



How International Tech Talent Helps Power Cars.com



TOP CHALLENGES:

- Competition for top talent was tough.
- The old immigration program was inefficient and slow without the right technology to support it. Visa processing took too long.
- Employees had a lot of questions and everything was funneled through HR adding to their workload.

ABOUT THE COMPANY:

Cars.com is a leading digital automotive marketplace dedicated to connecting car buyers and sellers in a meaningful way. The company has been headquartered in Chicago since its inception in 1998 and gives consumers the information they need to make informed decisions when purchasing a vehicle.

Preston Taylor started as lead technical recruiter at Cars.com. Within the last year, Preston moved into an HR business partner role, continuing to oversee the organization's immigration program and expanding the program with the help of Envoy Global.

INDUSTRY

Automotive & E-commerce

HEADQUARTERS

Chicago, IL

U.S. VISAS SPONSORED

Green Cards, H-1B's

ENVOY CUSTOMER SINCE

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When the immigration program at Cars.com was young, sponsoring foreign national employees wasn't common. The company tended to only consider sponsoring in extreme cases, where there were few (or no) other alternatives.

In a highly competitive marketplace like Chicago, however, which continues to grow as a tech hub, great local talent is that much harder to secure. That's why, Preston says, a company needs to consider all the options available when it comes to recruiting and hiring. "You really need to bring in the best folks who are going to help you expand your business and continue to take your tech innovation to new levels." Competition for talent helped push the HR team to explore alternatives to a reactionary and inefficient immigration program.

In the past, Cars.com had a limit to the type and number of visa cases they could take on. They weren't open to the F-1 visa Curricular Practical Training (CPT) or Optional Practical Training (OPT), for example – two hiring options that would open doors for them in the future. But, before Envoy, they couldn't handle the associated costs and time. It was expensive to go outside the company every time they needed to bring in foreign talent.



LEADERSHIP GIVES THE GREEN LIGHT FOR GROWTH

Things have changed since Preston started working with Envoy to manage and grow the immigration program at Cars.com. It has opened lots of doors for the organization's immigration program and what they're able to achieve with it. With Envoy technology and expertise at his fingertips, Preston says, he can convince leadership that immigration was a strategic program: "I was able to educate some of our senior leaders on why it's important to keep all options on the table, including looking at H-1B transfers and making sure we are doing green card sponsorships."



CARS.COM OPENS UP LANES FOR NEW VISAS

Now that the team has the support from leadership and the Envoy technology to do it efficiently, they can manage H-1B cap cases and F-1 OPT and CPT. "It's opened up the talent door that we really never had in the past," says Preston. Bringing in interns on CPT or recent graduates on OPT gets employees into Cars.com early with the hope that they'll have room to grow within the organization. He continued, "Since we started looking at OPT cases, which was last summer's internship program, we've converted three people that are a part of the OPT program – or that were part of a CPT program, and converted them to OPT – and now are full-time employees on OPT here at Cars."

Recently, Preston was able to get Cars.com E-Verified, which is an extra verification step in authorizing an organization to sponsor an F-1 OPT employee. That extended the OPT time to up to three years. They were able to get guidance from their Envoy customer success managers when they decided to go through the E-Verification process. Preston's team recently submitted H-1B visa applications for each of the three OPT employees during the FY 2019 lottery. The OPT program (and being E-Verified) have proven to be a good option for hiring talented database engineers and gives the company time to apply for an H-1B visa.



EMPLOYEES BYPASS HR WITH THEIR COMPLEX LEGAL QUESTIONS

“Communication Center: If I didn't have that, my day would be in pure chaos, especially in the climate that we're in politically,” admits Preston. As the political climate has recently set its sights on immigration, employee anxiety is high among the foreign nationals the company does hire. “Every time a news article comes out or somebody sends a Tweet, I'm getting questions left and right,” Preston says. He and his team are more than willing to answer what they can for their employees, but they don't always have all the information. And with nearly 40 foreign nationals in the Cars.com workforce, the volume of technical and legal questions requires more support than just Preston and the HR team.

The Envoy Communication Center is essential. With it, HR can provide employees with direct communication with a team of immigration law practitioners. That helps the team manage the volume of questions and lets employees get the expert advice they need. Preston's team has the space to take care of other essential HR priorities as a result. The Communication Center “keeps our foreign nationals happy, attends to their needs, and gives accurate, on-time information, especially in the ever-evolving world that we're in right now,” Preston says. “It's an absolute necessity for organizational efficiency here at Cars.”



ENVOY HELPS CARS.COM NAVIGATE IMMIGRATION POTHOLES

The customer success support at Envoy helps Cars.com navigate requests for evidence (RFEs), resubmit denied applications, and develop an immigration policy and procedures. Together with the support of Envoy, Preston and his team put together a travel policy to share with foreign nationals before those employees travel abroad, so they know what documentation they need, what their rights are and how to respond if they have an issue at the U.S. border. Thanks, in large part, to customer support from Envoy, Preston transformed a point of anxiety for foreign national employees to give them more confidence.

Uploading documentation to the Envoy platform saves Preston and his team weeks to try to get a visa application processed. The efficiency and speed from gathering and submitting documentation to getting a new employee started at Cars.com is something Preston has never seen anywhere else. Instead of two months, the whole process now takes an average of three weeks. And it all comes down to the efficiency of the Envoy technology: “Having both my candidate and my team be able to upload [documents] to the same place and exchange information is a huge time-saver.”

“If a company is really looking to expand their talent pool and going to utilize foreign nationals to make up some of the technical gaps in their workforce, I can't recommend Envoy highly enough – as a time-saver, for legal advice and as a good partner in recruiting and keeping the talent.”