



Sterra co-founder Chris Lim says he has always been interested in a challenge, and feels a bit uninspired when things get a bit low-risk. ST PHOTO: GAVIN FOO

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Entrepreneur with a sniper's focus in search of the next big thing

Investor with an aggressive approach learns importance of timing, patience and not being swept up by market hype



Cheow Sue-Ann
Business Correspondent

Entrepreneur Chris Lim likens his investment strategy to that of being a sniper – training his sights on what could be the next big thing and taking his best shot.

Mr Lim says his aggressive approach stems from his belief that he needs to stand up to what

everyone else is saying about an investment, and sometimes even against his own instincts.

The co-founder of water and air purifier brand Sterra likes a challenge and is drawn to high-risk, high-reward situations, an approach that led him to quit a banking job at Credit Suisse after just a few months to pursue his interest in e-commerce.

Launched in early 2021, Sterra is a Singapore-based brand of household products, including water and air purifiers, beds and massage chairs. Besides Singapore, the company has customers in countries such as Malaysia and the United States.

Mr Lim, 34, said: "In just one year, we managed to nurture an eight-figure revenue and are looking at expanding into Australia and the United Kingdom."

On his turning to e-commerce, Mr Lim said: "I got my first taste of the e-commerce world during an internship at Lazada. I was

immediately hooked by the start-up environment's vibrancy and the boundless potential of e-commerce.

"Despite starting from ground zero in terms of skills, I leapt into creating my own e-commerce business.

"With the help of my friend and business partner, Strife, we started our foray into e-commerce with toilet step-stools, then moved to T-shirts, turning in a six-figure profit in just one month.

"That was the turning point for us, and when we realised the potential of e-commerce."

Mr Lim, a Singaporean, is single and lives in a landed property with his parents.

He has an economics degree from Singapore Management University.

Q What is in your personal portfolio?

A The lion's share of my portfolio is in my business and cryptocurren-

cy, with a smaller slice in cash. Because these assets can be volatile, my returns are inconsistent, but over the past few years, I've enjoyed double-digit returns.

I invest in blue chips like Bitcoin and Ethereum, as well as a few gaming coins.

Investing is deeply personal. It depends on the individual's risk tolerance and understanding of certain industries. I gravitate towards investments that align with my higher risk tolerance and deep knowledge of my chosen fields, such as cryptocurrencies.

I divide my investment approach into two sections: a portion is backed by solid fundamentals for long-term holding and the other for higher-risk, higher-return opportunities in the short term.

Given the current bearish state of the crypto market, I'm planning to capitalise on this by increasing my investments.

His top three investing tips

- 1 Stay true to your risk tolerance.
- 2 Don't be swayed by the opinion of the masses.
- 3 Invest in industries where you can leverage your knowledge.

Q What has been your biggest investing mistake, and what was your best investment?

A I've learnt many hard lessons, from buying at the wrong time to not having the patience to hold and not knowing when to sell. These mistakes have instilled in me the importance of timing, patience and not getting swept up by market hype.

I've learnt to tune out what others are saying, and not be easily swayed by market opinion. Just because everyone says to sell (an asset), does not mean it is the best thing to do at that moment.

I've also learnt many valuable lessons in my years of investing in and running my own e-commerce businesses.

As with running any business, it is a roller coaster. So I'm always looking forward to the next thing. But I think that's the purpose, because there's always something we missed out on, there is always a lesson we need to learn, which is required to go to the next high.

So, for example, when we first started out, our first downfall was that we lacked focus. We spent all our time designing a nice logo, the nice website, but we didn't focus on what's the most important thing, which is the product's market fit.

Do people want the product? If people don't want the product, then no matter how nice a logo or brand name, it's not going to sell. So (one lesson is) focus. I guess it means looking at the bigger picture – to always come back to what is the main focus.

So we learnt that in order to be a global brand, we have to achieve a certain market share, and in order to do that, our product must have mass-market appeal.

Q Describe your lifestyle, and how your early years shaped your view of money.

A My financial education came from reading books, learning from friends and most of all, personal experiences. Missteps, especially, have a way of teaching unforgettable lessons.

I have always been interested in a challenge, and the same goes with my investments. When things get a bit low-risk, I feel a bit uninspired. I want to feel like it's all in. I guess it's a personal preference.

The second thing is impact. I want to see how (my work) translates into results in the real world as soon as possible. I realised that when I worked in a big company, because the company is just so huge and I worked on a very small aspect of the business, whatever I did, I didn't see its impact. Even if I were to continue doing it for 10 years.

I drive a yellow Lamborghini Huracan EVO. It's not just a car to me: It's a symbol of the freedom and determination that has driven my journey so far. It's a reminder that despite any roadblocks or nay-sayers, I should always keep pushing forward towards my goals.

Retirement for me isn't about not working, but having the freedom to choose my projects without thinking about finances. To reach that goal, I plan to diversify my assets into safer investments that generate a steady income. I aim to step into this phase of life by the time I turn 40.

sueann@sph.com.sg