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GLOBAL AWARDS 2015

Featured Winners...

Andy Khawaja
CEO of Allied Wallet
Payments Solutions
Provider of the Year
United Kingdom

John Harrison & Co
Tax Reform Specialists
of the Year
United Kingdom

F Chambers
Employment Disputes
Law Firm of the Year
Turks & Caicos



PAYMENTS SOLUTIONS PROVIDER OF THE YEAR



Andy Khawaja - CEO

Andy Khawaja founded Allied Wallet in California in 2002. He resigned from his role as Vice President of men's fashion company Bernini in 2001 and, together with a group of developers, worked to implement his payments company plan using his own money. A brave move borne out of an early love of the internet and a vision of what it could accomplish.



Allied Wallet continues to revolutionise the e-commerce industry by introducing new and innovative payment processing solutions for online merchants, enabling them to send and receive global payments. Here, Andy Khawaja, CEO, Allied Wallet, talks about the company's PCI compliant merchant services and state-of-the-art payment gateway

Today, Allied Wallet offers customised payment solutions to businesses of any size. The company provides payment processing services in 164 currencies, 196 countries, and nearly every payment method globally. The growth has been meteoric, coming from a simple idea to revolutionise retail from founder and CEO Andy Khawaja in the early noughties.

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"The inspiration was driven by seeing the world change," said Andy Khawaja, CEO, Allied Wallet.

"When the internet was first invented I was probably one of the first 500 people to have an email – I loved the AOL connection tone! If you got online it would be slow and there wasn't very much to look at. Yet, I thought, what if we bring everything that exists in the world today and bring it online and let people transact and generate a new revenue, new jobs, a different world where people can transact from my little apartment in Hollywood to sell my product in London, Tokyo, etc.?"

Mr. Khawaja spent six or seven years surfing the net, seeing what was out there and what could be added to.

"I was in the retail business. It was part of a click I had in the back of my head. We had a lot of consumers who used to call and order clothes to be sent to them. We used to call them 'consignment'. When you sent a customer a box of the new collection they would look at them and keep what they like. That clicked with me. I thought - What if they could go on the website, see the new lines, and click on what they like?" he recalled.

The initial idea led to a conclusion that, with the right talent, he could build a payment company offering the security to transact online.

"The idea was simple - make it easier to transact and do business online," he said.

"Being in retail, dealing with consumers from all around the world from Rodeo Drive, I would think about it, about how people could buy the product via a website, anywhere in the world. Today, you have boutiques who hardly do any business in store – it is 90% online sales," he added.

Initially, Mr. Khawaja's aim was to have as many websites as possible taking credit card payments online.

"I thought this would be a home run for business to have a better revenue and connect the world together once and for all. From a simple laptop you can conduct a transaction and have it delivered to your house. I never expected it to be so big and in so many countries," he said.

Today, Allied Wallet conducts transactions in 196 countries worldwide, making it a truly global platform.

"I did not expect the internet to expand at the speed of light. Look where we are today. Products are being built to make jobs for the future. Everything is improving and advancing. 60% of transactions are being conducted via applications, with many repeat customers. Who would have imagined this? A little app can be sold for \$2 billion. That tells you the power of the internet and ecommerce. This is an endless space – I call it the black hole of transactions, because it is endless. It is just going to get bigger and wider – social media is touching everybody," he forecasted.

Today, Allied Wallet has processed more than a billion dollars globally and boasts millions of satisfied customers through its global payment gateway and eWallet solutions.

The payment gateway enables businesses to transact on a truly global platform, accepting payment in 164 currencies and settling payment in 25. Merchants also benefit from low rates, 24-hour customer service, and the most secure, award-winning technology solution available.

For the everyday consumer, Allied Wallet has designed the free digital wallet program. This service makes it easy to send and receive money online with merchants, as well as friends and family. Furthermore, eWallet connects directly to a bank account, giving users a safe and secure place to store and transfer funds. So far, more than 100 million users have opened an eWallet account.

Often compared with Europe's PayPal, Mr. Khawaja is quick to point out the differences and explain how Allied Wallet works. "PayPal is more local. It doesn't have the ability to wire funds internationally. It only deposits into the wallet," he explained.

With Allied Wallet things are different. "We process in so many currencies and jurisdictions it doesn't matter where the consumer is from. We built the company to build global businesses because the internet is global. This is not about a connection between Mayfair and Knightsbridge, it's about a connection between the UK, Australia, and Germany etc... If you want to increase business you must work with a global process," he explained.

At Allied Wallet, security is of prime concern, but it also presents many challenges, most notably from banks and other traditional financial institutions.

The Allied Wallet platform is built to PCI-DSS Level 1 Compliance as an established internet payment service provider. Mr. Khawaja aims to ensure all consumers and merchants that their transactions are safe, so long as Allied Wallet is the service provider. He has grown Allied Wallet by employing an elite staff of processing veterans and innovative thinkers to uphold security, deter fraud, and assure users that their financial information is safe.

According to Mr. Khawaja, his team is way ahead of the bankers in terms of detecting fraud. Traditionally, if a business received perhaps 10% of its transactions from a jurisdiction it did not historically do business with, banks could flag that up as potentially fraud.

"Banks are in the money business not in the risk business," he explained.

"Bank compliance managers don't understand the business of ecommerce. They have no clue about the technology and the future of ecommerce. Instead, they make judgements based on guts, not knowledge, and close accounts to protect the bank. This can put the merchant out of business.

"At Allied Wallet, we monitor transactions electronically, have monetisation in place, and understand the price point. Does it match the items on the website? Is the same client buying every day? These things are all monitored electronically. We have a fraud security system in place," he added.

Convincing the traditional banking fraternity of the merit of Allied Wallet has long been a challenge, even from start-up, Mr. Khawaja claimed.

"The main challenges were banks never believing in the product we have. When I used to walk into banks and pitch what I had, they were looking at me like I came from out of space. Many banks said they couldn't work with me because they didn't have the systems in place. Today, 90% of banks do not support ecommerce and do not have the system in place to support what we do.

"They don't want to invest in technology they think will be outdated in 10 to 15 years. But that is the future. Why should you work with a bank whose system has not been updated in ages?" he asked.

With transactions conducted in 196 countries worldwide, Allied Wallet is a global platform reaching all corners of the world. While Mr. Khawaja's domestic market of the US remains the largest, new contenders are coming to the e-commerce stage.

"The US is a pretty huge market and the economy is growing. We've seen a large increase in transactions with a 14% increase in e-commerce transactions in the past eight months, while the UK has seen a 6% increase in the past 12 months. Anything above 10% growth is bravo and that is what we are looking at," Mr. Khawaja said, pointing out that Brazil, Mexico and India have all seen +10% growth recently.

However, unsurprisingly, China is the rising star, with a 300% increase in the past two years.

"The Chinese do not trust the Chinese financial system, for some reason. We are looking for 1,200% growth by 2020. Chinese ecommerce sees a lot of downtimes, and sometimes consumers cannot conduct transactions. If you have a foreign company, which can transact in Chinese and convince them to feel more comfortable to work with a foreign company, it is a home run as they like to work with western companies," said Mr. Khawaja.

"However, in China you cannot market as a foreign entity; you need to stay low and let the Chinese consumers talk about you and that is how they work. As soon as you start advertising they will team up against you."

Always at the forefront of technology, specifically security and identification, Mr. Khawaja claims that fingerprint recognition was his idea, borne out of an interview he did with Fortune magazine in 2013.


"Apple picked up my idea on that. I didn't do any trademark on it; I wanted someone else to pick up my idea, launch it and see it in a test environment, but it failed because a fingerprint can be copied," Mr. Khawaja explained.

However, never to be thwarted on an idea, he and the Allied Wallet team are working on biometrics at a higher level.

"We are building something similar. Apple has five-layer fingerprint recognition – I am coming up with a 12-layer fingerprint – this is the same level as the FBI – that takes a little bit of hard work, makes the device bigger, but we are working on making it as small as possible," he said.



From the shop floor to CEO of the largest e-commerce payment solution provider in the world, conducting business in 196 countries worldwide, Mr. Khawaja's rise to fame and fortune has been astronomical. Little wonder he has been named 'Entrepreneur of the Year' among other accolades in recent years.



The identification pad will attach to a mobile device. Development of this is under progress right now. Mr. Khawaja sees this technology being used for money transfers and conducting transactions in restaurants and other point of sale devices. Allied Wallet will begin pitching the idea to banks worldwide.

“The bank can take your fingerprint when you sign up for your account, and you can download the app and whenever you see a payment map that requires fingerprint recognition you plug in your reader and scan your thumb,” he explained.

Payment will be made via direct debit from the user’s account. Mr. Khawaja believes that biometrics will be so secure it will save a lot of money for governments around the world. “It could eliminate up to 50% of fraud,” he estimated.

“We work with governments all around the world and we communicate and we always see what the problems are with them and what their weaknesses are. Often they don’t have the manpower to build products like we do. We will build products around it to make it a more closed loop,” he added.

While Allied Wallet is embracing biometrics, other new FinTech developments are not viewed so favourably. For Mr. Khawaja, the jury is still out on crypto-currencies such as Bitcoin.

“There are a lot of restrictions in many jurisdictions. Allied Wallet will only use a currency and payment method that is fully approved by the government of the jurisdiction where we operate,” he remarked.

“The Bitcoin is a smart idea, but it is down by 60% since the beginning, so we want to be involved in something where our consumer will not have to suffer. We don’t want to be involved in something that is not 110% reliable.”

So how does the globe-trotting serial entrepreneur and CEO of one of the largest e-commerce payment solution providers in the world describe his management style? And more importantly, how does his team see him?

“My team love me. They call me buddy. I am the type of guy who comes in in jeans and t-shirt; that way you conduct better business. My team love the company. We were in the news a few months ago and we were voted one of the best companies to work for in the US – we even beat Google. We were on Channel 2 – they came and filmed us for the day and interviewed the team. We were voted number one. It feels good. It makes me feel proud of myself.

“I treat my team members the way I want to be treated. You get what you pay for. I’ve seen companies that cut salaries and time off. When you get good people you give them everything, so long as they are delivering. You give them hope, you work better if you know you are part of a team,” he explained.

Staff incentives are almost as stellar as the company’s performance. “We buy lunch for the staff, we give cars, gifts to Hawaii, because they are humans and they need to be looked after and feel like they are a part of something and building something with their time.

“I look at it from their point of view and what they get from it. I know this because I was an employee once and I spent 12 years in retail picking up my cheque. I needed to find a new way to climb the ladder and I look after my staff the way I wanted to be looked after,” he remarked.

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Looking back on it all, what advice would he give to entrepreneurs just starting out?
“Believe in yourself,” he said simply.

“Whenever it gets harder it means it is getting better; when it gets tougher that means the light is coming at the end of the tunnel. It is life testing you to see if you will give up, the harder it gets - fight harder. Don’t give up. That is when you will understand you are getting so near to enjoying your goals. Life makes it easy to give up – that is how it tests you.

“It’s OK to be flat broke but don’t give up hope. I used to travel on a one-engine plane around the West Indies with a brown bag – they used to call me the young Indy - pitching banks.

“Life is a challenge - I never gave up and look where I am today, if you don’t give up you can be in my shoes; life is a chance and when you encounter difficulties you will learn how to solve them yourself. Follow your dreams, execute what is in your mind and don’t follow anyone else’s advice, you are your own navigator,” he said.

As for the future – watch out world, Andy Khawaja is coming. “The next challenge is to dominate the whole world and be in every country in the world. I will scream loud and tell them I am coming. I want to reach every country in the world and give them the option to bank and transact.”



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