

Spotlight On:

Sam Mod | Co-Founder & CEO

FreshWorks Studio, Est. 2014

Engineer Sam Mod was out of his element when he emigrated from India to Victoria in 2013 to pursue an MBA at UVIC. With experience developing mobile apps for large corporations in India, Sam and his business partner, Rohit Boolchandani, were in over their heads with a failed first attempt as entrepreneurs. Little did they know that starting a business took a lot of time and effort especially in a new environment. Full of ambition and hustle they found their niche in Victoria's thriving tech scene. With no network, finances and full of culture shock, they worked tremendously hard to achieve what is seemingly impossible for most. That was then and this is now...

Co-founded in early 2014 by Sam and Rohit, FreshWorks Studio is now a multimillion-dollar, award-winning Victoria, Vancouver and Seattle based firm working in the space of digital transformation.

- What was the motivation behind starting your own business?

It wasn't about being my own boss, that doesn't motivate me to come to work every day. What motivates me is the work that I do and the work that I am surrounded by, the technology. I'm super passionate about the tech side of things. That is the "why" of it – my innate desire to use technology to solve problems. The mix of all of my business acumen and mobile experience made me think maybe there was actually an opportunity for me to run a business.

- Who inspired you to become an entrepreneur?

I give partial credit to James DeGreef, he saw what we didn't have the experience to see, the big opportunity that it could become. He once told us "It's not the destination that matters, it's the journey." There will be challenges, but enjoy the journey, the destination is just a matter of time.

- How has mentorship or networking played a role in where you are today?

We were so passionate and early on we would filter out good constructive (at times critical) feedback, but looking back a lot of it made sense. Now I try to learn from every situation, every event, being respectful of everyone's time and I come prepared with what I hope to ask and gain from the conversations.

- What do you see as your greatest accomplishment to date?

We came to Victoria as job seekers but now we are job providers. What I feel happy about when I go to sleep is that we were able to create 50+ jobs here in our small city – that gives me the most satisfaction.

- What has been your biggest lesson learned about being your own boss?

Humility really helps me keep a level head regardless of what is happening outside. Whether we are going through a challenging time or the best time, especially when times are very good that doesn't make me become complacent, I remain humble and on the ground. Humility is about being a constant learner in life and learning from the good stuff as well as bad situations.

- What has been your greatest reward to date as a small business in the tech sector?

It really makes me happy that I have contributed to and strengthened the economy in a way. There are 55 other people that their livelihoods rely on FreshWorks and they think of us as their family – that has been one of the most rewarding aspects for me.

- What unique challenges have you faced as an immigrant entrepreneur and how did you overcome them?

It was more of a mental challenge that we created for ourselves, the fact that we were immigrants, but as we became more confident we removed that tag. You have to switch off that way of thinking that being an immigrant is different. There will always be challenges around culture and language in coming to a new country; that is something that you won't be able to change. You should be aware of the challenges and accept them but don't create any other mental challenges which can alter your judgment. Communicate what you are good at and own it.

- Looking back, what advice would you give to other aspiring immigrant entrepreneurs from your own experience?

Don't give up on your dream, if you have a dream to own a company and solve a challenge make that your end goal. However, don't fall in love with the subsets of this big goal. Sometimes you have to give up on the small things and move on to the next which might solve the problem even more. Allow yourself to give up on the small things that might be holding you down but persist at the dream. Letting go is the toughest thing as an entrepreneur.

- Your motto is?

Lately I've become really good at "working hard at working smart".

- Tell us a little known fact about you/your company.

I have known my business partner for 12 years, yet we started out as adversaries during our undergrad back in India. Initially, we didn't get along we had two different points of views —I was the studious one and he was the troublemaker that knew how to work smartly. The more we spent time together we realized that we really complimented one another. We've learned so much from one another.

- Where is your favourite B.C. destination?

Salt Spring Island is where we go ever year for our company trip.

The Bottom Line:

- Initially outsourcing from India, FreshWorks now employs its staff locally and has doubled in size to some 50 staff in the past year
- 2018 SBBC – Best Immigrant Entrepreneur Award
- Sam is focusing on sustainable, practical growth and a diversified client base outside of BC while still maintaining the headquarters in Victoria and creating jobs locally