

Adult Building Blocks

FATHER/DAUGHTER TEAM CREATES CORK STRUCTURES AND FURNITURE FOR HOME AND OFFICE **BY EDITH G. TOLCHIN**

MIGUEL REYNOLDS BRANDÃO, of Lisbon, Portugal recently contacted me through LinkedIn, one of the many sites where I've been posting articles for more than 15 years.

Imagine: multipurpose, eco-friendly, grownup Legos for home, office and arenas.

Brandão, a co-inventor with his daughter, Catarina Reynolds Brandão, says, "CORKBRICK is such a simple disruptive concept that it is challenging to explain it." So I accepted the challenge and spoke with him.

Edith G. Tolchin (EGT): Please tell us a little about you and your daughter.

Miguel Reynolds Brandão (MRB): Catarina is my oldest daughter, now 28. She is a beautiful, kind and happy architect with a master's in rehabilitation. She is the mother of Lourenço, my first grandson.

I am a serial entrepreneur, Stanford alumni, strategist, author and mentor. My latest book is "The Sustainable Organisation," a paradigm for a fairer society. Think about sustainability in an age of technological progress.

Essentially, I am just a curious mind enjoying my journey in this world. A proud father of four. A citizen of the world.

EGT: Where did the CORKBRICK idea come from? Why do you consider this to be disruptive?

MRB: The CORKBRICK story started in April 2012 at a Lisbon airport coffee shop, on a trip to Casablanca, with an informal conversation between father (serial entrepreneur) and daughter (future architect) about flexibility in home spaces. We were discussing solutions for open spaces, specifically searching for ideas to create a dynamic guest room in our attic. We needed something simple, scalable, easy to mount and dismount—and most important without the use of tools, glues, or screws!

That was when we first thought of the potential behind a modular construction such as the CORKBRICK concept, and designed the first sketches. Ten days later, already back home from Morocco, we resumed our brainstorming and explored the global market to find that nothing fulfilled our imagination's criteria! There was no concept available with easy modularity and flexibility to build structures and furniture at home for people such as us, who are hopeless at DIY (Do It Yourself).

It is disruptive because it changes the paradigm of space management and play. It empowers anyone to build structures and



CORKBRICK is "a simple, practical, and better solution that stimulates creativity and collaboration among people, in family and work environments." — MIGUEL REYNOLDS BRANDÃO



furniture just with their bare hands. No need for outsourcing, tools or manuals. Besides, CORKBRICK is an example of how to leverage natural resources to create a simple, practical, and better solution that stimulates creativity and collaboration among people, in family and work environments.

Furthermore, CORKBRICK impacts six out of the 17 “United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals.”

CORKBRICK is more than just a product or a company. It’s a philosophy that embraces the ideals of sustainability and equity in their totality.

EGT: Have either of you invented before?

MRB: Yes. I did mostly software solutions to improve efficiency in strategic management and algorithms. Besides, in the nineties I developed another patent for a teleworking complete workstation.

EGT: Portugal harvests 50 percent of the world’s cork supply. Did this abundance help lead to your invention?

MRB: Surely yes. I have learned about cork’s unique benefits and sustainability since my childhood. Maybe it is in the DNA ...



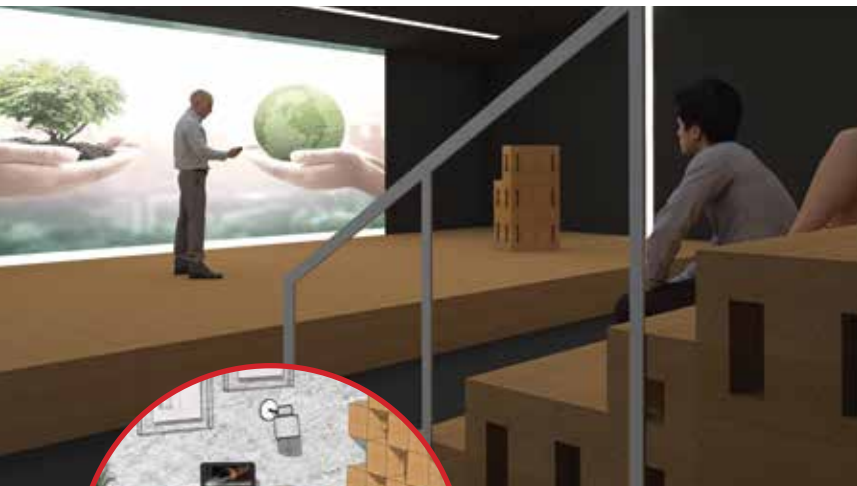
My fifth great-grandfather, Thomas Reynolds, was an early trader of cork in London who, after leaving the Royal Navy where he had fought Napoleon, dedicated his life to creating the first cork global industry. Together with his sons, he bought cork forests in Portugal and Spain and built more than 20 factories to prepare and export cork worldwide through his offices in Lisbon, London, and New York.

They were pioneers, lovers of freedom, entrepreneurs and liberals who fought both Napoleon and the absolutist king of Portugal, D. Miguel. They innovated and prospered with cork and left an outstanding legacy.

EGT: Tell us about your fundraising campaign.

MRB: Our vision is to create an organization where all members are fans, fans of the CORKBRICK concept.

CORKBRICK enables anyone to build structures and furniture with their bare hands.



CORKBRICK's makers say it is a philosophy based on the principles of sustainability and equity.

That is the reason we decided to open the company's equity to individuals—to creative minds. We are looking for people who “vibrate” with the concept and understand the business potential.

Fans bring an extra energy that will empower the company's creativity, flexibility, and endurance regardless of their financial commitment. We have involved 260 fans and investors, spread throughout 30 countries. Among us we have architects, engineers, designers—all creative minds, current or former executives, from organizations like Google, Lego, Cisco, University of London, AxelCapital, Miragon Investments, Maitland (family office), and Fladgate Partnership, to name a few.

Now we are on our fourth raise, heading to 500, on our way to build the first “Fan Owned Company” to create “Sustainable Dynamic Structures and Furniture.” It is thanks to our fans that we will be able to dream bigger and bring CORKBRICK to every household in the world!

EGT: Where are you manufacturing?

MRB: In Andalusia, Spain.

EGT: How many different units are you producing?

MRB: We produce just seven different pieces. With it, people can create their own solutions—thousands of them! Like with Legos.

For now, we propose 55 solutions for home, office and public spaces. But our portfolio will be growing not only by our initiative, but especially

by creators who will profit from their creativity by applying for challenge.corkbrick.com.

CORKBRICK empowers creative minds that cannot face Do It Yourself solutions. It goes beyond the DIY market to reach all those with a passion and enthusiasm to create unique and innovative solutions in their home and office.

We sell a unique, useful, trendy and sustainable product structured on a simple and highly efficient business to the global consumer. We believe it has the potential to become the new Legos for adults with the advantage of being fun and useful (and natural).

EGT: Please describe your patent process.

MRB: We did most of the process by ourselves, starting with the provisional application, then the PCT (Patent Cooperation Treaty) and later the regional/national applications. It was a slow and exhausting process but with a happy conclusion.

EGT: Have you encountered any problems in product development?

MRB: CORKBRICK is a kind of a “Columbus egg” (*Editor's note: i.e., a great idea that seems simple after the fact*), and so is the production line. The major obstacle was to demonstrate that what we envisioned works ... today, everyone believes in it, but we still must do a lot of promotion to explain to people that interior design and architecture might be fun and accessible to anyone.

EGT: Where are you selling?

MRB: Direct. Also, via our website and some special flagship partners that we are selecting worldwide.

EGT: Do you have plans for future products?

MRB: The beauty of the CORKBRICK system is that you produce only seven blocks, but you can offer a new product every day to the market. It's an efficient way to empower people to build their spaces. 🏠

Details: miguelreynolds.com; corkbrick.com

Edith G Tolchin has written for *Inventors Digest* since 2000. She is an editor (opinionatededitor.com/testimonials), writer (edietolchin.com), and has specialized in China manufacturing since 1990 (egtglobaltrading.com).



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Inventors

DIGEST

THANKFUL FOR JACK LANDER

USPTO Director Nominated
KATHI VIDAL OFFERS
STRONG IP BACKGROUND

It Aims to Squeeze
CELEBRITY INFOMERCIALS
SOLD THE THIGHMASTER

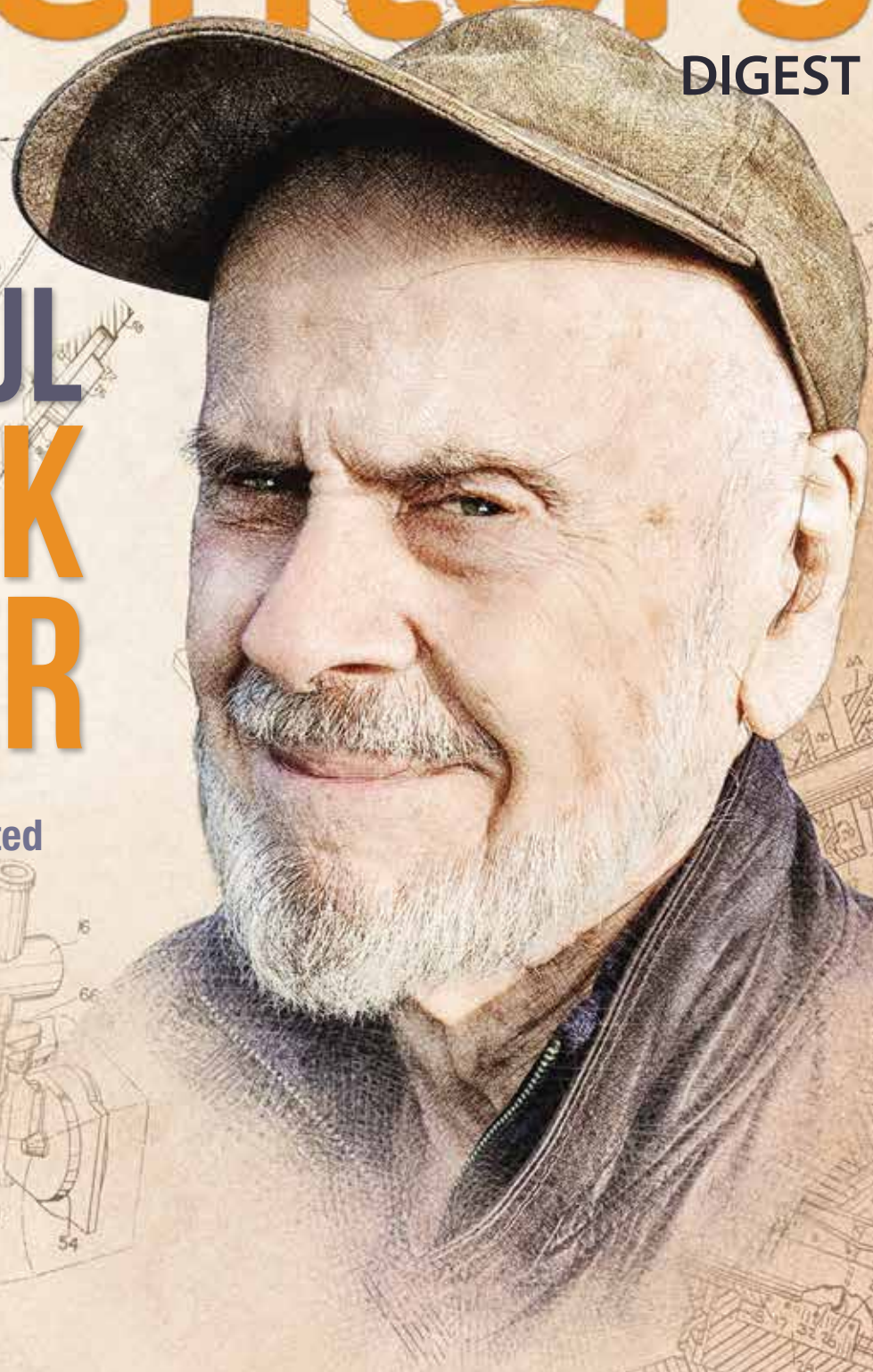


FIG. 3

FIG. 4

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