

Patty Russell - “To Build or Not to Build” - That is the Question

Forbes India, October,16, 2012 - Blog. Here’s a dilemma: You are the owner of a construction company and to expand your market, you need to go into neighborhoods where clients can’t pay the typical construction costs; where there is a dearth of skilled labour and where it is nearly impossible to transport the materials typically associated with your conventional construction methods. You ask yourself: Why make the effort - is the ‘juice worth the squeeze?’

This was the situation faced by Moladi, a South African family-owned business. Sure, there was a demand for new construction - after all, affordable housing in low-income areas can provide a pivotal asset and source of stability that can pull a family out of poverty. In fact, many families were trying to build houses on their own, leading to sub-standard construction and often dangerous living conditions.

Moladi, however, was ready to rise to the challenge. They put a lot of ‘skin in the game’ from a technological innovation perspective, and in the process designed a new construction material to meet the constraints of the target market - a removable, reusable, recyclable, and lightweight plastic formwork mould, which when filled with aerated mortar, could form the wall structure of a house in as early as one day. Better yet, each set of Moladi formwork panels could be reused 50 times, without electricity, and by unskilled labourers.

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