



## Simon Lee Visionary Awards Speech

**Northeastern Maryland Technology Council Board of Directors**

Thank you very much for that humbling introduction. I also want to thank the Northeastern Maryland Technology Council Board of Directors and John Casner for inviting me here this evening. I feel especially honored and humbled to speak in front of this star-studded audience of sponsors, customers, and industry leaders.

I also want to extend a special good evening and best wishes to all Rising Stars, Innovators, Leaders, and Mentors. You are what this evening is all about and you are all the future of STEM Education and Technology Advancement in the Region. You are really the future of our entire industry.

Taking the time to acknowledge and celebrate success is vital to thriving and furthering our country's prosperity and growth; this celebration is a wonderful opportunity to encourage and continue to reward the passion for STEM in this region.

The competition for talent in this region is real. Recognizing and cultivating STEM will ensure its long-term success.

When John Casner originally asked me to speak here this evening, I thought ...  
What do I really know about STEM and how can I contribute to an audience like

this? Well as I reflected, Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics have always been my great passions and have been cornerstones to my career, and the wonderful opportunities that have come my way.

I was born in Kumi, Korea in 1949, a very small, rural farm town and was the youngest of six children. My parents passed away when I was 13 years old. My oldest brother sent me to a big city High School in Tae-Gu and sponsored all my living and education costs. This gave me the opportunity to attend one of the best Universities in Korea. My brother was so excited and proud of me when I was accepted at Korea University in 1969. He sold his land and farm to support my college tuition and boarding expenses.

I received my Bachelor's of Science degree in Industrial Engineering from Korea University in 1973. With my wife Anna and 2-year-old daughter Julie, I arrived at National Airport on Jan 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1979 with a little over \$3,000 in my pocket. We knew it would not be easy, but I believed that by working hard, investing in my education and training, and staying focused on my dreams, I could accomplish anything. After all, America was the land of opportunity and I was determined to make the most out of my move to this wonderful country.

My early years in the US were challenging. I worked during the day as a book keeper for a local restaurant and went to school at the community college at night to learn computer programming in COBOL and FORTRAN. I soon leveraged my education and training and took a job at MCI and eventually held a Senior Management position. A few years of working for companies like MCI and other



consulting firms taught me a lot about business and technology, and helped me create my early ideas of what kind of company I would like to work for.

Eight years after my arrival in the states, I knew it was time to do something on my own ... and explore my capabilities to the maximum. With the support of my family, I began STG in 1986. I started STG with a simple idea ... Create a family oriented company that focuses on the employees and treats them like family members in our home kitchen. I always believed that these things would make STG a great place to work and a rewarding company to work for ... there has been nothing in my professional life more rewarding to me than coming to work at STG every day.

Take care of our employees ... In turn, our employees will take care of our customers and ... the Customers will invite us back ... This is STG's Circle of Success that I believe so strongly in ... It is the heart and soul of STG. It is why employees come to work for STG ... Why customers hire us ... and why I believe so strongly in the future vision that I laid out years ago.

Through the years, I have faced many challenges with the growth of STG. We had to graduate from the 8(a) and small business programs ... we were faced with declining budgets, rapidly changing technologies, and shifts in our national priorities.

During these times, I watched many of my friends, colleagues, and competitors leave the business. Some went out of business completely and some sold their

companies because they were afraid or did not think they could make it to the next level.

No matter what the challenge, “I never gave up” ... I always worked to find a way to achieve the goals I established when I founded STG. It was never easy and we made some mistakes. We learned from our mistakes, and did not dwell on them. For me, every day was a new day and every day was an opportunity to advance the dream.

Even though times as a small business were often difficult, I always wanted to continue my education and training. Nearly 20 years after founding STG, I completed my Masters of Science in Systems Engineering from George Washington University. What was even more special for me about my time at GW is I attended classes with my oldest daughter and my son. We did home work and presentations together. I was the oldest (student) and my son was the youngest student. You can figure out who did my homework. On graduation day, four members of the Lee family received degrees. In addition to me, my oldest daughter and my son received Masters Degrees in Systems Engineering, and my middle daughter received her Bachelor’s of Science degree. We set a GW record for family degrees conferred on the same day. When I left Korea, I never would have imagined what an important role continuing my education would play in furthering my dreams and how critical STEM would become to my entire family.

The vision I had for STG 25 years ago ... has been realized. Thanks to a lot of hard work and the ability to adapt as the business environment changed, I am running



a nearly \$300M company solving some of our customer's most important technology challenges. They include cyber security; cloud computing; enterprise networking; and mobile computing.

Even more challenging as the threats get more sophisticated and our customers' budgets continue to shrink. To face this more demanding future, I know that STG will need to continue to change. We are constantly renewing our commitment to our staff. We are all looking into the future with understanding of new requirements, new technologies, and again budget constraints. I am excited about this particular region and the opportunities we will be pursuing in the upcoming months and years; all of which will be firmly grounded in the technology services we provide.

I am committed to this region and to this community. Tomorrow, our facilities staff will be assessing new office space as we have outgrown our current facility here. We are honored to have had staff in Aberdeen for over 10 years with nearly 200 staff in the local region. STG is honored to serve these clients and to give back. We are proud to support and encourage our staff to support locally by engaging in STEM programs and mentoring.

33 years ago, I began the dream of a life in this land of opportunity ... I humbly stand before you as a living example of the American dream ... I'm proud so many of our staff work to protect this county, our home – some of them are here with us this evening.

Again, thank you so much for this opportunity to address you all this evening. I hope that you can see what a strong role Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics have played in my life and the success of STG.