

Kosuke Sogo: Utilizing AI to Empower Professionals, Businesses and Industries



Kosuke Sogo | Co-founder & CEO | AnyMindGroup

In this era of digitalization, Artificial Intelligence (AI) is considered as the major breakthrough in the history of information technology. Its practical implementation has proved to be beneficial in various business formats. **Kosuke Sogo, CEO and Co-founder of AnyMind Group**, promptly realized the potential of AI and remarkably implicated it in the advertising industry. His redefined ideologies and firm zeal to pursue passion has sculpted him into a leading advertising and marketing expert and entrepreneur in the Asia region.

CIO Look appreciates the contribution of such leaders and admires them for their excellent work in their respective fields.

Below are some of the outlooks of Kosuke on his journey of becoming an entrepreneur in his own words.

I co-founded the company in Singapore in April 2016 with Otohiko Kozutsumi, who took the role as Chief Operating Officer, whilst I took on the role of Chief Executive Officer. Initially, we launched AdAsia Holdings, a company focused on the advertising technology space that offers machine learning-based solutions to both advertisers and publishers.

At that time, there was a gap in the industry—marketers and publishers had to use diverse solutions to serve multiple needs. There was also uncertainty on

which platforms to leverage on, and how to leverage on them. This formed the basis of our product philosophy of easy-to-use, consolidated solutions, which we hold true to this day.

In January 2018, we expanded into AnyMind Group, an AI solutions organization that spans across advertising, marketing and human resource technology. At AnyMind Group, our vision is to empower professionals, businesses and industries for better growth through technology. We want to help people leverage on new and upcoming technology to drive greater returns for them.

We have three businesses under the AnyMind Group umbrella: AdAsia Holdings, CastingAsia and TalentMind.

CastingAsia is an influencer marketing solution that effectively packages artificial intelligence (AI) to empower marketers to discover, manage and track their influencer marketing activities through a single, easy-to-use platform. We want to provide brands and influencers with a smart and safe environment that drives tangible returns on both sides.

At the same time, **TalentMind** empowers recruitment and human resource professionals to make smart, data-backed decisions and action, enabling efficiency and scalability through AI. Ultimately though, we aim to grow TalentMind into an all-in-one platform for human resource professionals—addressing all their needs through a single platform.

We have grown tremendously as well since starting the business in April 2016. Eight months in, we started operating at a profit, and have generated revenue amounts of US\$12.9 million in 2016, and US\$26 million in 2017.

Right now, we have 330 staff spread across 13 offices in 11 markets and countries, with our engineering teams situated in Vietnam, Thailand and Japan. We also acquired two companies—FourM in Japan and Acqua Media in Hong Kong, and in 2017, rose our Series A funding round totaling US\$14.5 million.

A Glimpse of the Author

When I was young, I wanted to follow my grandparent's footsteps to be an entrepreneur. Hearing first-hand experience from them helped shaped my perception of entrepreneurship, and I knew that I needed industry experience first before starting my own business – understanding the intricacies and gaps of an industry before jumping in to make an impact.

My childhood ambitions led me to graduating with a degree in business management. In my university days, the digital advertising industry was growing exponentially. The growth and opportunities in the market caught my

attention, and after graduation in 2010, I found a job in a Japanese ad tech company.

In my first few years, I was the top performer in the company, and was given the opportunity to expand the business into Southeast Asia, establishing their presence in 6 markets. In 2016, I felt that the time was right – having amassed experiences across Asia, and building an understanding of the local nuances in each market. I then left to start my own business.

Emergence of A leader

A lot of my leadership ideologies stem from my grandparents—their focus on the ‘people’ aspect of their businesses, and the ability to motivate and lead large groups. This is reflected in AnyMind Group’s philosophy of “Growth for Everyone”. We know that our growth starts internally – from our own staff growing together with the company—and we will be able to empower our clients, stakeholders, and entire businesses, industries and society. We want to create an impact on the world through our technology. I keep three traits close to my heart—commitment, speed, and an adaptable mindset. These are reflected in the AnyMind Values—a set of guiding qualities that everyone in AnyMind Group possesses.

Speed is an essential facet in today’s fast-evolving technology landscape, and companies that are not fast enough to adopt new technology will lose their competitive edge. As a startup, we also need to be adaptable to the needs of our clients, industry changes and advancements, and business needs. We need to be adaptable and find new ways of solving problems.

Since my university days, I also admired from afar the growth of Softbank, and the entrepreneurial mindset and spirit of Masayoshi Son. He has a great vision for society, and has a never-ending hunger for success. He is never satisfied with his achievements. I reflect this in myself as well – always looking for the next business opportunity, and never resting on my laurels. I always look to learn – from my own mistakes and others – and grow personally and professionally.

The Future Endeavors

Many founders see an IPO or sale as an exit strategy. For me, it’s the opposite. Both my co-founder and I really want to make an impact on the lives of others through technology.

For AnyMind Group, any future public listing is just a milestone for us. Our vision of empowering professionals, businesses and industries for greater growth through technology, means that we plan to expand. We are looking to

expand our current market share and grow our products further. We're also looking at expanding outside of Asia in the future, and truly make a global impact on people's lives. Most importantly, we are looking to expand the industries that we're in – over the years, we've built great technology for our current industries, which can also be packaged and adapted to other industries.

Even though we're only at our 2.5 year mark, I believe that we can continue this growth for years to come.

Advice for Budding Business Leaders

Entrepreneurship is never easy, and you will need a high level of commitment to the business in order for you to grow it. To me, being a business leader means taking an always-on approach to the business. For the past few years, I spend the majority every day, including weekends, thinking about the next steps for the business, how to improve the lives of my staff, and how to continue building on what AnyMind Group has developed so far. On some weeks, I travel to four countries, taking red eye flights so that I can spend my waking hours on the business.

This commitment is driven for my passion about entrepreneurship, the business and creating an impact on people's lives. I believe that having this approach has helped the business grow to what it is today. Being a business leader also means that you need to keep learning and growing. You need to rebound quickly and adopt a different approach. If you do not grow, the business will not grow. I hope to have inspired the readers and emerging entrepreneurs through this narration.

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