

# Dashmote



**Dennis Tan**  
CEO & Co-Founder - Dashmote

**Industry:** Tech

**Mission statement:** "Turn data into analytics. We help professionals and companies unlock the power of data, guiding them through an AI and data-driven world."

**Headquarters:** Amsterdam (Rokin 86, 1012 KX Amsterdam)

**Founded:** 2014

Dashmote's AI-based technology is helping to unlock new market insights by turning images into data. With its smart technology, the company has expanded overseas, moving into the New York market. We spoke with CEO and Co-founder Dennis Tan to get his tips on growing your business in the Big Apple.

Key takeaways:

- Expansion can help you get a global perspective on the industry, widen your use-cases and grow your people
- There are a lot of cultural differences you should be aware of, reaching from how you sell yourself to the very different legal culture
- Start by going there for a one or two week trial period to begin building your network and gain confidence in your business' ability to capture the New York market

### How long ago did Dashmote establish its New York office?

About two years ago we established an office in NYC but it wasn't really active. Recently, we started to hire more people and expand. The idea for this year is to increase our U.S. team by 6 to 8 people, and to grow to a team of 20 or more by next year. To answer more directly; on paper, almost two years and the new version, basically since about two months now.

### What motivated you to expand to New York City?

There's a common saying that "if you can make it in New York, you can make it anywhere." More realistically speaking, for us there were a couple of reasons:

One of the main reasons was business traction. We have some large clients who we work with in Europe and then at some point they asked if we could also provide our services in their U.S. and Asia markets. In short, we already had some clients in the U.S. and in New York.

Another major reason for us was that - every time we went to the U.S. - we actually managed to get something out of it. It almost felt like a waste when we weren't there, leaving a lot of stones unturned. At some point, we were making up the balance and said, "Okay, we definitely need to have more presence here." So business presence was definitely a large part of our expansion.

Last, but not least the network and our partners that we have there are more compelling reasons for us to be locally present. Besides, of course, it's been a fun experiment expanding to the U.S.

### What impact has this expansion had on your European operations?

There were a couple things for us that were quite interesting about the relocation. One of the things we always have on the line is that we want to get a more global perspective on the industry very quickly. We're one of the few globally incorporated companies, not just in the U.S. and Europe, but also in Asia. So I think that gives us an advantage.

Another thing is that our company is really people focused. If I were to ever have children, I would want them to have an international experience and experience different cultures and different perspectives.

I was very fortunate to have those experiences when I was younger, but in the company, we have people who didn't have that opportunity. Having an office in different places allows them to have those experiences as well.

I think the most important thing for me is not necessarily our business, but the people in it. At the end of the day, businesses are nothing more than a group of people collaborating and heading in one direction.

I think if we can bring them to the next level, not only in skill-set, but also in building this broader perspective in terms of cultures, increasing communication and understanding of each other, it can really unlock great things.

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### What are some of the cultural differences that you've noticed in doing business, marketing or hiring in the Netherlands versus the U.S.?

I think there are many big misunderstandings in how people look at America when it comes to differences. People think it's not that big of a difference, simply because we speak the same [English] language. The reality is that the differences are as big as going to South America or Asia.

There are a few main things I always tell my mentees. I think you can really see the little things, for example, if you think about setting up meetings. In Europe, it's very common to plan a meeting like three or four weeks in advance. While, if you take America it takes about one to two weeks, there's no point in doing it much in advance as opposed to Europe.



Dashmote team

Also, in America they're much better at selling themselves, which is a good and a bad thing. That also means you need to be, let's just say slightly cockier. When I'm in America, I kind of have to switch my thinking and the way I talk about my past achievements. But in Europe, and especially the Netherlands, it really just matters what you're doing right now.

And then the last thing is, of course, the legal part. There is a legal kind of culture which isn't a bad thing necessarily, but you just have to be aware of it. I think the easiest way to explain it is; when you're thinking about writing a legal document in the Netherlands you have a very defined set of rules. There's almost a default to fall back on. If you think of something like a shareholders agreement. In Europe, if you write something down, it will always refer back to the basic law. But in America, it's different.

#### What were some of the preparations that you had to take before leaving the Netherlands?

I think the preparations were mostly focused on setting up relationships and building a support network. That could either be through accelerator programs or creating partnerships and building a basic plan. In most cases, of course, you will not have access to your whole team in an instant, so it's not something to be underestimated.

I would like to advise fellow entrepreneurs - if you're really serious about this stuff - to try it out. Go to NYC for one or two weeks and then focus on building your network there.

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#### What was the most difficult part of the process?

It's the people. The reason why we are now going to expand is because I spent about a year to find the right person. I'm very picky because I need a company culture match. I think I interviewed about 50 to 60 people and sometimes they fit perfectly but didn't fit with the culture or something.



#### Important to note are the numbers.

This is an especially recognized top challenge when expanding to U.S. territories, studies show that **39% of companies struggle with this process as well.** \*



Then timing was a big thing for us. You shouldn't underestimate administrative setup and how much time it takes to do it. So especially a bank account was very, very hard and very necessary to make any further steps, whether it's incorporation or getting visas.

As a startup or scale-up, you're really proud to move quickly but you can get frustrated by processes that you have no impact on and which can be quite slow. So especially for us, no matter where we are in the world, it's always a big slow down.

\* Source: Halve Maen's Best Practices Report, "How to Make it Big in the Big Apple"

#### What were the benefits of this expansion?

I think one of the things is that it's a nice challenge. Of course, it's not for everyone. But I, however, think challenging yourself is always nice. Meeting new people, not just for the company, but also for input on your business is invaluable.

Different markets demand different things from the products and services you offer. So you sometimes have to find new technology that you can implement or different use cases for what you're already doing. And these kind of cases provide new insights all round.

#### Do you have any final words of advice for entrepreneurs who are thinking of taking this step?

Believe in yourself. Maybe it sounds a bit strange but entrepreneurship is a lot about growing self confidence. You do that by little successes.

Remember, it will take a while. Don't expect it to be done in one week, six months or two years. Especially in New York which is one of the most difficult cities in the world to make it.. But it's definitely not impossible. Just go for it.