

Jillian Flodstrom (00:00):

I think all too often, we, as entrepreneurs, don't give ourselves enough time to dream and wonder what our life could look like in the future. In today's episode, we're talking to Episode 192 - Pieter van Nuenen, and what's so cool about his company is that he helps people relocate from a home country to Lisbon, Portugal. He talks about the journey of his company and what they do to provide exceptional customer service as he guides people through this journey of a relocating to a whole new country. So, if this is something that you've ever thought about or wondered, like, how does that process even work? Could it be a reality for me and my family? You're definitely gonna wanna tune into this week's episode because there's so many good things that we cover about what does this process look like, what does his process look like, and how to choose a company to help you relocate, if that's something that you're interested in doing.

Jillian Flodstrom (01:08):

Today, we have the pleasure of speaking with Episode 192 - Pieter van Nuenen, the co-founder of the Portugal Company. Pieter's journey began in 2000 when he, he was a Dutch businessman living in Portugal. After falling in love with his beautiful wife Alice, they began to build a life together and eventually purchase a property in, in Lisbon's central neighborhood. Their love for Portugal and its culture continued to grow, leading them to acquire property in central Portugal. In 2014, this dream of running an Airbnb and small farm eventually turned into a successful relocation company that they run today, which offers a real estate support, tax and fiscal advice. For those folks looking to relocate Pieter and his wife's passion for beautiful homes, Portuguese culture, nature, and architecture, inspired them to find the Portugal company where they promised to give candid advice and welcome clients with genuine Portuguese hospitality. If you've ever considered a relocating to Portugal and need expert guidance, you are definitely gonna wanna tune into this episode. Please welcome to the show, Pieter, how are you?

Episode 192 - Pieter van Nuenen (02:18):

Hey. Hello. Good evening, good afternoon, good morning. Great. That's good evening. As you know, <laugh>, thanks for having me.

Jillian Flodstrom (02:25):

Absolutely. I'm excited to talk to you today because I know that there's a lot of people that have considered relocating outside the United States, but it is a very big overwhelming situation that a lot of people face, and they don't even know that companies like yours exist. So what's really cool about what you do is you focus from the very beginning stages, looking for a property, doing all these different things, but you hold our hand through the entire process. So let's start there, because I think a lot of people don't even know that this is an option that they can relocate out of the country. So tell us a little bit about your process. Where does it even start?

Episode 192 - Pieter van Nuenen (03:09):

Yeah, so it, it starts hopefully because that's why, why we advocates ourself as relocate specialists or buyers advocates in a very early process of of our clients' decision to to move to Portugal. And nowadays we work with with a lot of American clients. They want to move from for example, California or other states to to, to Europe, to Portugal in, in our case, but also with other foreign people from other European countries or South Africa, Israel well a lot of different nationalities. What we really prefer to do is to step in the process in a very early stage. So we are really sitting with our clients on the virtual table

to really discuss and to really talk with them about yeah, their decision. And also have a early insight, what they are looking for, because I always say with a, with a big smile, Portugal is a very small country, especially if you compare it to, let's say the US or to South Africa. But the country, although it's geographically small, has a lot of our variety in, in nature, in culture, and also in, in a climate zone. So that's why we really think our added value is best as we are at the table talking to to our clients in the early, early stage. That's really ma can make the difference.

Jillian Flodstrom ([04:49](#)):

Well, I know that you guys primarily focus on that client journey from start to finish. What are some common mistakes that businesses can make that, you know, if they're, they don't have those journeys dialed in with their business? What are some common mistakes that you see?

Episode 192 - Pieter van Nuenen ([05:10](#)):

I think yeah, as we are really focusing on customer experience and the customer journey, and as I said in, in our little introduction to you we really focus on quality and not on on quantity. So for us it's about 25 to maybe 30 projects a year can be a little bit more, can be a little bit less, but that's more or less what, what we do. And then indeed, from the end of, from the beginning to the, to the end of a, of a process for, for people to relocate. So I think that's really what our focus is. And sometimes every, let's say twice a year, we are kind of tempted to really scale our business in terms of quantity because there is a lot of demand. A lot of people are reaching out after a webinar like this or whatever.

Episode 192 - Pieter van Nuenen ([06:03](#)):

So we are like, okay, let's scale it and let's grow. But what we really think is, is most important for us is to keep it not small, but keep really the quality and, and this customer journey in in, in the core of our business and what I see in not in, in competition, but also in completely other surface industries that, that people or that entrepreneurs want to scale it very fast. And yeah, I think there you can make kind of a mistake or a misunderstanding with your customers because they want definitely added value and, and quality, right? Rather than just a little bit of attention and a little bit of advice. No, they want it all, they want all your attention and all your added value. So that's why we really want to keep it focused on quality and really focus on this customer journey.

Jillian Flodstrom ([07:05](#)):

Well, in some ways that you do that, do you limit the number of customers that you work with? Is there certain things that you do to make sure that you maintain that exceptional level of customer service?

Episode 192 - Pieter van Nuenen ([07:19](#)):

Yeah, I think it's, it's, it's not a, we, we didn't work it out in a process or in a specific way of working, but as I said, we tried to jump in in the process in a very early stage. So we also have kind of a way to manage expectations and timing because, you know, I think the mentality of taking decisions between Americans and Portuguese people are, it's, it's a bit different. I'm not saying completely different, but in America, things are a bit faster. It, it's more business wise, the perspective is different. Whereas in, in Portugal it's, let's keep it really clear. It's a south of Europe, it's a bit slower. So the quality of life might be higher, if you know what I mean, because things are not turned around as, as fast as, as an us.

Episode 192 - Pieter van Nuenen ([08:25](#)):

So I think we are really taking care of that process and try to manage expectations and also try to translate the, the demand and the perspective of our clients wherever they come from into a more Portuguese style and Portuguese mentality. Because imagine if you want to work with a Portuguese bank or you want to have a appointments with a Portuguese real estate agents. Yeah, maybe in the US it's very common that they jump on it and then the next morning you can walk into the office of the bank or you have this appointment with the realtor next day here in Portugal, it's a bit different. And so that's why we try to translate into, yeah, not get ahead. We always say our clients don't get lost in translation. It's bureaucracy, it's sculpture, it's the language. Of course, they're all barriers. And yeah, that's why we want to be in the middle of this process for them.

Jillian Flodstrom ([09:32](#)):

Well, and what were some ways that you determined, I'm sure there's, even though every situation is different, I'm sure there's some through lines that you found when working with clients. What are some ways that you guys developed, you know, these timelines or benchmarks that people are going through this process?

Episode 192 - Pieter van Nuenen ([09:52](#)):

Yeah, I think timing is, is is very important as I said. And, and it's not only the difference in in, in timelines or in expectations, but also imagine you want to move from California to, to Lisbon, the capital of Portugal. Some people try to do that in a couple of weeks, or they have a timeline of let's say nine months. But it really depends. We, so, and these things we don't have in our hands. I mean, we work with American and Canadian clients that that we helps to buy property here in, in Lisbon. I'm talking about new built apartments, for example, in the, in the middle of the city. And the buildings and the apartments, they are completely ready. They are completely 100% ready to move in. One thing is missing, that's a license, and the license needs to be issued by the town hall of of, in this case, of the Lisbon Town Hall.

Episode 192 - Pieter van Nuenen ([11:00](#)):

And some people are already waiting for over six or seven months. So that's something, yeah, you never know at the beginning because, but it's, it's, yeah, it's also not on our end. We can't manage that. I mean, we can talk to, to talk to people and say, Hey, imagine take that into account. So do not yet sell your house in the US or have a temporary solution in between. But that's really difficult. So every process is completely different. And also every process has one or two or maybe three or even more surprises in it, which is sometimes yeah, it, it take, it take can take longer. But we also have seen cases that we have helped people to sign for their new property in, in maybe 30, 40 days, which is pretty, pretty fast for, for Portugal.

Jillian Flodstrom ([12:00](#)):

Wow. I feel like there's always surprises in real estate no matter where you buy. Yeah, it always pops up. What are some ways that you utilize technology? Because when you're first meeting with clients, I would think that, is it always in person? Is it virtual? How do you guys handle that?

Episode 192 - Pieter van Nuenen ([12:17](#)):

Yeah, good question. Good question. So sometimes it's, it's really in person at the ground here in Portugal. When people are traveling from, for example, the US to Portugal, we prefer to meet, of course, and to sit down. But sometimes it's via via Zoom or teams or a virtual meeting. We have even had a, a

couple of processes that were completely virtual, so people didn't travel to Portugal. And so they, they asked us to be their eyes and ears. So what we did for them is to show them different properties by means of videos, images, setting up virtual calls and meetings. And we really treated every step in the process online with them. And then we set up a, a power of attorney with a Portuguese lawyer, so the lawyer could sign.

Episode 192 - Pieter van Nuenen ([13:22](#)):

And we got the key at the signing of the final deed. And only after that the, the client flew into to Portugal. So we handed over the key the first time we met in person, which is, for us, it was a, a, a bit yeah, it was a, a complete new style of doing business, let me be very honest. Also with bit of extra responsibility, if you know what I mean. But it turned out very very good. Everyone was very happy. And yeah, it's, it's so in, in this case, technology is really key and you have to rely on it and what we also see, and I think that that's a bit of a side step at your question, I think technology nowadays like we are talking, I'm in Lisbon, you are in at the other side of the Atlantic.

Episode 192 - Pieter van Nuenen ([14:21](#)):

It's like we are in the same room. So that also influences big time, the decision of people to move to a, a different country. I mean, we, we were out today here in Lisbon with with a relatively young couple from from Boston. They want to move from Boston to li somewhere maybe next month already, depending a bit on on the surprises or on the non surprises, if you know what I mean. But they stay with their employment contracts in, in us. So they, they are free to, to, to work from wherever, from wherever they want. So in that respect also technology plays a very big role and people are very flexible. They can move and they can work yeah, literally from from another continent. It's, it's really amazing. And that's, I think, still amazes me big time.

Episode 192 - Pieter van Nuenen ([15:21](#)):

I, before we started our company which you said indeed is called the Portugal Company, I was doing corporate communications for a multinational, and of course it, it was a semiconductor business, so it was really deep deep technology. So yeah, technology was most of the time in my prof professional life, kind of a, a key thing. But nowadays you, yeah, it's, it's a given. It's everywhere. It's, it's in your pocket, it's in your car, it's, yeah, it's the way we are talking right now. It's, it's making things way more easy.

Jillian Flodstrom ([16:02](#)):

Well, I think that's the most exciting part, that if our listeners had never even thought that it was a possibility that you could work in another country, you know, different time zones, but there are ways to make it work, it really opens up a whole new line of thinking because before, you know, not that long ago, it would've been something that we could've never done, but nowadays it's just the sky's the limit on what you can do. And I really think the importance of that personalized customer service for not only for your own business, but for all of our businesses, is huge. And I'd love to hear some of the tips that you guys use when you really focus on making that client journey personalized for people.

Episode 192 - Pieter van Nuenen ([16:49](#)):

Yeah, I think what what we do is try to listen and again, in a very early stage to, to what our customers with our clients are looking for. To be honest, we are also a bit I don't know what the right word is in, in English, but a bit kind of stubborn. So if we think, hey, we kind of want to steer them a little bit into, not into a complete different direction, but some people, as I said in beginning, don't have a clue about the

different climate zones in Portugal. And a lot of people think, Hey, it's just sun and beach, which is not, not the case in the north of Portugal. You can find completely different sceneries and nature r than in, than in the south of the, of the country. So we also sometimes yeah, try to not to manage their, where they are going, but it's, it's, it's about advice. And I think that's, that's where our added value comes in and where people can learn a lot about the country, and not because it's our own opinion, but simply because we are here at the ground trying to Yeah. Steer the process and help them to make, make the right decision. Right.

Jillian Flodstrom ([18:08](#)):

Well, and I think it's a baseline too, for all of us, is that listening, that fact gathering and looking to make those recommendations of what is best for our clients.

Episode 192 - Pieter van Nuenen ([18:20](#)):

Yeah, yeah, definitely. And, and also our process doesn't stop. And, and there are two things that are really at the core of our work. It's, it's people make a decision to, to move to Portugal and they want to buy a property. So that's at the core of our business, but as soon as the final deed has been signed by the clients, we are not gone. Well, if they want us to step out, we will step out. But 99 of the percent of the people want us to stay on board, because then also a new kind of chapter starts for them to, to become really had to, to be part of the Portuguese society. Some have kids that want to go to school, some people are concerned about the healthcare system. Others want us to set up a business or, or import their cars.

Episode 192 - Pieter van Nuenen ([19:21](#)):

And we even have, have helped a lady to to, to buy a horse because she was really into horse riding, and we connected her with with a kind of a famous horse center here in Portugal. So our service, if it's up to us, it never stops. We, we just keep on board, we just keep going. But it's of course, always, yeah, it, it, it's, it's, we listen and we, we feel if there is a common ground to do, so, of course that, and I think that's, yeah, that's where the customer experience yeah, that, that's really at the core of our business.

Jillian Flodstrom ([20:04](#)):

Well, and I love that the fact that you of course are a resource in the beginning, walking people through this process when it's probably just a ton of questions in the beginning and then even after things are wrapped up, but it really isn't wrapped up because you continue to work with clients and to be that resource for them if they need, which I think is what all of us as small business owners really strive for, is to be there to support the clients after the sale, after that initial conversation, to make sure that they are always getting what they need, as well as that we can be a resource. Yeah. And if people are looking to connect with you, if they're like, listen, I wanna talk about this, I wanna talk about maybe moving to a different country. What's the best way that people can connect with you?

Episode 192 - Pieter van Nuenen ([20:52](#)):

Yeah, I think that one of the ways is just to have a look at our website. We have not a a lot of property listed on our website. That's not the way we work. We really want to listen and to hear from our clients what they are looking for, and then our process kind of starts. But please have a look@theportugalcompany.com. That's the, the name of, of the company and the name of the website. You also can send us an email via support@theportugalcompany.com or reach out via WhatsApp. It's, it's all on the, on the website. So easy to to find. And yeah, and, and sometimes it's, it's really the process

starts by a simple question or just opening a little conversation. And sometimes it then kind of develops automatically in a, in a new project or in a new customer journey.

Episode 192 - Pieter van Nuenen ([21:52](#)):

Sometimes it kind of stops for a couple of months and then it pops up again after maybe six, six months or so. But yeah, for us it's, it's, as I said, it's not a standard procedure. It's always, yeah, giving some insights, sharing some some knowledge and answering some questions. And then sometimes it also dies. I mean, sometimes people just think, okay, no, this is way too whatever, way too far or way too early for me and my family. So then they just kind of are tempted to ask a couple of questions or to read a bit on, on our website, and then they think, okay, maybe in five years or 10 years or, although I think it's never too early. I mean, it's, it's fun. I, I'm my myself, I I'm a Dutchman. I'm born and raised in the Netherlands.

Episode 192 - Pieter van Nuenen ([22:48](#)):

So for me, moving to Portugal was a, ah, not a big step. I mean, it's from one European country to another, although there is a lot of differences, believe me, between the north of Europe and, and south of Europe. So imagine the south of Europe and the us it's, it's, yeah, it's a lot of fun. And also, let me be very honest, it also can be very frustrating when it comes to, yeah bureaucracy or managing expectations. But in the end, it's, yeah, it's, I think it's, it's one of the most beautiful things you can do, move from one place to another and, and kind of indulge yourself in new culture and new experiences. And that's why we, yeah, we are here to help and to to reach out our hands and to, to see if if we can make the process and the decision a bit a bit more easy and more, more fun.

Jillian Flodstrom ([23:49](#)):

Absolutely. Well, thank you so much for spending time with us today. I really appreciate it.

Episode 192 - Pieter van Nuenen ([23:55](#)):

Thank you. And I appreciate it a well looking forward to questions or whatsoever. I'm very open to to share all my knowledge and all my insights. Thank you.