

LANDING PAD RESIDENCY PROPELS GRUNTIFY INTO US MARKET

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Gruntify is transforming the way organisations collect data and perform work in the field by replacing clipboards with modern, digital workflows. A three-month residency at an Australian Landing Pad helped the company secure crucial clients in the US.

The idea for Gruntify was first conceived in 2015 by CEO and founder Igor Stjepanovic after he won a local government contract to help identify and remedy civic-related issues like graffiti and vandalism. At the time, Stjepanovic was (and still is) steering the helm of GIS People, a geospatial technology company, from which the Gruntify platform was evolved.

Often referred to as “the Swiss Army knife of data management and field work”, Gruntify is a cloud-based GIS tool. It empowers customers to build spatially enabled e-forms and collect rich data (videos, pictures, audio files, forms and GPS locations) in the field using their mobile devices.

Once the data is collected and submitted to a central database, it can be mapped and shared in real time with command and dispatch centres. From there, it can be managed by people or by programmable automation agents known as “Grunts”.

‘The workflow allows for multiple parties and agencies to participate and work together on a single copy of the data — in real time,’ says Stjepanovic. ‘With enough data collected, heatmaps, cluster maps, and/or even advanced analytics and reports are automatically produced.’

This blend of technology and automation makes Gruntify an ideal solution for industries such as insurance, transport, public safety, national security, disaster management and many more.



Gruntify founder and CEO Igor Stjepanovic.

‘The Landing Pad residency enabled me to form strong relationships and alliances with strategic partners, and gain more insight in relation to market needs in the US.’

Igor Stjepanovic, CEO and Founder, Gruntify

Searching for new opportunities

The Gruntify platform was instrumental in helping the Queensland Government manage responses to natural disasters in Stjepanovic’s home state of Queensland. Realising there was a worldwide market for the platform, Stjepanovic turned his focus to cracking the US market.

‘The US is prone to natural disasters such as floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, fires and earthquakes, so it made sense for us to aim for that market,’ says Stjepanovic. ‘Our solution had been battle-tested during Cyclone Debbie in Queensland so we had the advantage of a proven product to take to market.’

Attempting to enter a market as large and diverse as the US did pose some challenges for Gruntify.



Australian Government

Australian Trade and Investment Commission

'Being unknown and located overseas makes it very hard to do business in any country, and in particular in the United States,' admits Stjepanovic.

'Given our clients are government organisations, selling "direct" did not seem like a great idea, so we started looking for strategic partners and resellers early on, as well as working through various accelerators and incubators that had access to government clients.'

Stjepanovic first heard about the Landing Pads program through an Austrade social media post. The Landing Pads program provides market-ready scaleups with an operational base and customised support for their overseas expansion goals. Scaleups participate in an immersive program in one of five Landing Pad cities: Berlin, San Francisco, Shanghai, Singapore and Tel Aviv.

'When I learned more about the program, I thought it would be ideal for Gruntify – what better way to learn about the market, make new contacts and network with potential clients than to immerse myself in the country for three months?' says Stjepanovic.

Going further, faster

In 2018, Stjepanovic packed his bags for a three-month residency at the San Francisco Landing Pad. Over the next 90 days, he made new contacts and friends, and worked on building strategic partnerships with Microsoft, the National Association of Counties and startup accelerators that focused on the government sector.

'The residency enabled me to form strong relationships and alliances with strategic partners, and gain more insight in relation to market needs in the US,' says Stjepanovic. 'Furthermore, I validated some ideas and assumptions as correct, but also crossed out some ideas that would never work in the US market.'

'My motto is "You can only know, if you go", so the residency was really useful and enlightening.'

Upon his return to Australia, Stjepanovic continued to follow up with his contacts. It wasn't long before some of the key partnerships made in San Francisco and through the Landing Pad introductions came to fruition. During 2018, Gruntify worked with Miami Dade County, City of Houston, Metropolitan Transportation Commission and several other large US government agencies.

In January 2019, the City of San Jose in California selected Gruntify to help improve its emergency response to fire incidents across the city. After making several trips to San Jose over a two-month period, Gruntify implemented a system that was

highlighted as a 'great success story' by city officials during a presentation to the [Lord Mayor at the town hall](#).

Advice for startups

Stjepanovic has some advice for other Australian startups thinking about entering the US market.

'Ask yourself: why I am taking my business to this new market? Is it because:

- I would like to grow the company and acquire more customers?
- there is genuine opportunity or need for my product or service?
- I would like to raise capital?

'Then remember your choice and develop and stick to the plan that will help you fulfil that goal.'

'The second thing you should do is decide how you are going to sell your product – will it be direct or through a partner or reseller? Going through partners or resellers like we did allows you to tap into established networks and distribution channels, or reach clients that might otherwise be difficult to reach if you were selling directly.'

'The third thing is to be prepared to "tweak" your product, not just update s's to z's on your marketing material. These changes can be time-consuming and costly – but can mean the difference between making a sale and missing out,' says Stjepanovic.

Greater expansion on the cards

Since participating in the Landing Pads program, Gruntify has gone from strength to strength. The company is well on its way to "conquering" the US market after assisting several US city councils to address multiple civic challenges.

Gruntify's rapid scale-up in the US was followed by expansion to the UK in late 2018, another key market for the company.

Despite the many successes, the Gruntify team knows the company still has a long way to go in terms of reaching its full potential and international goals.

'Gruntify is uniquely positioned to transform the way organisations deploy and manage their field workforce while delivering premium customer experiences, increasing efficiency and profitability and driving down costs,' says Stjepanovic.

'I look forward to building on the company's first-class product and market position as we deliver even greater workflow automation through next-generation innovations that harness artificial

intelligence, augmented reality, low or no code deployments, geospatial data collection and analytics, and an integrated reporting engine.

'My vision is to establish Gruntify as the industry's dominant force and leading location intelligence platform.'

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