



Opportunity Recognition & Innovation with Sam Cooper



*“Do the right thing, take care of your customers,
and success will follow.”*

- Sam Cooper
President and CEO of PolyJohn

EARLY LESSONS & INSPIRATION



*Answer the following questions based on
what you learned from the video. Be as
specific as possible.*

1 EARLY LESSONS & INSPIRATION

What was Sam’s first job, and what did it teach him?

Answer (0:50-1:30):

Sam started working at PolyJohn when he was just a teenager — showing up at 4:30 a.m. to work in the factory with his grandfather. It taught him discipline, responsibility, and the importance of showing up.

► Hint: Sometimes your first job teaches lessons that last a lifetime.

2 LEGACY & VALUES

What did growing up in a family business teach Sam about legacy and values?

Answer (1:40-5:20):

He saw firsthand how his grandfather and father built PolyJohn on one guiding belief: If your customers are successful, you’ll be successful. That mindset continues to shape every decision he makes today.

► Hint: A company’s legacy is built by putting customers — and people — first.

3 INNOVATION & CHANGE

How did Sam bring innovation into a traditional business?

Answer (6:40-9:20):

After working in the energy industry, Sam returned home with fresh ideas. He introduced lean and Six Sigma methods to reduce waste, automate systems, and improve quality — proving that even established companies can evolve.

► Hint: Innovation often means finding a better way to do what already works.

4 IMPACT ON NEW MARKETS How has PolyJohn expanded its impact in new markets?

Answer (10:30-11:30):

PolyJohn now produces restroom trailers, handwashing stations, and disaster-relief units — serving major events and emergency situations worldwide. By spotting needs in unexpected places, they’ve turned necessity into opportunity.

► *Hint: The best innovations come from paying attention to what people need most.*

DISCUSSION-BASED QUESTIONS

! *Reflect on your personal thoughts and write your answers below.*

1 PERSONAL CONNECTION What part of Sam’s story stood out to you the most? Why?

2 BIGGEST TAKEAWAY What’s your biggest takeaway from Sam’s story about recognizing opportunities and driving innovation?
How can you apply that mindset to your own goals?

3 APPLYING LESSONS

Sam said, “You can ruin your brand in five seconds, and it takes 30 years to build it.” How can you protect your own reputation — in school, work, or your community — through the choices you make every day?

4 INSPIRATION

Sam’s story shows how leadership, innovation, and doing what’s right can create long-term success. Who inspires you to take the harder, more meaningful path and why?

! Use your creativity to complete the following activity.

1 FESTIVAL FIX-IT

Sam shared how PolyJohn products are often used at **music festivals**, where thousands of people need access to clean, safe facilities in a short amount of time.

Your Scenario

You are helping design for a **large outdoor music festival**.

- Crowds are big.
- Lines are long.
- The environment can be messy, loud, and unpredictable.

Your Challenge

Design a **product, service, or improvement** that makes life **cleaner or safer** at a music festival.

Answer the Following Prompts:

1. What's the problem? (Think cleanliness, safety, accessibility, weather, crowds, or long wait times.)

2. Who does this problem affect the most? (Festivalgoers, workers, artists, families, people with disabilities, etc.)

3. Your solution: Describe your idea in 2–3 sentences.

4. Why does it work?

How does your idea make the festival experience cleaner or safer?

GREAT WORK!

You're one step closer to thinking like an entrepreneur. Keep exploring, learning, and dreaming big!