



Jackie Stenson

Essmart



Jackie Stenson is CEO and co-founder of Essmart, a company that distributes life-improving technologies in southern India.

Based in Bangalore and an engineer by trade, Jackie, 28, started out designing technologies that could improve the lives of low income communities around the world whilst a student at Harvard. After working on technology-for-development initiatives in Africa and India for several years, she had her 'Aha!' moment: the real challenge is not the technical design of life-improving products, hundreds already exist, but rather their dissemination.

As Jackie realised that the intended end-users of life-improving products, like affordable solar lanterns and non-electric water filters, simply don't know about them or how to access them, Diana Jue came to a similar realisation whilst studying at

MIT. When they were introduced in 2011, Essmart was born.

Essmart is building a marketplace for life-improving technologies in places where people already shop, the 15 million small retail shops that serve 90% of Indian households. The products Essmart sells are helping meet the needs of the 97 million Indians that lack clean drinking water and the 700 million who have unreliable electricity.

After aggregating a catalogue of in-demand, high-quality technologies, local sales executives demonstrate and market the products in shops, distribute them, and ensure after-sales service through manufacturers' warranties.

Essmart currently operates six distribution centres which have helped build a combined network of over 600 retail shops that have sold over 7,500 products. Essmart has over 40 full-time employees, most of whom are employed out of the villages and towns in which they operate. Revenue has increased on average 33% month-on-month from August 2013 to May 2014.

Through Essmart, life-improving technologies achieve their intended impacts, and rural shops and end-users improve their businesses and lives.