

Interview with Featured Boston Mentor: David “Chet” Chetwynd



David “Chet” Chetwynd
CEO & Co-Founder
[JMNC Solutions, LLC](#)

Q1: Currently, you are working as the CEO & Founder of JMNC Solutions. How did you get into your current work?

JMNC Solutions is a consulting company, and consulting returns me to the roots of my early career. After completing an undergraduate degree in Engineering and working for a few years as an engineer, I decided to pursue an MBA and then spent 6 years as a consultant working for large telecommunications clients in the US, Europe, Middle East, and Asia. After that I spent a few years at a Boston-based start-up (more on that later), and then from 2003 to 2018 I was at a Japanese company based in Silicon Valley. After 7 years in a Vice President role focusing on strategy, business development, and M&A, I decided to go out on my own and focus on helping other companies in these areas.

Q2: Do you have experience living in Boston? What is your impression of Boston as a city to be an entrepreneur?

Although I’m based in Raleigh, North Carolina, I am a frequent visitor to Boston. My introduction to the Boston area’s business scene came in 1999 when I worked for a start-up out of Waltham. StorageNetworks was an innovative company selling on-demand shared data storage services well before the term “cloud” came into wide usage. Investors loved the idea, and the company had a very successful IPO, topping out at a valuation of nearly \$10B. I ran a global services organization focused on data protection and data storage solutions. After moving over to Hitachi Data Systems in Silicon Valley, I was sent back to Boston in 2009-2010 for executive education at both MIT and Harvard. I really love the area, and throughout my career in tech I’ve had many interactions with Boston-based companies and Universities.

Q3: What projects are you working on at the moment?

My management consulting has spanned from start-ups to large international companies. A sampling of recent projects in that area include 1) advising the co-founder of a start-up SaaS company on rationalizing multiple portfolio offerings from different acquisitions while improving overall customer engagement, and 2) working with an innovation division in a very large global company to map out strategic growth options. I also coach CEOs operating at the complex intersection of Western and Japanese business practices. Finally, I serve as a mentor and advisor to start-ups, including several Japanese start-ups.

Q4: How has your experience been mentoring Japanese startups through CIC's partnership with JETRO?

I'm fairly new to JETRO's mentoring program, but the two companies that I've mentored so far have been a pleasure to work with. I'm always inspired by the focus on ESG for the work coming out of Japan.

Q5: What do you think are the challenges facing a Japanese startup that is trying to expand its business in the Boston area?

Business practices can be quite different in the US versus Japan. Leaders are required to navigate many legal, regulatory, and cultural hurdles. Relationships may not be as important as offering a leading product or service. Contracts are far more complex. Investment or sales pitches must be short, clear and compelling. Good local talent will require more pay, bonus, and equity as your business grows, or you will risk losing them to the competition. Competition will move quickly, aided by modern tools in the cloud and digital workflows. Software user interfaces will be clean, simple, and intuitive. To be competitive, it's not enough just to have a great product or service. You must know how to build it affordably, how to get it to market, how to price it competitively, how to sell it, how to support it seamlessly, and how to stay in the lead.

Q6: What advice do you have for Japanese startups that are exploring business opportunities in the Boston area?

Japanese start-ups competing in global markets must be attuned to local market requirements and US business practices. Boston offers a vast and diverse pool of talent, and leveraging this talent will be a key to success. Build a great strategy. Understand your markets and your customers. Iterate quickly. Tolerate risk. Learn from failures. Adapt quickly to changing market conditions.