

A MAGAZINE FOR THE ADVENTUROUS ENTREPRENEUR

FOUNDERS

A portrait of Mark Francis, a man with a beard and mustache, wearing a dark suit jacket over a white shirt. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile.

MARK FRANCIS

CO-FOUNDER & COMMERCIAL
DIRECTOR AT ZETL

Roads to Success

POWERED BY
ASIA CEO COMMUNITY & CSUITE XCHANGE

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ABOUT ZETL

ZETL IS ASIA-PACIFIC'S FIRST FINANCING COMPANY FOR ASSET-LIGHT BUSINESSES AND ALSO ONE OF THE FEW EMBEDDED LENDING FINTECHS IN THE REGION.

PROVIDING NON-DILUTIVE FINANCING TO STARTUPS & SMES FOR GROWTH, PAYROLL & WORKING CAPITAL.



Recent Clients of InvestHK



TELL US ABOUT YOUR BACKGROUND, AND HOW YOU CAME TO FOUND YOUR COMPANY?

I was born in Hong Kong and spent time living in Malaysia, the UK and Shanghai, before settling back in HK. Most of my career had been within the HR/staffing space, before launching my first venture (Silverstrand Executive Search) in 2012, followed by another (Cleverly Search) in 2017.

It was while scaling those businesses that I saw a gap in the market to provide financing to asset-light businesses, who are typically too small or don't have enough physical assets, to secure bank finance. Using my contacts from headhunting, I approached Shan Han, who had worked for a number of hedge funds and banks, bringing a strong understanding of finance and product. He is now our CEO. We then got introduced to our third co-founder Matt Roberts, via a Japanese VC in Singapore, quickly identifying that his experience in structured finance & private credit would complement our skillsets. With that the founding team of Zetl was born!

WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU AND YOUR ORGANIZATION – MISSION, VISION, OR CORE VALUES? WHY?

All three are important, but since our mission is written on our website, I'll go with On a mission to finance the next generation of businesses in APAC

CAN YOU EXPLAIN BRIEFLY HOW YOUR SERVICE(S)/PRODUCT(S) WORKS?

Everything can be done within our web app at www.zetl.com with the onboarding process typically taking around 10-12 minutes, with integrations to cloud accounting software such as Xero & Quickbooks, plus an open banking API aggregator called Finverse, that significantly reduce the time required. We offer a number of products including Invoice Financing, Credit Lines, Term Loans, the Wage Layer (an embedded payroll financing product) plus Revenue Based Financing.

The whole process is conducted online, primarily through our app, with the underwriting process a combination of our machine learning credit scoring model and a fundamental overlay from the team. Proposals are completed via e-signatures and then funds are dispursed digitally.





for New Foreign and Companies in Hong Kong

WHAT MAKES YOU DIFFERENT FROM WHAT'S CURRENTLY AVAILABLE IN THE MARKET?

I think being a truly tech-enabled business is one clear difference. Zetl went live in 2019, so we needed to be clever in using relatively limited resources, to compete with larger alternative lenders and/or banks.

We were also a fully distributed team before Covid hit, which meant we weren't particularly impacted by the WFH adjustments, as all our processes were set up for remote working. Then being one of Asia's few embedded lending fintechs is also another clear difference. There aren't many API-enabled lenders in the market.

HOW HAS THE INDUSTRY BEEN CHANGING IN RECENT YEARS?

In recent years, the industry has undergone significant changes. The adoption of Machine Learning/AI in credit scoring and underwriting processes has accelerated approval times. We also have open bank API integrations as well as OCR tools that can review bank statement data. Lastly, enabled by the rapid adoption of digital payments during COVID, embedded lending has become a key driver of growth for us. This strategy allows us to utilize our technology, underwriting capabilities, and debt capital to enable our partners to provide financing to their customers and merchants all through a unified API. We currently have several pilots in place across Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, and the Philippines with payments processors, POS systems, and payroll management software companies.



WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD FOR YOUR COMPANY?

We've got plenty to keep us busy with the embedded lending pilots, but in addition to that, we have further expansion across the region planned, to complement our activities in Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia & the Philippines. We'll be incorporating in Japan later this year, followed afterwards by Vietnam & Thailand, while there are a couple of active pilots in place with partners in Australia & New Zealand. Through our embedded lending partners you'll hopefully be seeing a lot more of Zetl soon!



ZETL

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