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Gaston Taratuta on Becoming an Entrepreneur ‘by Force’

HOW A TUXEDO RENTAL LED TO BUILDING A WORLDWIDE DIGITAL ADVERTISING FIRM
BY WILL RUSSO

Up against global competition—a finalist group of entrepreneurs representing 41 countries—Gaston Taratuta’s attitude was one of cool confidence: “You are the world champion of this story. Chin up and believe it, brother!”

This mindset ultimately led to him winning the title of Ernst & Young’s World Entrepreneur of the Year during the June competition in Monaco.

Taratuta’s career path began in Miami, where he arrived from his native Argentina to earn an MBA. Following graduate school, he learned the digital marketing space in those early days with Brazilian internet company UOL, which had him living in Brazil for two years overseeing all U.S. business.

As Taratuta recalled, his position abroad was eliminated abruptly after he rented an expensive tuxedo for an awards ceremony. “I became an entrepreneur by force,” he reflected. His role was transitioned from full time to contract, so Taratuta headed back to the U.S. with \$5,000 to start his own business, Internet Media Services. The company was rebranded as Aleph Holding in 2020, named after the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet. (Taratuta’s family is Jewish.)

The company expanded globally, acquiring similar businesses as the number of content-driven and shoppable platforms exploded in the growing digital marketing space. Along the way, Taratuta also received major funding from Sony, CVC Capital Partners, Twitter, Snapchat and MercadoLibre, all current stakeholders, bringing the company to a \$2 billion valuation as of last year.

The founder and CEO said his business is an “enabler of digital advertising in



Gaston Taratuta founded Internet Media Services, which rebranded as Aleph Holding in 2020.

emerging markets.” It acts as the exclusive representative for Silicon Valley tech platforms in places where the companies have no internal operations, currently serving 90 countries with a team of about 1,600.

“My business is based on the advantage of the disadvantage,” he said. The aim is to provide the ecommerce infrastructure for smaller, niche players to achieve global reach for their products and services, narrowing the global wealth gap in the process.

“Most important is to do what you love with the people you like,” he added. “Don’t do something you don’t like, because when you build with passion, it’s easier.”

Big mistake

Without elaborating, Taratuta offered a relatable sentiment many likely feel in their work: “Not risking more.”

Lesson learned

A captain can’t take all the credit,

Taratuta said. They have a crew, people with skills in areas where the leader may struggle, and a healthy tolerance for failure. “It’s not about me; it’s about us,” he added.

How he got the gig

In his view, failing is the most important element of success, and often, there isn’t acceptance for it. “Teaching to fail needs to happen in school and at home,” he said.

Pro tip

To stand out in the global market, “be always ready to build the product or service that you know will have limited competition.” Build in differentiation value—which often comes from a willingness to educate your clients—to gain trust.

Will Russo

Will Russo is the contributions editor at Adweek.