused on continuing to build our global infrastructure so we can provide our clients with end-to-end campaign solutions wherever in the world they need them.

We are also dedicated to enhancing our offering, one example being the launch of our content studio, HEVE, which enables us to create compelling campaign solutions that include both live events and branded content.

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