

Healthy Home Concierge Andrew Pace | Transcript

Welcome to Green Building Matters, the original and most popular podcast focused on the green building movement. Your host is Charlie Cichetti, one of the most credentialed experts in the green building industry and one of the few to be honored as a LEED Fellow. Each week, Charlie welcomes a green building professional from around the globe to share their war stories, career advice, and unique insight into how sustainability is shaping the built environment. So settle in, grab a fresh cup of coffee, and get ready to find out why green building matters.

00:33

Charlie

Hey, everybody. Welcome to the next episode of the Green Building Matters podcast. I'm your host, Charlie Cecchite, and today I've got Charlie 2 pace with us. We're going to talk everything from healthy buildings might get into some mold. We're going to talk about the Green design center. And gosh, he's got his own podcast, too. So I'm going to stay on point here so he doesn't critique me too much. But, Charlie 2, welcome to the podcast.

00:54

Andy

Charlie, it is just absolutely my pleasure to be here today.

00:57

Charlie

Well, I know we're connected in some green building circles, and I'm glad you're on today. I like to just get that origin story first with my guests. So where'd you grow up and where'd you go to school?

01:07

Andy

I grew up just outside of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I've been here all of my 50, almost four years now, and actually grew up in a family business. My family owned a, still owns a commercial construction material supply company and went to school here in southeast Wisconsin at University of Wisconsin Whitewater. And when I got out of school, I instantly went to the family business. I actually had to beg my parents to join the family business because they're like, you need to spread your wings, man. You need to do something unlike this. They didn't warn me how frustrating it can be in the construction business, but they're like, all right, well, you want to do this, we're happy to bring you in. And it was my job for the first few years to work with a couple of different product lines that we offered that dealt with concrete repair, concrete waterproofing, real high end coatings for the industry. And I was going around the midwest to architects, engineering firms, talking about my products, writing specifications. And we actually had a job in Milwaukee. We were supplying a water based epoxy floor coating for a below grade parking structure. And after the primer coat got applied, we started getting phone calls from people living in the condos above. This is 1992, by the way back. So we thought, what's going on, we thought we had all the ventilation shafts secured and everything cording off. What really shook us was three of our own workers were rushed to the hospital because of inhalation complications. They could not breathe. And this is because of a water based floor coating. We all thought in 1992, water based means it's safe. There's no solvent. Completely untrue. We learned the hard way that water based just means 50% of the liquid component is water. The rest can be xylene, acetone, whatever they want to put in there. But it shook us, and it forced us to evaluate what we were doing and say, there's got to be a healthier way to do this. There's got to be a safer way. We found a very small company in California called American Formulating and Manufacturing. And they made paints and coatings and all these specialty sealers for a group of people that were called the chemically sensitive. And I knew nothing about this. I was a few years out of school. I was still learning the business. My expertise was in coatings and so forth. Never heard of the chemical sensitivity, but that just got me. I dove in headfirst. I learned about sick building syndrome, environmental illness, and mind you, before the USGBC was even thought about, this is before the LEED program was designed. And so we were

trying to promote materials that we called common sense healthy building materials. So really got our start way before the green movement even was thought about.

04:03

Charlie

You have the construction family business. This event happened. It's an AHA for you, for, essentially, arguably, healthy buildings. We have greenhouse buildings. Healthy buildings are part of that. So that is a big aha. I know you stacked a lot of certifications and training around, and you started shifting. It looks like your career towards that. Tell us a little more about your early career after all.

04:31

Andy

That's a good question. I remember one of my earliest presentations going to. I had a friend of mine. So step back. In the mid nineties, I became president of the Milwaukee chapter of CSI, a construction specifications institute. So all commercial architects and engineers and some contractors and suppliers, and I remember having a lot of friends in the industry were principles in architecture and engineering firms. And I would go to these principles and say, hey, what about using these types of products for your projects because they're healthier? And the response I always got was, 'okay, we'll keep this in the file until we have a customer who asks about this stuff', because basically they're saying, nobody cares. I had a friend of mine who was ahead of building the maintenance for the largest medical complex in Wisconsin, and he said, bring over a five gallon pail of this paint. Let's have my guys try it out, see what we think. I brought it over, they're putting it on. My friend is saying this stuff is amazing. We can't smell a thing. Doctors and nurses that complain all the time about the fumes. This is going to be a hit. The painting contractors hated it. I learned later on that it was not about the pain itself. It's because they'd lose out on all their pricing deals they got for the cheap stuff they normally bought. It completely got shut out of the mix because of finances and politics, I guess. But what did happen was these doctors and nurses would come up to me during these presentations and say, where can I

buy this for my house? And it just dawned on me what I gotta do is just sell it to the people who are interested. And so we formed a new company doing nothing but supplying to residential. And now it's coming full circle. We're doing more commercial work than ever before.

06:19

Charlie

I love the entrepreneurial side of it, but first, just listening. Hey, people are asking for this. Who better than us to do that? That's one of my favorite things. So that's an early career. I asked about mentors of my podcast guests. Not everybody has an in person mentor. If you're lucky, someone will open the door, challenge you. Sometimes it's someone you look up to, hear them on stage, read their books. Are there any mentors you could kind of take note of so far in your career?

06:48

Andy

There are a few. It's cliché to say that my father was a mentor, but he was an entrepreneur. Obviously it had a big effect on me. My grandfather was also an entrepreneur, but in the business, I guess industry entrepreneurs mentors a few people. The fellow who owns that AFM company, American Farm Manufacturing, Sam Goldberg, he was truly a mentor for me because he actually was from a different industry. He was an attorney, and he ended up buying this company and making it into what it is today. He had some very easy rules to remember about things like, you're not going to convince everybody, so don't waste your time on trying to just spend time on those who truly need the help and want the help. And then there was a physician down in Texas. His name was Dr Bill Ray, and he started a clinic called the American Environmental Health Foundation. And he was one of the first mainstream physicians to really focus on chemical sensitivity and the detox of it. And I spent a lot of time with him over the years, writing papers and doing research. And he unfortunately passed away a few years ago. But I would say these are the people who really were the biggest influences on what I do.

08:04

Charlie

That's the key word there, influence. Thanks for sharing. Sounds like some really great people there. One more look back, look back on the highlight reel. What's on the highlight reel and life and business so far?

08:20

Andy

Oh, boy. Highlight reel in business is. I got to tell you, the highlight reel is almost like every few years it renews. And I don't want to say that I ever drop anything off the reel, but I keep on adding things. Most of the highlights for me are when customers come back to me five years later, ten years later, because maybe they're now moving on to another home. And they come back and they say, you helped us live in the home we were in, and we need your help again. And then I know that it actually worked. That, to me, is probably the absolute best thing that could ever happen to anyone in this business.

I remember years ago leading a group of green building retailers in a roundtable discussion, and one of the questions came up, what happens when mainstream retailers, the big box stores, start selling the same products we're selling? I said, then we know we've done our job. Don't get mad at them for jumping into this space. Understanding why we started this and why we do this is to change the industry. And if that happens, man, pat yourself in the back, because it finally happened.

09:31

Charlie

We pulled them where we needed to be. You're right. You can say that with a LEED, which I've made my career out of. Hey, when every building is the LEED platinum building and we don't have to have this rigorous process to prove you did it right, then we have won. And then we can shift to regenerative design.

09:45

Andy

But for now, let's get it right on that. I remember there was a job we were doing in Wisconsin many years ago, and involved in the conversation was a journalist, and he was going to write articles about it in the Milwaukee Journal. And my question was to the group. Unfortunately, we're in this position where we still have to write articles about this the best bet for all of us. The best thing could ever happen is nobody writes about this anymore. Nobody talks about it anymore. It puts you and I out of our little thing that we do, right. But if we don't talk about it, if we don't have to talk about it anymore, that means we've reached that point. And I think early on, this is again, late nineties, early two thousands, when they're writing stories about. I remember this job was a mass timber project in the early 2000s and just a totally new concept. And I did say, people will think it's strange if you have to write an article about it. That means it's strange. And therefore the average reader is going to say, not for me. I understand how you have to push the envelope. We're getting to the point now where, as you said, so many buildings are LEED platinum, so many buildings are being built to these newer standards. Now that we don't hear about it as often, that's probably a good thing.

10:59

Charlie

Love it. That's the bar and some places where we're already right there at it and going past it. So for those listening to our listeners, just, hey, just be encouraged, taking a long time to get to here. I'm sure there's more work to do on operating carbon, embodied carbon, and health. I haven't even asked you the tough questions about whiskey yet. I've done my research. I can't wait. So let's get to the present day. You got a few different things going on. Tell us, like about some of your companies, even the podcast. And then a day in the life of Andy today.

11:34

Andy

Oh, boy. Several years ago, about five years ago, I guess now I finally decided to start recording. Just thoughts in my head. Gets to the point where, you know this, you're living and breathing and sleeping, trying to sleep. Everything you think about day in and day out, 24/7 is green building. And I needed a way to get this

out of my head, and I started the podcast, and it actually turned out to be an absolute hit. We became fast, became like the fastest or the largest listenership of any healthy building podcast on the iTunes network. And now we're morphing into doing video and so forth. But it really was a way for me to get this out, to sort of gather my thoughts, and it's helped me understand what my role in this is. There are not many people that focus on healthy building. First I would say a handful of people across the country that I can reach out to understand and really value that aspect of construction. First green building is ever just an encompassing description. It can mean so many things to different people. There are people out there who are absolute experts on the sustainability and the environmental standpoint, the energy efficiency standpoint. That's not my forte. I was on the board of the USGBC here in Wisconsin. I helped co author the Wisconsin Greenfield home program. I've decided that focusing on human health concerns first, that's my goal. That's my future.

13:09

Charlie

I want to talk a little more about Wisconsin. Hey, what green building, especially health building items, are a little easier and harder to do because where we're at, I'm in Atlanta, Georgia. There is a lot of humidity here. Maybe we can't bring in as much fresh air. It's kind of battling energy code, et cetera. So why don't you tell us a little bit about the region? Definitely the design center. What's your typical kind of project? So hit on those two things for us.

13:34

Andy

I sure can. That's a really great question. The regions, I think all too often building code or even just discussion of how to build the perfect green building does not take in consideration. The region does not take into consideration the climate here in Wisconsin. On any June or July or August day, it could be 85 degrees with 70% humidity. In the middle of winter, it can be a low of -30 air temperature with humidity in the teens. We have an absolute problem. There are a lot of flooring manufacturers that have refused to sell certain products in the upper midwest

because they realize that it causes their products to move so much they can't take the stress. And so our buildings have to be designed for that climate. This absolute climate change inside of the building, outside of the building. And it's only getting worse. And so we have to be able to manage this and manage moisture even though we're not as humid as it is in Atlanta, Georgia, we have to be able to manage that moisture both ways. So in the summertime we got to get it out of the house. In the winter time we gotta keep it there. So it causes us to use it a lot. We use energy recovery ventilators, but we also use humidification systems in the wintertime because it's too dry. So it is very challenging.

14:58

Charlie

Depending where you're at. I mean, here it's so humid and it's the wet cold in the winter and you've got the dry cold. And so just that factors in not just our commercial buildings, but scale it down to homes, too. And it's a little hard to fight there. Talk about 30 plus years at the Green design center. Just like what your typical project looks like, who might want to give you guys a call?

15:23

Andy

I would say my typical client is somebody who says we are remodeling or we want to build new and we've got a ten year old that has autism or that has a mold sensitivity or there's somebody in the home with Lymes disease. So there's severely depressed immune system issues. This is my typical client. They're coming to me saying, yeah, I'm concerned about the environment, of course, but really what I want to focus on is how do I make my home or my facility as healthy for the occupants as possible?

And so whether its a half hour phone call to just kind of walk them through a certain project or its a year long whole house project where Im working with the architect, the entire design team, and we're making sure that every component of that home is chosen based upon how it's going to affect the indoor occupants. And I would say these days, that's more of what I'm doing. I'm doing more of

these larger whole home projects. Any given time, I have between 20 and 25 homes going up across the country that have, for folks who are trying to live in a healthier home and to the discussion we just had, a lot of times the best thing they could do is move to another climate where it would be better for their certain health issues they're going through. But let's face it, we all can't do that. And so we have to try to make it work where they're at. And so it's a process.

16:56

Charlie

Doctor Justin, you're absolutely right. That's who's calling upon you. I can tell you love this work. I love how you started the podcast to get things out of your head. And then, hey, let's give people a peek into that, listen in. So that's really cool. All right, so mold, I'm not the foremost expert on mold. Someone said, I know how to green up a building, but I've not got this level of detail. But arguably maybe the pandemic hits, right, Charlie? And we're focused on green cleaning and lots of fresh air and better filters and just bleach everything. I'm being facetious, but that kind of happened. Office buildings, maybe we kind of forgot about something like mold. So what do we need to know about mold? Give us the cliff notes.

17:36

Andy

Like an excellent question. So the cliff notes would be right now we're seeing a mold. I would call it a pandemic. And the reason for that is the unintended consequence of trying to do the right thing. Keep in mind that we started tightening up our buildings back in the seventies because of the oil embargo, and we're trying to make our buildings more energy efficient. Come the late seventies, eighties, buildings started being made from more synthetic materials that didn't naturally breathe, more plastics. And then come the nineties and two thousands now we're starting to really tighten things up for the energy codes to reduce the amount of fossil fuels in keeping our buildings cool or warm.

What happened inside of the house or the building was we forgot about the occupants, and we forgot that old adage that a house needs to breathe, well, that

wasn't really true. The occupants needed to breathe. The house didn't. What's happening is when you build a home to be really airtight, but it still allows some air to come in through little cracks and crevices. It also brings in moisture that moisture feeds mold that's already present on the wood in the cavity walls. 1015 years later, you wonder why you have a mold problem in your house. And so, and we're finding that this is greatly affecting people's health.

In the last several years now, we have learned that there is actually a genetic test for people to have this predisposition to be mold sensitive, and that mold sensitivity can cause a whole host of things, from dysautonomia to mast cell activation to chronic inflammatory response. We're finding that this is actually the biggest reason why people become chemically sensitive or have what's called environmental illness. It's because of mold or bacteria that's growing inside of the home. And so this has become our, I believe it's our generation's lead and asbestos issue within our facilities.

19:31

Charlie

Sounds like it's a much more major concern that maybe day to day life will show. Somewhere should someone start there? I mean, if it's your own mold device, is it, hey, I see some black mold. And don't just go spraying it with stuff. I mean, what's one or two next steps for someone listening, saying, hey, I think I might have a problem?

19:51

Andy

Yeah, that's a really good question. Yes. First of all, don't spray anything on it unless you know exactly what you're spraying on it and why. But I would say for anybody who suspects that they might have a mold problem in their home or in their place of business, I would go to, there's a foundation out there, a nonprofit foundation called Change The Air Foundation. changetheairfoundation.org dot. This group was put together by a mold remediation scientist as well as just a mom whose children developed severe health issues because of mold exposure and just went to this deep dive of what do I do? How do I fix this? And so these two got

together and created this foundation a couple of years ago. And it's really fast becoming the best resource for where to start.

If you think you have mold or water damage, who should I talk to? Who should I hire? What should I do? Here are the steps to take care of it. It's all unbiased information. Just, here's what works. I got involved with the foundation myself as a volunteer last year, and I started what's called a Builders advisory committee and were actually putting together protocols on how to build homes. We're going to start there, how to build homes that eliminate the possibility of mold growth inside. And it's not easy because like we talked about before, every region is different. People do different materials for their exterior, framing for their roofing, materials for their insulation. So we're trying to make it so that we can show kind of best practices. And then we go from there.

21:29

Charlie

That's good stuff, man. Okay. I'm going to put a link to that nonprofit, that foundation. Everybody goes there to check it out. We got some expert tips here from Charlie 2. So I like to ask about the future. It might be already here, but you've been reading up on it. But what's something kind of exciting coming at us in this, let's call it healthy building, healthy home movement that you're excited about?

21:51

Andy

What I'm excited for right now is, and I'll preface this by saying I have been in the business for 30 plus years, and most people who have been in a career for 30 plus years are thinking about retirement and kind of winding down their career. I am not. Maybe a few years ago I thought about it during the pandemic, but I will say throughout the pandemic and now out of it, I have been just absolutely renewed because homeowners and professionals alike are now starting to reach out to say, hey, I get it. I understand why you've been talking about this for so long because I'm seeing it and we need to make a change. I have never seen the amount of

excitement in the healthy building space as there's been in just the last couple of years. And I'm talking about how I remember going to the first three or four green build conferences back when it was just a pipe dream. And it was in a hotel conference room, and it was just. Everybody was just so excited to be in this industry because we're all just. I mean, just breaking ground. Right. And now it's much more corporate. And not that there's anything wrong with that, but it's just a bigger deal. I think healthy buildings are now in that exciting phase. We get it and we need to do something about this. I see it being grabbed by architectural firms, engineering firms, HVAC specialists. I believe that this is the number one topic in construction that people are talking about, maybe at the water cooler or after work, but they're bringing it to their place of business, saying, you know what? Maybe we need to delve into this more because there's a serious issue going on here.

23:31

Charlie

That's really good. Okay. All right, everybody, you heard it here. You got to catch up on that. Don't think that's already been handled. That's still a serious issue, and it's not too difficult to address. Okay, so let's get to know you a little more. I have some kind of rapid fire questions. What would you say is your specialty or gift?

23:53

Andy

So I would say it's empathy. I've worked with over 30,000 customers in my career, and the number one bit of feedback I get is, thank you so much for listening and understanding what we're going through. It's hard to talk about yourself, like, what are you good at? And all that stuff. But that's the one thing that people keep on telling me, is they just appreciate being able to talk about these things, have somebody who understands it, and then doesn't react in a negative way. If somebody says, I can't walk through the perfume aisle of a department store because I get a major migraine, how many people would just kind of snicker and say, you're one of those people? And my response is, I hear that all the time. I

understand it, and here's what we do. And so I think empathy really is my best attribute.

24:37

Charlie

Everybody has it. That's fantastic. Would you say you've had that for a long time or you really had to work on that?

24:43

Andy

I would say it's something I did not have to work on, but it came over the years of dealing with people who are just so sick and had such problems. And when you have a family that comes to you and says, we've got a five year old who's going through cancer treatments, and we think it's because of heavy metal poisoning, it's just. I mean, it breaks your heart. And when you hear this time and time again, I didn't have to work on it. It worked on me.

25:09

Charlie

You're a good word Smith. I ask a little bit about habits, routines, rituals. What do you have that kind of keeps you on point?

25:19

Andhy

Oh, boy. I do like to keep up with the industry. I listen to a lot of podcasts. I have about 30 or 40 on the docket, and I don't get to them, obviously, at all. But when I have a spare moment, I like to listen to what the industry is dealing with. I used to go to a lot of trade shows. I don't have the time for it as much anymore, but when I do, I really, truly enjoy it. I would say my number one habit is I'm in a constant state of learning. One thing that I get from every client who I've ever talked to is they teach me something I didn't know before the call. And if somebody calls me and I say, oh, yeah, I know that. I know that. I mean, I'm done.

You know that once you stop learning, you stop living. And so I learn from every one of my customers. I think that's my number one thing on a daily basis.

26:11

Charlie

I found to really learn, you got to ask great questions, but you gotta ask great questions. So one of the coaches I work with, he teaches inquiry methods, just how to ask great questions and then peel back the end, peel back some more and really get to the root of it. So, I'm sure you've really worked on that and improved that. The motto of our podcast, I didn't even tell you, but it teaches everything you know. And so you're learning a lot. It's important that we don't. We don't hold on to it. Teach everything you know. So next time I see, I'll bring you an organic kind of t-shirt that says, teach everything you know. Green Building Matters podcast for being a guest.

26:47

Andy

Beautiful.

26:48

Charlie

Any tips on how to be a really great listener? Talk less, not interrupt people. Ask great questions. I don't know. You just have to be pretty conscious about that.

26:59

Andy

Yes. Understand that most people you talk to, at least in my. What I do with my consulting, these folks are not in the business. They don't understand how a home gets put together. They just want to live in a healthy one. And I have to remember that they are formulating their words and questions to the best of their knowledge. And while it may seem odd that they use certain phrases and terminology that most in the business would scoff at because, no, you're not saying it right. You need to say it this way. You have to just listen through that and

understand. These folks are just trying to tell you what's going on and they're using the best words they have. And so I've been able to take those words, reformulate it into a directive that goes to the design build team to say, here's what the customer is looking for. And I'm able to say that in a way that they understand. Because if the homeowners tell this to the builder, to the architect, they're going to say they're nuts. They don't know what they're talking about. I'll do it my way because they don't know any different. And so you have to be able to really listen to what they are saying so you can achieve their goals.

28:08

Charlie

I love this topic. If you don't mind, one more pillow back is do you repeat it and say Charlie 2, I just want to make sure I have this right. I mean, your biggest concern right now is the following, did I hear that right? Do you find yourself doing that to make sure we have clarity?

28:22

Andy

Sometimes I think, sometimes I have to speak it back to them, but then I'll use the words that I'm going to use to the contractor because I'm stepping back a bit, when I get hired on a project as a healthy home consultant, I work for the homeowner, but I have to be that liaison between the homeowner and the design build team. And when the homeowner says, listen, we need to make sure the bedroom is the healthiest room in the home. And I don't know how to do this, but we need to do this. This I'll say, okay, so what you're saying is you want to make sure that you have no electromagnetic fields behind the headboard because that can disrupt sleep REM cycles. What you're saying is you want to make sure there's no pollutants in the air that you're breathing in throughout the night because that can cause breathing difficulties, causing sleep disruption. Then I'll say, and we'll do this by doing these things. This is what we're talking about. Yes, then I'll get the go ahead. And then I say it to the contractor or the architect, a lot of times we'll have to go back and forth. I had a call with a client just before this podcast and that's exactly what we're doing. We're going through the build spreadsheet and she says

I have no idea how a home gets built. So I don't know what this means. And so I described it in a way that she understood, and then she and her partner can talk about it and they can make good decisions without that description, without breaking it down to how we understand it. I think people go through the construction process sort of blind and just trust that the team is doing the best they can for them. And a lot of times they're doing the best they can for themselves. So we have to make sure we're on the same page.

30:04

Charlie

Well said, man. Let's talk about a bucket list. Not everybody has a bucket list, but let's say you shared a couple things. Is there a certain place you want to travel to one day or travel back to?

30:16

Andy

Is there a venture?

30:18

Charlie

Maybe you want to write a book? What's on the bucket list?

30:21

Andy

Yeah, boy, I'm writing a book. I'll be honest, that's something I've started about five times in my career. And I get through, like a first chapter and go, what am I doing? And I say that, I mean, with a smile on my face. The industry changes so fast, and it's hard to write a book. And then it goes through all the process of being published, and twelve months later it gets published, or however long it takes, and half the information is obsolete by the time it gets published. So I may do more writing. I am writing for a couple of magazines right now, and I'm doing more videos because I want to be able to give that information out to our clients and others fast. So I guess bucket list. There is. I need to complete that recording

studio in the office that I started a couple of years ago. Bucket list. Personally, I've been blessed to be able to travel around the world. But there are still some places that I'd like to get to. There are places that I've been. I'd like to go back. I mean, I've spent a lot of time in Scotland. I'd like to go back. I've spent a lot of time in Italy and France. I'd like to go back. I learned a lot. I learned a lot many years ago in Sicily, how in certain parts of the world, people are sustainable not because they want to be, to check some box to feel good. They do it because they have to. They have no other choice. And so I always wanted to start a travel program about sustainability, about how the world is sustainable and has all these wonderful sustainability attributes. But nobody ever talks about it's not sexy to reuse certain things in a certain way, but that's the way they do it because they have to. But ultimately, it really is sustainable. And so I would like to start a travel show based upon that.

32:08

Charlie ??

Count me in for that. And there's so much more to do than just, say, a list of LEED certified hotels, which are a decent start. But no, just how do you really connect with nature here? And these are things you could do and offset your travel and your carbon alternative transportation. Dude, I got all kinds of ideas. I bet you look me up on that one. Well, before we move on, as I was checking out your LinkedIn, it turns out you have a couple certifications and something that has become what my wife's friend called my midlife crisis. And so I've got to discuss it with you. I didn't go buy a convertible, but I bought a hell of a lot of bourbon and rye whiskey. So you and I now have something we can talk about outside the podcast.

32:48

Charlie

I see you have some certifications from seven years ago, before the pandemic, before all this bourbon got really hard and expensive to find, some buddies. How'd you get into it? Sounds like bourbon and scotch. You've got some certifications around that.

33:02

Andy

Yeah. So I mentioned before that I just constantly learn. I love to learn things. I educate myself well. I have a good friend of mine who he and I, after work, was a business owner as well. He and I would get together after work over a whiskey, and he was a scotch drinker. I drank scotch. I drank Irish bourbon. Didn't really matter to me, and he really got me into scotch. And it turned out that we decided to donate a tasting event for a school fundraiser. It was such an absolute hit, and everybody said, you guys need to take this on the road. We're like, okay, well, I own a business, he owns a business. We don't have a lot of time, but we thought it could be fun, at least from a hobby standpoint. And so we ended up going to Scotland to train on becoming scotch whiskey sommeliers. And we both are certified. And then we got the executive bourbon steward certification. I'm working on cognacs and armagnacs. For me, it's the educational part, it's the science part. I love nothing more than giving a two hour presentation now after work on how to distill the. How the terroir of where the ingredients were grown affects the overall spirit, how it's aged, the chemical process of aging in the wood. I mean, all that just. It just is so intriguing to me. And my tasting events now have literally become like a bill nye the science guy, exploring exploration of whiskey. And I'm just, I'm thrilled to do it. It's a lot of fun. And It's even more fun to do research.

34:41

Charlie

We're going to have a whole separate conversation about this, man. I'm. Lots to talk about. For example, I don't know if you ever include some 13th colony, double oak that's in a whole other category of its own. I'll send you some samples of that. So we got back to just your career, green buildings as we kind of start to wind down here. You know, how do you like to consume content? Do you like to hold a book, listen to audible, do you like to look at, watch YouTube videos, Ted talks, documentaries? Sounds like you spend a lot of time with people and you're learning from your customers, but how do you like to consume content? And then

a follow up is there a book or a podcast or a documentary you'd recommend to our special?

35:21

Andy

I would say podcasts right now are probably my number one, just because I can listen to as I go and then stop and rewind and listen again, because honestly, I have to. I don't always have the mental capacity to hear everything in the first go round. And I'd like to listen to a lot of different types of podcasts. And yes, I've got podcasts I listen to that are on whiskey and bourbon and so forth. But I also have things like buildcasts and the building sustainably podcast. And one, there's one called Learn True Health with a woman named Ashley James. I was on her show a couple of times a few years back, and I like to learn a lot about alternative health topics because that really affects how we look at healthy buildings. A lot of the problems that people are going through health wise can be attributed to how we live in our built environment. Understanding what's happening from a health standpoint really helps me decide on how we're going to approach our new podcast season, who we're going to talk to, maybe the things that we need to look for. So I would say podcasting is probably my number one that I look at a lot, and that has now turned into, a lot of these podcasts have turned into videos, YouTube videos. And so I kind of use that interchangeably. And then when it comes to the written word, I, I know I'm one of those people that I have a hard time sitting down and reading because my mind is racing and so I can't control that very well by listening or watching it kind of for me, it allows me to sort of drown out some of the noise.

37:01

Charlie

I have that too. I can get through, I don't know, maybe eight or ten pages holding a hardcover. But then I'm just this idea guy and so I'm like you, but if it's some content that I'm ready to just even passively listen to, so that's good, man. We got a few things to come and. We're starting to wind down here, man. I'm just loving

this conversation. Two more things as we wind down. One is, as you look back so far in your career, is there anything you wish you'd have known earlier?

37:28

Andy

I wish I would have known earlier, probably about, I learned this about 10-15 years ago, but I could have used it early in my career that the pioneers are the ones who are always getting the arrows in their backs. The pioneers are the ones that need to push the envelope. We need to, we kind of sacrifice ourselves, don't we? Because if you come out and say something that's already been said a hundred times okay, so you're just glomming on. You're a bandwagon kind of person. If you come out and say things that the industry is almost shocked by, Orlando pushes back on. And if somebody would have told me, be more aggressive with this early on, don't worry about the fact that you're getting shot down because I'll tell you, for the first 10-15 years in business, I got shot down an awful lot. And understand, too, as an entrepreneur, unless it's just a stroke of luck, most entrepreneurs like us strike out a few times. But that's good. We learn from our mistakes. We have to fail in order to succeed. And it's just a lesson that I had to learn the hard way. It would have been awesome if somebody told me early on, listen, you're going to strike out a few times. On the other hand, maybe if I would have known that, I wouldn't have been as persistent. So I see it both ways.

38:47

Charlie

I agree. I love entrepreneurship and you need some adversity. You need to build up your grit, your resilience. We could fill in the blank with a lot of things, but it's not for everybody. And I really do agree with that. Can't take the easy street all the time. It's gotta be a little pushed back here. Last question. Let's say, someone's listening to our podcast here and they're loving your store, they're laughing, and they wanna buy us a good bourbon soon. And Let's say someone's just now jumping into this healthy building and healthy home movement, something you become an expert in if they're just now jumping in. Any words of encouragement for them as we come to a close, words of.

39:31

Andy

Encouragement is number one. People always say, I've done my research, I've gone online, I've been researching, and so I know what I need. My response always is, don't believe what you read, okay? Find somebody you trust. Whether it's me or somebody else, find somebody you trust that has earned your trust and use that person or that organization as sort of the sounding board. Because if you go on Google to search for healthy paints or healthy floor materials, the first 2000 listings you get will be paid ads from manufacturers or paid bloggers. They've been paid a lot of money to write good things about a company. You need to find people who can give you honest information. And that's becoming a little bit harder to find these days just because of how the Internet works. So find somebody. Find a show that you like to listen to that you can say, you know what, I trust that I'm hearing. Also get recommendations, personal recommendations from family, from friends, from co workers, from colleagues. That is far better than just learning it yourself online. And so I would say that's your first step for us, going right to our website, thegreendesigncenter.com. On there, you'll find links to all the products that I've been able to sort of curate over the years that I have said. And these are the healthiest of the healthy that I can find for these categories. Paint materials, flooring materials, air purification systems, you name it. It's not the end all be all list. There are other things out there that are good as well, but these are the ones that I've been able to personally vet over the years and my customers have been very happy with. Also on that site, you'll find links to podcasts, which is non.toxicenvironments.com dot. We're starting our 8th season in September, so I'm looking forward to that. So it's on iTunes and Spotify, and it's also now being recorded as a YouTube video. So the YouTube page is up and running. And then you also find a link to how to connect with me as your consultant. I book appointments anywhere from 15 minutes to an hour at a time. And whether it's somebody saying I want to stain an exterior door. Can you help me find the healthiest material available? Or how do I tell my contractor what I want to use all the way to? Can you please help me design and build a healthy home for my family? And so either way, I'm here for you.

41:56

Charlie

That's amazing. Okay, we're going to make sure those links are in our podcast show. As everybody goes, make sure you take a look at. Take a listen to the podcast connected with Andy, not just on LinkedIn there through the website. It sounds like he'll give you some of his time. You just got to reach out and book that. Andy, I really enjoyed getting to know you today. I think our listeners were pretty pumped about this episode and just, hey, man, keep up the great work. And separately, we'll be talking about some good whiskey, man.

42:20

Andy

That sounds like a plan. Charlie. Thank you.

42:24

Charlie

Thank you for listening to this episode of the Green Building Matters podcast@gbes.com. Our mission is to advance the green building movement through best in class education and encouragement. Remember, you can go to gbes.com podcast for any notes and links that we mentioned in today's episode, and you can actually see the other episodes that have already been recorded with our amazing guests. Please tell your friends about this podcast, tell your colleagues, and if you really enjoyed it, leave a positive review on iTunes. Thank you so much, and we'll see you on next week's episode.