



ENTREPRENEURSHIP

SHOME BASU

**Amit Mavi**

31 years

Age at starting business  
27 yearsCompany name  
Better Option Propmart  
Private LimitedHeadquarters  
Greater NoidaSeed capital  
₹10 lakhSource of money  
SavingsProfit after one year  
₹1.6 croreCurrent profit  
₹45 crore

# Rising high in realty services

Mavi's real estate advisory venture has witnessed a profit growth of 123% in just four years.

**I worked part-time for two years** while studying so that I could have funds to start my own business.

**As print and TV advertising** was expensive, I focused on participating in real estate exhibitions in India and abroad.

**The global financial crisis** in 2008 adversely affected the real estate sector, but it turned out to be a blessing for me. It forced me to diversify my business and enter the affordable housing segment.

**E**ven as a student, I had set my mind on being an entrepreneur. I toyed with several ideas for a start-up while studying for my bachelor's and master's degrees in business administration from the Victoria University in Australia. Intent on starting my own business, I even managed to save ₹4-5 lakh during these five years. I did so working part-time for two years at various food and beverage outlets, often doing night shifts and keeping long hours. However, by the time I returned to India in 2003, I still hadn't come up with a concrete and viable idea for a new venture.

It was in Delhi that I discovered how well auto sales were doing and decided to start a company to provide car financing. After making numerous cold calls to banks, I managed to speak to the regional manager at the ICICI Bank. We had a few meetings and the bank agreed to let me work on a target-based model. I had to find people willing to take auto loans from the bank and I would be paid a commission for each client. So, in 2003, I set up Crown Finance, leased office space at Lajpat Nagar, hired two employees, and began marketing my services to corporates through tie-ups and networking.

Within a few months, I managed to increase the volume of loans substantially, so the bank allowed

me to work on my own terms. In about three years, I had 40 employees and was earning ₹4 lakh a month. While the venture was profitable, I was not satisfied as I could foresee a limited scope for growth in the business.

I began considering other avenues and saw a big opportunity in the real estate sector. I had noticed large tracts of land around Delhi and knew that the increasing demand for housing in the National Capital Region meant the developers would soon be vying for these. My conviction grew when, in 2006, I managed to facilitate a deal for nine acres of land in Faridabad between a farmer and a developer. I received a commission of ₹45 lakh and decided to become a real estate developer.

However, this required a large amount of capital, which I didn't have. So I ventured into the next best option—real estate advisory services. I wrapped up my auto financing enterprise in six months and, in 2007, set up Better Option Propmart (BOP) at Greater Noida. I kept aside ₹45 lakh I had earned to secure my future and used ₹10 lakh of my own savings to set up the company. The company provides a range of services, from facilitating search for residential and commercial property to underwriting for real

estate projects.

I was expectedly apprehensive when I started the second company because I was leaving a flourishing business to venture into a field in which I had no expertise. My first project was with Jaypee Greens, which launched a township at Noida in November 2007. The company had hired several well-established consultants for this project. I wanted to prove that I was as skilled as they were, so I worked hard to make the quickest sales. BOP managed to sell as many as 66 apartments in only 23 days. The bulk of the money that I received from this project was reinvested to promote the business.

Initially, most of the capital was spent on creating brand awareness to procure clients. As most of the marketing channels, such as print and TV advertisements, were very expensive, I simply focused on participating in real estate exhibitions. However, this also meant spending a lot of money as I attended 8-10 events in India, America, the UK, Dubai and Singapore. Apart from these, I advertised through the Internet and sent direct mails to several corporates.

In January 2008, when I had barely begun to settle down, the global financial crisis shook the real estate sector. Till then, BOP had specialised in luxury

projects, but the demand for these reduced drastically during the downturn. It took me a month to overcome this hurdle and find a solution.

I approached Jaypee Greens to convince them into developing a project, Pavilion Court, which would offer two- and three-bedroom apartments at about ₹40 lakh each. The project was launched in April 2008 and within 9-10 months, BOP succeeded in selling 3,000 flats. The crisis proved a blessing for me as it forced me to diversify my business and consider affordable housing. Currently, the apartments I sell are in the range of ₹15 lakh-10 crore.

In my haste to sell the apartments, I made a few mistakes, such as hiring 60 people in three months in a recruitment frenzy. Over time, I realised that many of them were incompetent and had to fire half of them within a couple of months.

I now have nine offices spread across Delhi and 400 employees. One of the most challenging tasks I face is to keep the business operations running smoothly as I collaborate with about 500 brokers. As of now, my target is to make a profit of ₹100 crore in the next two years.

— As told to Shobhana Chadha

Benefit from change in health plans  
Page 2



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