

## Interview with Featured Boston Mentor: Pardees Safizadeh

---



**Pardees Safizadeh**  
CEO and Founder  
[Albaloo](#)

**Q1: Currently, you are working as the CEO and Founder of Albaloo, where you help early stage startups gain traction and scale their marketing. How did you get into your current work?**

My path to marketing is not the typical one. I started social media marketing in college when I was studying not marketing – but theater. My friend and I were working together to put on plays. But because of the content of our plays, we were not allowed to advertise in the school newspaper. So, I started to look for other ways to get the word out. That led me to start using social media, like Facebook Events. Our marketing slowly became more sophisticated until we even got coverage by a major local newspaper, the Boston Globe. During college, I got a summer job at a tech startup writing blog posts about local music shows. Now these kinds of marketing strategies are common but back then, this kind of social media marketing was really new. I applied everything that I had learned in college promoting theater and my blog posts were successful, so I became the head social media marketing person. I saw that there was an opportunity to teach companies how to leverage Facebook. That's how my business started, and then I expanded into new platforms as they grew up like Twitter and LinkedIn. I grew my business on the side, as I worked full-time for a Public Relations firm and part-time for Greenhorn Connect. I built my reputation as the “social media expert” in Boston. I went on to work at various companies including IBM, CloudHealth Technologies, and Evergage, while continuing to build my skills. I felt like I was ready to shift to freelance again and that's when I launched Albaloo. I oversold what I could handle in three months and started building out my team, and that's how I landed here.

**Q2: Are you originally from the Boston area? What is your impression of Boston as a city to be an entrepreneur?**

I was born in Kansas. I moved to Boston when I was kid and went to Boston College. Boston has changed a lot since as I grew up. I remember going into Kendall Square in Cambridge and there was very little to do, and the Seaport in Boston was just a parking lot. It has grown a lot. I think Boston is one of the better cities in the US for entrepreneurship. There's more Boston could do in terms of diversity and opening up the innovation ecosystem to incoming internationals. It can feel a bit closed sometimes. They really want to see you succeed before they start buying into your project. Boston has great resources, but it requires hustling.

**Q3: What projects are you working on currently?**

We are working with a couple of Japanese clients. It has been great to learn about how they approach business and trying to adapt their approach to the US market. I have enjoyed the challenge of figuring out how we can preserve their Japanese roots, while bringing in the American flair. We also work with a gym that has multiple locations in the US, doing content marketing and website work. In addition, we have a startup that creates courses for recruiters who are trying to get into technology. And we are working on Hubspot implementation with a founder who is creating courses for college students who want to learn about STEM careers. It is really rewarding to work with such a diverse group of clients, and watch them thrive in the market.

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

They are great! I love them. They are so positive. When we showed one Japanese client a new design, they said, "that is the most beautiful design ever." And I felt like I wish that all my clients expressed themselves like that. I also appreciate that they are very strategic. I have seen that the Japanese companies really want to be able to back up what they say and what they do. American companies tend to be a bit looser – they'll say that they are going to do something even if they have never done it before. Our Japanese clients are the clients who do their homework most reliably, and they also take their timelines seriously to deliver on time. I am also really impressed by how educated the Japanese teams are. It is a pleasure working with them!

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

Language is a big challenge. Also, I think they have to get more comfortable with expressing their personalities. In the US there is an emphasis on "authenticity," so people really care about who you are as a person. Americans really want to know about the people behind the company. But in Japan, it seems like the focus is not on the people at all, but instead on the institution. I try to help them find a middle ground and put some kind of "face" on the company so Americans can trust them. Another challenge is that in the US, people take more in terms of aspirations. In Japan, people talk about what they have already done and what they can back

up. This is a major difference to bridge, especially when it comes to competing against American companies.

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

I think it is hard with COVID. I feel like the Japanese teams create a better impression in person than online. To overcome that, I think that the Japanese companies need to use their networks and every resource available to them. For example, they could message other Japanese people in the area and ask for help. It is okay to rely on others. And I would suggest that they loosen up. I realize that is tough to say but I think they must understand the culture that they are in. If they really want to do everything that it takes to “win” in the US, they have to Americanize some aspects of how they work and do business – like they need to talk more in terms of aspirations and have their leaders front and center.