

I left the USSR to live on food stamps in the US - now I'm a global entrepreneur: how I made the American dream work for me



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- **Summary:** Sergiy Korelov, a Soviet-born entrepreneur, defied odds by immigrating to the US with little money and no knowledge of English, eventually establishing a successful interior design business after years of hard work and working multiple jobs. Now after deep soul-searching amidst a self-admitted “mid-life crisis”, he aims to empower others through education, coaching, the Kore Nation Podcast, and plans for an international business network, emphasising the importance of a purpose-driven mindset in business and life.
 - **Key facts:** Sergiy Korelov, 49, San Diego
 - **Themes:** Success Story, Rags-to-Riches
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Interior designer and building contractor turned business and personal development coach, Soviet born **Sergiy Korelov** is the epitome of the American dream. And after almost a quarter of a century building a comfortable life from scratch in the States, the self-made entrepreneur is ready to share his business secrets.

Sergiy, 49, was born in the USSR in the 70s. By 1991, the USSR had been split into 15 republics and life was harsh. Although happy and safe in a humble flat with his engineer father and cinema technician mother, communist ideology was all around - and in his early 20s, Sergiy entered the Green Card lottery in the hopes of starting a new life in the West.

“The propaganda was strong so you believe that you live in the best country in the world because you live in this bubble. But when the Soviet Union broke, the devastation of the economy was so severe that there was nothing on the shelves when you went shopping.”

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You'd have to get coupons from the government and stay in line for many hours to collect something. A mafia was on the rise at the time and it was a very rough period".

Sergiy explains that, on his 25th birthday, he received a letter informing him that he was one of 50,000 winners - of roughly 10 million applicants.

"I got this huge envelope and a seal from the United States government. It was like a movie. I was very shocked, excited, and confused to be honest. Now I have to make this big decision: move to a completely new country, new territory, which I know very little about, or stay home".

With just \$1,500 dollars to his name, Sergiy, his pregnant wife Olga and their two-year-old daughter Eva flew to settle in Alaska.

"We didn't have any luggage, just a backpack. So, it was a rough move but so romantic and adventurous."

Unable to speak English and technically living in an "enemy territory" at the time, Sergiy explains that life was incredibly tough for the couple initially. The couple lodged with a Ukrainian friend for one month - the only person they knew in America - while they found their feet, but with only temporary food and gas stamps to rely on, Sergiy spent the remainder of his money on a car that only lasted three months.

"I picked up three jobs because this needed to work. It took everything to put food on the table and keep a roof over our heads".

With a population of just 633,000 in Alaska at the time, locals were friendly. Having been a skilled craftsman back in the Ukraine, Sergiy quickly became a respected woodworker in the U.S, supplementing his new source of income with additional jobs driving a schoolbus and caring for the elderly.

Alaska was freezing, moose would graze in the back yard and food was significantly more expensive than back home, but gradually as his wages grew, the family soon embraced this new world of opportunity.

Sergiy went on to become a part of the local church, and eventually began leading Russian speaking services after meeting other immigrants at the local Christian centre. Although he explains that some locals were "suspicious" at first, he went on to rise through the ranks at the parish and became senior pastor of the local church and vice president of a pastors' network - as well as also being appointed as planning commissioner for the city of Wasilla.

The first company he launched with a partner was called Joy Painting. He then went on to become a full-time building contractor, before importing design products from Europe and being invited to serve on the board of directors for a local builders' association.

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After almost 9 years in Alaska, Sergiy moved his family to the warmer climates of California and enjoyed the rewards of his self-made success. His interior design enterprise EuroCasa.co is based in San Diego, specialising in kitchens and closet transformations.

Now months away from turning 50 and having established several successful businesses in the states, Sergiy has turned his attention to giving back to his community and sharing his journey on Kore Nation Podcast at skd.club, a website offering a wealth of insights into overcoming barriers in business and personal growth.

“I see myself transforming one person at a time into a purpose-driven business leader, self-disciplined and self-governed. Even if you’re a handyman or hairstylist, it may seem like a small trade, but if you have the right mindset, I will empower you.”

Sergiy’s vision is to open an international business network and expand out to Canada and Mexico. The long-term mission is to create embassy style centres for business development and eventually introduce them to developing countries.

“I am passionate about my vision and feel that this has the potential to become a movement with a global impact. I want to bring hope and powerful tools to one purpose-driven business leader at a time at a grassroots level”.

Now a father of four, Sergiy fiercely believes financial security is nothing without personal growth, emotional satisfaction and finding a voice to share our ideas.

“I want to give a chance to as many people as I can teaching them how to build business, raise their families and be influential leaders. We need to be the creators of our own lives.”