

## Sam Visaisouk: Life with a Purpose



Sam Visaisouk | CEO | Tyromer

While the iGeneration was introduced late to the technology, the Generation Alpha will be living amongst the machines by birth. Although the world is still debating over whether machines are making the lives of humans easier or more complicated, the fact is that there are certain qualities of humans that machines are now trying to learn from – learning from experience. Unlike machines, humans live through experience directly to know it first hand and profoundly with personal context. **Sam Visaisouk**, the **CEO of Tyromer**, is one such frontrunner who took the lessons of experience to overcome adversity.

### Shaped by the Environment

The charisma of Sam is indeed exemplary. Coming a long way from smiling his way out of troubles and gathering strength from distress, Sam has not only grown to be resilient but also to be an unapologetic leader. *“We are the product of our experiences”*, says Sam.

Sam’s journey was shaped by his childhood days. Not being sheltered by structure, he grew up in a constantly changing environment. Unlike others Sam took this as an opportunity to learn and to adapt to changes. *“This upbringing influenced me to become an entrepreneur and to cherish the chaotic environment of start-ups”*, asserts Sam. However, Sam yearned for a stable “home” after living in turbulent Southeast Asia in the 60’s. He recalls how happy he was when he received his Canadian citizenship.

Sam grew up with little formal education attending barebone Vietnamese, Chinese and Lao schools. Once he was given the opportunity to pursue a university education, he chose to study mathematics and the physical sciences because he lacked a traditional foundation in North American culture, social issues and humanities. Apart from life experiences, Sam acknowledges his technical educational background prepared him for entrepreneurship and the innovation economy.

### Taking What Life Deals You

Sam had his share of hardships and challenges too. Being judged on the basis of his ethnicity and race throughout his early life prepared him for bigger obstacles in his later life.

Remembering his old days he comments, *“I worked hard to get a Stanford Graduate Fellowship for my Ph.D. but became collateral damage as a result of the Vietnam War when my student visa was not renewed. My Ph.D. was from a small lesser-known university in Canada and the lack of pedigree closed many doors on me. I taught grade 9-12 math and science in a small private school and learned to communicate complex concepts to young students.”*

# The 10 Best Performing Leaders to Watch

*“That ability gave me my competitive advantage throughout my career in innovation development as I was able to communicate complex technical concepts to government and business leaders who typically do not have advanced technical background”, he adds further.*

## Revitalized Catalyst of Tyromer

Sam believes that there is a purpose that every human must serve. That purpose came to him late in his career. He learned about an environmentally sustainable rubber devulcanization technology invented by Professor Costas Tzoganakis of the University of Waterloo and saw it as a socially responsible solution for the global scrap tire problem. As a society, we generate over one billion scrap tires a year, and because tire rubber is vulcanized and cannot be reused easily, we burned half of them for their fuel value! With devulcanization, we could recover a large part of this “renewable” resource (or waste). Tyromer Inc. was created with the vision to return scrap tire rubber to new tires.

*“Many of my start-ups were based on my ideas or inventions and I suffered from being in love with them against better business judgement. I could not let go when I should have”, Sam said. Serving as the CEO of Tyromer has helped Sam in adopting a new dimension towards work. “With Tyromer, I am the business person behind another person’s invention”. Unlike earlier times, Sam no longer gets emotionally attached to the idea. He is more focused on the impact of the idea. “As a result, I make better decisions and have more patience to do things right. I want to nurture the next generation to grow that impact and give them purpose and pride in their careers. Beyond building a business, I can build future leaders.”*

Under his guidance Tyromer has established strong and trusted collaborations with leaders in the tire and rubber industry. *“To bring innovation from a startup to an established industry that is traditionally risk adverse requires more than a good product. To shorten the time for product development and implementation, an open innovation business model was necessary. With trusted collaborations, we can together bring about the circular economy to the tire and rubber industry”, comments Sam.*

## Circular Economy and the Tire Industry

Tyromer’s technology converts scrap tire rubber in a twin-screw extruder into Tire-Derived Polymer, or **TDP, using only carbon dioxide as a “catalyst” and no chemical solvents or devulcanization chemicals.** This is the only known cost effective and environmentally sustainable technology that can return scrap tire rubber into new tires on a commercial scale. To date, TDP has been used in excess of 20% in new tire rubber compound, compared to the typical 5% without devulcanization.

*“There is still stigma on recycled material. It is our job to engage with industry leaders and experts to educate, inform, learn and collaborate to find solutions that enable companies to recycle old tires back into new tires. The technology now exists and can be implemented on a commercial scale to positively impact the way we manage our scrap tires. For sustainability, we are proud that we do our share”, he adds further.*