

Greenmovement - environmentally inspired solutions

 By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

5 Oct 2020

Greenmovement is an energy-innovation centric organisation that aims to create cost-effective, renewable and accessible energy for the African continent.



Zethu Kunene, founder of Greenmovement

Zethu Kunene, founder of Greenmovement, shares more...

■ ***Can you tell us a bit about Greenmovement?***

Greenmovement is an energy-innovation centric organisation. We aim to create cost-effective, renewable and accessible energy for the African continent through environmentally inspired solutions that perpetuate sustainability, development and design.

■ ***When, how and why did you get started?***

In my late teens I read that by the year 2050, the total weight of plastic in the ocean will outweigh fish. This forecast blew my mind and the further I looked into the environmental state of affairs of the world. I wanted to participate in assisting with its preservation, which lead to our informal establishment of Greenmovement in 2012, and began our operations in 2013. Though back then, we were entirely focused on waste recovery.

At this stage of our business, we were quite primitive operationally and would literally go from dustbin to dustbin collecting recyclable raw materials to resell to materials recovery facilities.

Fast forward about two years, and we managed to get our first established company to use our waste recovery services, with the condition of collecting and safely discarding the sawdust generated weekly. At this point of our business we understood that we can definitely use the sawdust as an input in our transformation/conversion process but had no idea to what end.

After a few months of hoarding sawdust in the backyard, we had amassed a ton or so of sawdust and figured we should do some research regarding a solution to this problem. Within the first month we had created the first Woodie (a solid fuel replacement for charcoal, coal and firewood) and over the next few months of late nights and trial and error we had finally produced a market-ready end product and abandoned our services in waste recovery.

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Environmentally inspired solutions with our WOODIES eco firewood replacement.
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A post shared by [GreenMovement](#) (@greenmovementenergy) on Sep 28, 2020 at 5:01am PDT

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has established itself in the renewable energy market. growing from strength to strength since and

■ **What is the core function of Green Movement?**

Our core functions at Greenmovement is the manufacturing and production of Woodies intended for the market and third parties.

“ Woodies is a renewable energy solution that is cost effective and speaks to the needs of the communities in our midst. ”

Through a unique combination of biomass materials, Woodies have been designed to provide thermal heat with lower emissions. Our product burns cleaner than competing solid fuels and contains no hazardous substances.

■ **What are some of the obstacles you've had to overcome since starting out?**

To address not only identifying the obstacles that have arisen since starting out, but also to correctly evaluate and find timeously implementable solutions to these obstacles – I believe that as an entrepreneur it is imperative to distinguish between personal and business related obstacles.

Firstly, regarding personal obstacles, the two faculties concerned is the perfectionism paradox and dealing with self-doubt. Secondly, business related obstacles include proper cash flow management, making important decisions and understanding investors (and what investors want).

■ **Covid-19 and the national lockdown has impacted many businesses. What impact did it have on Greenmovement?**

Covid-19 and the national lockdown presented us at Greenmovement to take a giant step back and reassess our business model. The initial 21-day lockdown drastically slowed down the economic hustle and bustle of the country; allowing us to solely focus and develop our ancillary business functions and recovery strategies.

“ Due to the impact of the national lockdown, we worked under the theoretical notion that the circumstances put all businesses (small and large) on the same foot, a kind of “clean slate” that disarmed traditional barriers of entry. ”

With the above mindset we managed to penetrate the market and gain market share. Implementing the appropriate strategies we managed to increase our May 2019 sales by more than 1000% in May 2020 and have been growing from strength

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■ **How did you prepare for the lockdown?**

In trying to prepare for lockdown and post lockdown we thought that the best practise would be to understand the nature and philosophy of business. The pandemic has severely disrupted the supply and demand business model and shaken the foundations of social and economic co-existence indefinitely.

Additionally, understanding that the ability to do fundamental paradigm shifts will be pertinent. We need to rethink the paradigm that both consumer and producer were actually living in. What we had to realise is that the rules of economic doctrine of growth over everything else as a measure of success is based on an industrial revolution type of thinking. Today, we live in an abundant world and not one of scarcity. But facilitating this paradigm shift is difficult as consumers would naturally want to revert to “normal”. Although what we have to understand is that Covid-19 has brought 2030 ten years early.

■ **What's the biggest challenge you are facing during this pandemic?**

The biggest and most important challenge is facilitating our part in keeping the health of our employees and customers. We collectively as businesses and consumers need to actively play a positive role in curbing the spread of the virus.

■ **What sort of assistance will you need going forward?**

“A little knowledge is a dangerous thing”. We believe that the best resource that can assist Greenmovement on its continued growth trajectory is industry knowledge and general business acumen. This resource would assist significantly as it will assist with any and all future important business decisions and opportunities.

■ **What would you like to see changed in the South African startup landscape?**

I believe that there are a few internal and external faculties that need to be addressed in the start up sphere.

Firstly, on an internal basis; the mindset of the entrepreneur and how we operate (or begin operations) should not be one revolving solely around finding funding or capital. As important as funds are in the start up landscape, entrepreneurs have to realise that it is also just as fruitful to evaluate the resources that one can easily access and how to leverage those resources into income generating products. Externally, the infrastructure in South Africa is not start-up-friendly.

■ **How can we start normalizing creating our own opportunities?**

It's a lovely sight to see that the youth of South Africa are no longer holding onto age-old linear ideologies of attaining formal education to finding employment.

“ The newage is not only looking to achieve financial security but also achieving a satisfactory state of mental health, begging the question “does this job make me happy?”. This leads to thousands of South African youth opening small businesses in varying fields of service. ”

I am currently of the notion that creating our own opportunities is a system already normalised in the South African youth and it is only a matter of time until we reap the rewards of such a concept.

■ **What do you predict the next 6 months will be like?**

The next six months will see a second wave of infections. This will naturally affect consumer spending habits and national legislation – I do not think to the extent of the initial lockdown but this will definitely affect economic participation. Businesses will have to look to new and creative solutions to sustain and grow their services to meet the needs of consumers.

■ **What has been your biggest lesson from all this?**

My biggest lesson from the national lockdown and the Covid-19 pandemic is that as business we should never remain content and complacent. Consistently forming new partnerships and networks will allow for larger economic participation through leveraging services and products.

Additionally, frequently addressing business strategies and finding new models to increase performance is a necessity as we can not guarantee that the state of affairs today will be the same as tomorrow.

ABOUT EVAN-LEE COURIE

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