

# Apiax's CEO on Building Upon Past Tribulations, Successes, and the Developments on the Horizon



Apiax builds digital solutions that aim to make it radically simple for companies of all sizes to comply with global regulations. Companies of all sizes and across industries can use its software to bridge the gap between compliance, business, and technology. Philip Schoch, CEO at Apiax, shares insights and updates about company growth and the expansion to the Asian market.

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BY:

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## What have been some of the recent enhancements to the Apiax business?

Despite the challenges, Apiax saw immense growth in 2020. The company practically doubled our number of employees, surpassing 70 people in total. This has been the fastest growth since the company's founding in 2017. In the first half of the year, we opened an office in Singapore and added our on-site APAC Lead, Yvonne Ngai, to the team to help us support local clients even better. We also opened offices in London and Frankfurt. To add to that, we were recognised by various institutions including the FinTech50 list, the RegTech100 list and won a few awards in Asia and Europe.

We have also seen growth in new partnerships that help our clients integrate our products more seamlessly into software systems (CRM, banking systems, advisory tools, and so on) and to ease daily tasks. In terms of number of clients, we had strong growth last year and are on track to tripling our client base this year. The same goes for content partners. Today we work with three of the "big-four" companies and with many more specialised global law firms. This gives us the ability to cover more use cases on more regulations and new emerging ones.

All these enhancements are important steps towards our goal of turning compliance into a business enabler for our clients and becoming the one-stop-hub of rules and regulations for financial institutions of all sizes. The fact that all of this happened with most of our employees working and beginning their journeys with Apiax from their homes, shows just how far we have become in just four years.

## Have there been any interesting product developments?

We are happy to announce that our product offering has become broader with more jurisdictions covered from more world class content partners. We now offer regulatory requirements, along our use cases, and for most jurisdictions. Next to instrument distribution and behavioural rules, we recently added products to cover cross-border data processing and data transfer regulations, as well as new rules for onboarding requirements.



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In addition to our cross-border compliance rules, we are soon to release more use cases for a variety of topics, including: tax efficiency and data protection. We are continuously improving our apps and our platform, as well as our integration points to allow other software vendors to seamlessly make use of our binary regulatory answers. And just as important, we are adding more content partners to cover more use cases for the industry.

We are on the journey to offering any regulation for any digital project in the financial services industry.

## According to your recent survey, how are financial institutions currently coping with cross-border compliance?

In our recent study, we found that only 55% of financial services companies are currently actively marketing their services to clients abroad. We saw two, previously uncommon, scenarios which demonstrate how the pandemic and current regulations are hampering cross-border financial services:

### Digital banking

Restrictions around in-person meetings and travel restrictions have meant marketing banking services and products have shifted online. Financial institutions not only need to master the complexity of a slew of new regulations, but also find a way to ensure their teams

stay compliant in the digital space. Finding ways to support modern banking applications, such as client advisory tools, online advisors, trading systems or mobile applications.

In many jurisdictions, as is the case for many in Singapore, there are specific rules governing online financial services and products, so organisations need to be aware of those regulations and ensure their advisory, sales and marketing teams are too. Regulatory knowledge needs to be up to date and, most importantly, accessible to anyone who needs it across an organisation.

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### Virtual and video meetings

The inability to hold face to face meetings with clients has caused a lot of confusion, with many organisations still not aware that most cross-border regulations are equally applicable to virtual meetings. According to the survey, 49% of organisations in the sector admit to having difficulty understanding the legal rules around virtual meetings and only 32% have taken steps to cover current requirements.

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Even if we take virtual scenarios out of the picture, traditional forms of [compliance guidance](#), such as manuals, can quickly become out of date and provide ambiguous input. So, either a compliance team has the capacity to inform their advisory teams at short

notice, or those teams must use their own judgment to interpret the restrictions. That is a huge risk, but the alternative could mean delaying or cancelling a meeting and losing the business.

### Specifically, how have you been growing the APAC business?

Shortly after opening our office in Singapore last year, we applied for the Monetary Authority of Singapore’s Financial Sector Technology and Innovation (FSTI) Proof of Concept (POC) grant to help fund experimentation, development, and dissemination of our technologies.

The [grant](#) enabled us to conduct a project with a global universal bank with a strong client base in Singapore, to explore the potential of digital cross-border compliance solutions. To improve their cross-border compliance processes, the client has asked Apiax to help them digitise their cross-border framework. One of the challenges for the POC project was not having a colleague onsite due to the travel restrictions. However, despite the distance and time difference, we delivered the project on time and published the report on it.

The POC has enabled Apiax to showcase our product and regulatory know-how capabilities and the case study has helped to give our prospective clients a better understanding of how Apiax can help them to improve their regulatory compliance and at the same time lower risk and improve go-to-market strategies.

### What are your future plans, and your roadmap for 2021-2022?

We believe that it’s only a matter of time before digital regulation and compliance practices will be a standard for financial institutions worldwide.

Our objectives are to accelerate global growth plans, strengthen product development and continue to build a strong interdisciplinary team across all locations. This includes the expansion to new markets, investing heavily in the product pipeline, as well as an ambitious hiring plan for the coming year.

We are working on a number of initiatives to continuously improve accessibility and usability of our products, be it via a stronger partner network with pre-built integrations or even better user education and documentation. Our regulatory products can be used for a variety of use cases and we work on enabling our clients to detect even more of these use cases themselves. ■