

Jan Koum Biography

Jan Koum is a Ukrainian-born American internet entrepreneur who co-founded the mobile messaging application WhatsApp. This biography of Jan Koum provides detailed information about his childhood, life, achievements, works & timeline.

Quick Facts	
Famous as	CEO and co-founder of WhatsApp
Nationality	American
Born on	24 February 1976 AD
Height	1.88 m
Zodiac Sign	Pisces
Born in	Kiev, Ukraine
Founder/Co-Founder	Co-founded WhatsApp
Net worth	\$9.5 billion



Jan Koum is a Ukrainian-born American internet entrepreneur who co-founded the mobile messaging application WhatsApp with Brian Acton. The extremely popular mobile application was acquired by Facebook Inc. in 2014 for a whopping US\$19 billion. A billionaire today, he is counted amongst the richest Americans but just a few years ago he was so poor that he had to live off food stamps. Born into a humble family in Ukraine, he migrated to the United States as a teenager with his mother and grandmother. His initial years in the new country were very difficult; the family struggled to make ends meet. Their situation worsened when his mother became ill with cancer and eventually passed away. A resilient soul, Jan Koum worked his way through high school, and found a job at Yahoo as an

infrastructure engineer, while still attending college. He formed a rapport with Brian Acton, another Yahoo employee with who he would form a long-term collaboration in future. After working at Yahoo for several years, both Koum and Acton left the job to explore newer avenues in social media. Their love for social media ultimately led the two men to form WhatsApp as a mobile messaging application which went on to become the most popular messaging platform in the world.

Childhood & Early Life:

- Jan Koum was born on February 24, 1976, in Kyiv, Ukrainian SSR, Soviet Union, to Jewish parents as their only child. He lived a simple life in a small town that was disrupted by the chaotic political environment and anti-Semitism in the country.
- To escape the unfavorable conditions in their native land, the family decided to migrate to the United States. Jan, along with his mother and grandmother moved to the US in 1992, and his father planned to join the family later. However, his father fell ill in Ukraine and could not make it to the US. He died in 1997.
- Aged 16 at the time of the immigration, Jan faced considerable challenges in adjusting to the new country. His mother took up babysitting to earn money and Jan himself began working as a cleaner at a grocery store.
- He became interested in programming while at high school and discovered that he possessed an inherent knack for it. By the time he completed his schooling at 18, he was a skilled self-taught computer network engineer.
- He enrolled at the San Jose State University. While still a student he took up a job with global accountants Ernst & Young as a security tester to help pay for his studies.

Career:

- On his job, Jan Koum was assigned to the new search engine Yahoo to inspect security levels at the company's advertising system. While working on this, he became acquainted with Brian Acton, one of Yahoo's earliest employees. The two men shared many similarities and struck up an immediate rapport as both of them had a similar no-nonsense approach to working.
- After a few months Koum joined Yahoo as an infrastructure engineer, while still attending San Jose State University. A few days after his joining Yahoo suffered a systems breakdown, and Koum—who was attending a class at that time—was immediately called to help with the problem. At this juncture Koum realized that he would have to choose either the university or Yahoo, and he chose the latter.
- Koum and Acton worked together at Yahoo for nine years. During this time they not only became good friends, but also realized their mutual interest in the fast growing social media world. However, Yahoo did not offer them the opportunity to explore social media, so they quit their jobs in 2007 to explore newer avenues.

- Both Koum and Acton took a year off and travelled around South America. On their return to the US, both of them individually applied for jobs at Facebook and Twitter, and both were rejected by both companies.
- In 2009, Koum bought a new iPhone. On visiting one of the first App Stores to open, he realized the potential offered by the market for iPhone compatible applications. This gave him the idea for an application for low-cost convenient communication.
- Excited with the idea, he roped in Acton and the two men incorporated their new company—called WhatsApp Inc.—on Koum’s birthday, February 24, 2009. One of their fundamental principles was that their company would never accept any form of advertising revenue.
- The duo launched the WhatsApp Messenger in early 2010. The early messenger kept crashing and the men faced many challenges in promoting the application. Frustrated after a few months of trying, Koum was on the verge of giving up when Acton convinced him to give it some more time.
- There were not many other instant messengers at that time, and gradually WhatsApp became popular with the users. The rising popularity of the app enabled the founders to acquire additional venture capital.
- The user base of WhatsApp grew steadily over the months and by February 2013, it had around 200 million active users. The rising popularity of WhatsApp grabbed the attention of the social media giant Facebook which acquired WhatsApp for US\$ 19 billion in 2014. By 2016 WhatsApp became the most popular messaging application with a user base of one billion.

Major Work:

- Jan Koum, along with Brian Acton launched the WhatsApp Messenger (developed by WhatsApp Inc.) which was initially released in 2010. The instant messaging client for smartphones became the most popular messaging application in 2016. It was acquired by Facebook Inc. in 2014 for US\$19 billion.

Awards & Achievements:

- Jan Koum and Brian Acton were the runners-up at the 8th Annual Crunchies Awards in 2015 in the category Founder of the Year.

Personal Life & Legacy:

- In 1996, a restraining order was granted against Koum in state court in San Jose. He was accused of verbally and physically threatening an ex-girlfriend. More recently he expressed his regret on

having behaved that way.

- He lost his mother to cancer in 2000.

Net Worth:

- Jan Koum has an estimated net worth of US\$9.7 billion.