

# Positive Disruptions: Cassette



Modular housing in Gayang, Malaysia. Courtesy of POSCO A&C and Cassette.

**How did housing affordability become one of the greatest crises in the United States? While many macro-factors drive housing costs upwards, one that's received enormous attention is the lack of innovation and efficiency gains in construction since the 1970s.**

In 2018, a group of colleagues devoted themselves to uncovering obstacles preventing true construction innovation in the hopes of improving the affordable housing situation. Their detailed findings led to the creation of intelligent modular construction systems, packaged with complete implementation plans and crews to ensure success. In short, they founded Cassette.

"Cassette opened in stealth-mode in May 2019, which gave us time to engineer our systems and test our assumptions before opening more publicly in early 2020," says Dafna Kaplan, founder and CEO. The company set out to provide shelter for a transitional homeless person for every 100 housing modules sold in any given city.

## Pivoting To Find the Positive

Opening a new business in 2020 was exciting, but then came the pandemic. Kaplan explains, "We knew right away that COVID-19 was going to have a huge impact, so we pivoted. Instead of raising capital at the worst time in recent history, we doubled down on our product and process development and hired out the team for modular feasibility studies to pay the bills. It was the best change we never planned, and we're a stronger company as a result."

Kaplan's career has crossed product, technology, architecture, and construction industries. This diverse background has given her a keen ability to sense trends and future states on a macro scale. She credits the broadness of her experience with her ability to help see patterns and metaphors. When asked about COVID-19, Kaplan says, "There's always something that disrupts the path that you're on, whether it's your business, industry, or career ... I believe those are the moments of greatest opportunity, if one pauses and takes the time to ask questions."

She suggests starting with questions such as:

- Why did this happen? (root cause analysis)
- Is there a historical metaphor?
- Are there broader issues at play?
- What were my assumptions before, and should they change now?
- What's my new opportunity, given my new reality?

## Staying Relevant

What's Kaplan's advice for marketers? She suggests that instead of asking what potential clients think, ask yourself why your products and services exist in the world. This will help you articulate the 'soul of your brand,' and why it's relevant.

She encourages marketers to become more entrenched in the fabric of our organizations and to "Stop thinking of yourself as marketers and understand yourselves as holistic business leaders." She advises us to find a company we believe is doing things right and using our gifts to help better articulate the firm's message, service, or product. She notes, "In A/E/C, your colleagues, rather than a product package, are the touchpoints of your brand in the world. If you can inspire and infuse them with a sense of the company's soul and mission, this will be your most pure and powerful form of marketing." ■

## Spotlight Contributors



**SPOTLIGHT #1**  
**David Bourke**  
Co-President/CEO  
IA Interior Architects



**SPOTLIGHT #2**  
**Shagufta Anurag**  
Chief Executive  
Officer/ Founder  
Saltmine



**SPOTLIGHT #3**  
**Joanne Wilson**  
Co-Founder  
Frame Home



**SPOTLIGHT #4**  
**Dafna Kaplan**  
Founder and Chief  
Executive Officer  
Cassette