



INNOVATORS VS COVID 19

Novade – A Construction Software’s Story From the Ground Up



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NEWSLETTER

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We talked to Denis Branthonne of Novade about helping the construction industry improve safety, quality, and productivity, and he had the following to say:-

First of all, how are you and your family doing in these COVID-19 times?

Denis Branthonne: COVID-19 has been a forced reset for many, including myself. For the first time in two decades, I have not taken a plane for more than a year. I look at the positive aspects – I am spending more time with my family at home, and my carbon footprint has improved!

Tell us about you, your career, how you founded Novade.

Denis Branthonne: I grew up in France, came from a humble family, and studied at MIT in the US. After which, my engineering profession brought me all over the world to the US, Europe, and Asia.

Novade also had humble beginnings. Years ago, I observed that the construction sector had been late in adopting digital technology, especially in the field. The emergence and wide adoption of affordable mobile technology created a paradigm shift. I started Novade with the belief that technology could really help the industry improve safety, quality, and productivity.

We started operations with a small team of pioneers on the ninth floor of an industrial building in the suburbs of Singapore in 2014. Our initial goal was to transform field management in the construction industry through technology. We spent countless hours on sites, deciphering how people operate, and eventually launched the Novade platform. Today we operate in 20 countries across the world, and our application is used by more than 100,000 users.

How does Novade innovate?

Denis Branthonne: Innovation is driven from the ground up. It invariably starts with issues observed in the field, and our job is to develop new technologies or functionalities that can solve these issues.

For instance, when the pandemic started, we quickly considered its impacts on construction sites and developed COVID-19 Safe Site, a set of digital solutions to manage site operations, conduct health checks, and enforce social distancing rapidly and safely. The platform also enables digital contactless site processes such as toolbox meetings, inspections and provides remote visibility for businesses.

I believe we are going to experience the acceleration of technology adoption in the construction industry in the coming decade. We innovate by constantly enhancing our construction management platform. In addition, we have a dedicated team working on Artificial Intelligence (AI) capabilities and integrating Novade's software with other technologies such as the Internet of Things (IoT) devices and Bluetooth wearables.



How does the coronavirus pandemic affect your business finances?

Denis Branthonne: In the second quarter of 2020, we experienced a significant shift: on the one hand, projects were delayed because of lockdowns or supply chain disruptions; on the other hand, demand for remote digital solutions exploded. We noticed that clients who had started to adopt digital solutions to manage their operations prior to COVID-19 were handling the situation better than the others.

Overall, our business has continued to grow at a very fast pace.

Did you have to make difficult choices regarding human resources, and what are the lessons learned?

Denis Branthonne: Thankfully, this was not something Novade had to face. Instead, we scaled up, expanded into more markets, and hired more talents to fulfill those roles. And we have learned to manage that growth in a work from home environment.

How did your customer relationship management evolve? Do you use any specific tools to be efficient?

Denis Branthonne: The pandemic has profoundly impacted customer engagement and relationships. Pre-COVID-19, our sales, and consulting teams were spending a lot of time on construction sites. With so many restrictions in place across the world, we have learned to rely on video calls to engage and interact. While spending time in the field with our clients remains critical for our business, I believe remote engagement will continue after the pandemic is over.

Did you benefit from any government grants, and did that help keep your business afloat?

Denis Branthonne: Governments across the world put in place support programmes in 2020 to improve business resilience. We benefitted from some of these programmes, and I am really thankful for these initiatives.

Local authorities are also pushing the adoption of digital solutions for the construction industry with grants and incentives by Infocomm Media Development Authority (IMDA) and the Building and Construction Authority (BCA) in Singapore, and the Construction Industry Council (CIC) in Hong Kong. We are the pre-approved vendors in both countries.

Your final thoughts?

Denis Branthonne: 200 million people work on construction sites every day, and the pandemic has highlighted the importance of their role. We believe that technology can help them do their job faster, smarter, and safer. But there is only one way it will succeed: from the ground up.

Your website?

<https://www.novade.net/>

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