



Client:
Tober/ ToVee

Project:
Various

Location:
USA

Todd Tober of Tober Building Company (TBC) and Tober Volume Elements (ToVee) has championed the transformation from traditional building methods to volumetric construction, starting with his own businesses. He recently took time out from his busy schedule to answer some questions about his philosophies around construction – specifically in relation to his decisions to embrace offsite, modular building.

The Tober Building Company (TBC) is a United States-based commercial construction business that provides superior, quality construction services. Project estimating, management, feasibility and finance is part of the TBC package. Operational excellence is achieved by a talented team that understands the vital importance of efficient planning, direct communication, and competitive pricing.

With over 20 years of construction experience under his belt, Todd made the call to embrace modular approaches some years ago, using Howick technology from the get go. He knew it was likely to be a ground-breaking decision, and so it was.

Three years ago, Todd started Tober Volume Elements (ToVee) as the specialist offsite and modular construction arm of TBC. ToVee sees modular as the future of commercial construction, applying smart offsite manufacturing technology to reduce costs and compress schedules without sacrificing quality. Building the ToVee way is ideal for multifamily projects, student housing and hospitality construction.

We caught up with Todd to get a better insight into what has driven his decisions and how he sees things developing in the sector.

What do you think makes TBC stand out from the other construction companies? What are you doing differently?

Todd: What separates a good contractor from a great contractor isn't getting a project done, it's "HOW" you get the project done. We really spend a lot of time making sure that we are communicating with the project team (the owners, architects, subcontractors, suppliers, and engineers) about things like schedules, sequence of work, setting expectations of quality,

and so forth. Such communication paves the way for a high level of quality.

I feel that the difference between ToVee, and especially TBC, from others is that we want to change. We want to learn and improve and be better. What I see as a difference is the frustrating fact that many contractors say, "this is how it is done", or "this is the way we've always done it".

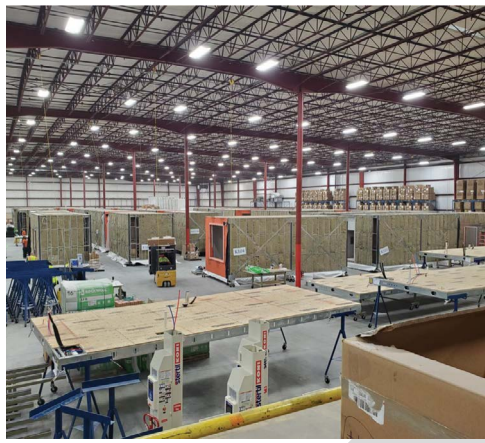
I've learned that change has to come from the top - from the developers. That is one of the main reasons I began our development company - to effect positive change and disruption.

Given your familiarity with traditional and modern building methods, what made you decide to embark on offsite manufacturing? Was the purchase of the Howick FRAMA™ 5600 the first step toward adopting construction technology?

Todd: In the ongoing quest to provide "good, fast, and cheap" I became a developer in order to better control the projects, relative to quality and price. But even when watching my own developments take shape, I could see very clearly that there was a potential for tremendous value-add by controlling a portion of the development in an offsite manufacturing system.

We started with a wood concept and very quickly realised that to maintain quality and consistency we needed to switch to steel framing and do it in a way that enabled us to manage quality control. We reviewed several roll-forming machines and manufacturers and decided to base our manufacturing process on the Howick system. The Howick FRAMA™ 5600 has been an amazing machine that has allowed us to really standardise our product.





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You could be considered a trailblazer given your acquisition of construction systems. Tell us about your adoption of offsite and modern methods of construction.

Todd: The ToVee concept is now three years old. It grew out of a realization that traditional, on-site construction is inefficient, costly, and unpredictable. By taking the process into a factory setting, ToVee eliminates key factors driving these issues.

Production of the ToVees, which includes all framing, rough ins, and finishes takes place in designated areas throughout the factory. By controlling most of the process, we stay on budget and on time. Our design and engineer teams focus on fabricating the ToVees using technology to attain the greatest accuracy in measurements.

Modular manufacturing is an exercise on how to make a man-hour more effective. This means that, instead of maybe getting six hours of actual value-add in an eight-hour day onsite, we may get seven or seven-and-a-half hours in the factory. Basically, this means that we are trying to build more efficiently in the factory than in the field which is not as easy as it sounds. Field construction by nature is already pretty efficient, but we definitely have some tricks up our sleeves.

The most difficult part of the journey has been selling other developers on the idea that modular is not “trailer homes”. The ToVee system is actually much higher quality than anything you will ever find anywhere in the world that is built onsite.

The FRAMA™ 7800 you have on order from Howick is a formidable system. What plans do you have for this machinery?

Todd: To date we have been printing our own wall studs with a Howick 5600 and purchasing floor and ceiling joists through local manufacturers. Once we knew that our modular concept was a viable business, we decided to make the decision to not just manufacture our own wall studs, but also our own floors and ceilings. I started a company that is exclusively dedicated to manufacturing wall and floor panels with our Howick machines and our panel framing equipment. ToVee provides fully finished, modular apartments to other developers and together with Atlas Frameworks will have the capability of delivering and installing the highest quality metal wall and floor panel systems on the market today.

On your website you mention ‘quality with fair price’. How is this reflected in how you conduct business?

Todd: I think a construction company should always have, at the forefront of its mission, the desire to provide value to its customers. The value that we are providing is to continually look for, and provide, better building methods, materials, pricing, scheduling and communication. The eternal quest to be able to provide “good, fast, and cheap” is how we are delivering product to our clients. Howick is part of that equation.

What does the future look like?

Todd: Our hope is that we continue to develop our own projects, that we are able to use as showpieces and as a testament to other developers, that modular is here to stay, and that it actually provides real value to multifamily construction.

Find out more

Scan the QR Code to find out more about the FRAMA™ 5600



Scan the QR Code to find out more about the FRAMA™ 7800



If you'd like to discuss how you can apply Howick technology for your own construction business, talk to us today

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