

# H-1B Success Story: How FiftyThree Fixed its Broken Immigration Process With Envoy

Designers, engineers and makers comprise the core the team at FiftyThree. The New York-headquartered company was founded in 2011 by four “ex-Microsoft guys.” In the last five years, the tech company launched two flagship products: Paper, an app that allows users to take notes, draw pictures and sketch diagrams in one intuitive tool. And the original Pencil, its award-winning digital stylus, helps creatives express themselves on the go.

Today, FiftyThree has millions of customers worldwide, with a diverse international community. A dedication to great design and engineering have, no doubt, contributed to the company’s quick growth. However, a strong product and loyal customer base can’t keep a company afloat on their own. For FiftyThree Head of Global Operations Jason Sharpe, success also depends on the building blocks of an organization — its employees and how they are empowered to perform at their best.

While still a small business, FiftyThree competes over talent with big players in the industry, such as Facebook, Google and Microsoft. So their approach to talent management is simple: Recruit from all over the world to ensure the highest-skilled people are on their team and keep them happy with fun work and a supportive environment.

Yet, while FiftyThree currently has a growing workforce, previous immigration challenges created a barrier to the recruitment process for employees in need of H-1B visa sponsorship.

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## About the Company

### Employees

Less than 50

### Offices

New York, Seattle

### Types of Visas Sponsored

H-1B Specialty Occupation Visas,  
Green Cards



## DID YOU KNOW?

Architect Daniel Libeskind, designer of One World Trade Center, uses FiftyThree's Pencil stylus.

## Problem

"To be completely transparent, our immigration process was non-existent," says Sharpe. "There was no strategy, the process was completely in disarray."

Instead of proactive case preparation, a transparent process and a culture of constant communication, they received just the opposite. When partnered with a Seattle-based law firm, they were met with zero visibility and responsiveness. Pair those issues with internal barriers to the immigration process and the organization had to rethink its entire H-1B visa processing.

## Solution

After diagnosing the problem, Sharpe realized they hadn't placed enough value on finding the right partner. He believes the first step is vetting potential partners for "fit." The crucial step is to engage with partners that not only have the expertise, but demonstrate a high level of care in their work and are passionate about helping people through the immigration process.

Sharpe found the value his organization needed with Envoy. Natalie Napolitano, his customer relationship manager, provided that previously missing level support.

**"She cares, she's responsive and she takes the process personally, he says. "That's the exact type of vendor we wanted to find. We're lucky we did."**

Here are a couple more of FiftyThree's other top-rated Envoy benefits, according to Sharpe:



**"The telescopic ability to zoom in and zoom out:** It offers the right data insight for different levels of the audience. I can zoom into one case and zoom out to see all of my sponsored employees, enabling leadership to easily plan and forecast."



**"You're also able to see the end-to-end process.** Insight into the process helps our employees and all of us as a leadership team. I am confident in our staff that it's being handled, and that's the most important thing. It's important that our employees have this feeling of stability and trust. We've bred that with Envoy."



**"Passion for customers:** At the end of the day, it's just having a passion for our customers, and that's something we mutually share."



## Lasting Results

**“Until I got involved in this process at a more granular level, I didn’t really fully appreciate how personal, nor how scary it can be for folks,” says Sharpe.**

FiftyThree offers green card sponsorship, making a lasting investment in its workforce. And they’ve found that the reward of offering someone a secure future has many benefits.

Software Development Engineer Andrew Chan is one of their most recent employees to complete the green card process. FiftyThree took a moment to celebrate the process and what it meant for everyone involved. “It was an emotional milestone for the company and we’ve had a few of those thanks to Envoy.”

Finding the right immigration provider wasn’t just switching to a different vendor for FiftyThree. Through change, they found a true partner that’s dedicated to their success in the immigration process and beyond.

***“We’re 38, lean and mean and a lot of my job is to find ways that the gears can still turn, and to do that efficiently. So we’re extremely pleased that Envoy is part of that equation.”***

**“Working with Envoy is the difference between walking around in the dark and being able to turn on the lights.”**

- Jason Sharpe

## Advice to Employers

“In one word, it would be outsource. I think it’s foolish to try to navigate this yourself. It can burn a lot of time, energy and expense. Usually the counterpart internally that deals with your traditional standard among law firms is either an external legal council or an internal one. Both are not cheap, especially to companies of our size — outsource, outsource. And, of course, find the best partner to outsource. We found that in Envoy.”



**Jason Sharpe**

**Head of Global Operations  
FiftyThree**

