

# Chief Sustainability Officer at USC Mick Dalrymple, LEED Fellow | 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.

Hey, everybody. Welcome to the next episode of the Green Building Matters podcast. I'm your host, Charlie Cichetti. I love getting inspired every week, even during the interview. I hope you're getting inspired listening to these amazing green building careers. I've got Mick with us. He's the chief sustainability officer at the University of Southern California. We know each other in our LEED Fellow circles. Mick, I'm just really excited to have you on today. How are you doing?

**00:56**

Mick

I'm great, Charlie. Thank you so much. It's great to be here. I appreciate your time.

**01:01**

Charlie

I'd love to get that origin story a little bit from my guests. If you would kind of take us back. Where did you grow up and where'd you go to school?

**01:09**

Mick

I grew up in Tucson, Arizona. I went to the University of Arizona and studied electrical engineering. And when I was electrical engineering, that required us to take one course that was not from the College of Engineering, just to actually have a life, be a little bit multidimensional. And so I took an international relations course that just kind of blew my mind. It was. It was always interesting to mine. And then eventually I became a student activist. And in doing that, I found myself learning a lot outside of the classroom from mentors in the administration. We were trying to lobby them, and they were. They saw us as students that they could mentor since they teach anymore. And so were there. We became their students. So eventually I created my own degree. It was electrical engineering. Three minors, electrical engineering, math, and international relations. When I graduated from college, I became the lobbyist for the university students from three universities in Arizona. And at that time, my main goal was how to make the world a better place, how to improve the world. I realized through that experience in politics that the media was. This unbelievable influence actually happened. And so my brother and I had always talked about making movies, and my brother left the Navy to go do special effects in Hollywood. I thought, if he can do it, I can do it. I went to Hollywood and started making movies and ended up working on a lot of different movies. Tom Hanks and Julia Roberts, Kurt Russell, Ted Danson, Melanie Griffith, Sylvester Stallone, Martin Short, Don Johnson. I just had a fun time making these. Kind of fell into a dual track of working in visual effects, but then also working in live production for or sorry, main unit production for the studios, the major studios. So it was a great mix of really artistic technical work as well as just general management of how you move an army to go make a move.

**03:19**

Charlie

What a fascinating background. I'm in Georgia, I have had this in the last 10 plus years, newfound appreciation for the film industry, you may know,

but Georgia is really number two to Hollywood there TV shows and movies and it's created a lot of jobs here. I've had a peek into it. There's some green studios here in Atlanta, for example. But okay, so you probably learned how to be an incredible storyteller too. You've got a great sustainability story. You ended up going into facilities and sustainability eventually. Making the world a better place. I love what you said when you're getting out of college, that's essentially what you were appointed to do. But when did the sustainability mix start showing up for you?

**03:57**

Mick

Actually it started really early. I was raised in a riparian area right where the A creek, a major creek, flowed out of the mountain onto the desert floor. So it was kind of a Huckleberry Fin type setting. We had this creek for a backyard and we built rafts and boards and crawdad fishing and rope swings, all of that. I just had a really strong connection to nature growing up and it was my playground. And then around 1974, 1975, my father, who was a mechanical and civil engineer in the Air Force, one day he said, hey, let's take a bike ride over to the other side of the neighborhood. And my father didn't ride bikes. I thought this was really interesting. I was like, it must be important. So went and the builder of our neighborhood, his name was John Wesley Miller, went on to the pioneer of the he had built a cul de sac with six homes that each featured different solar technologies. And one had stored heat and rocks under the house. Another had solar water heaters, passive solar design. And then this one had this new fangled thing called a solar photovoltaic panel. It was one of the first commercially available ones. It is just absolutely fascinating that you could actually make electricity from the sun. So that just was always in the back of my mind. And then one time I was in college, and after I'd become a student activist, a girlfriend and I were walking around one night. It was kind of like a first date. She was an economics major. And we just started this discussion. I was an engineering major.

**05:35**

Mick

And like this whole idea of gross national product and exponential growth, I'm like, you know what that is, right? It's an exponential curve. It eventually has a vertical climb. How is this the way that we measure our success? I'm like, how is this possible? We're going to strip the planet of all the resources. And her argument back was, don't you think we're going to become more efficient? And I say, well, yes, but we're talking about a vertical climb. This is very challenging. And so that stuck to the back of my mind as well. And then. And then I was actually working. I was working in the film and advertising world again. And in 2001, Dick Cheney came out with his national energy. And being from a military family, just read it.

**06:23**

Mick

I was like, this is just going to send more family members off to war to fight for oil. This is ridiculous. So I thought back to those solar panels on that house. Whatever happened to solar? It was basically studying electrical engineering. It's the same basic transistor technology that computers use. My computers have totally taken off. Why hasn't solar? And so I just started researching around, and then somebody said, well, you have to go to a Scottsdale green building meeting. And I went, and it turned out to be an expo on alternative wall systems. It was just fantastic. There were like 20 different vendors with different SIPs and ACCs and scoria, all sorts of things. And some still exist, some don't. And I just thought we could spend 15% more on our building envelope and save 50% of the energy.

**07:09**

Mick

Like, that solves our national security issue with oil. Why don't we? Why don't we do this? It's just like the heavens opened up. And I was like, this is it, and this is the answer. When is your next meeting? And they're like, oh,

well, next Thursday. And I thought, wow, you got a lot of meetings for a nonprofit group. And then it was in the same giant church hall, except all the lights were off, except these few lights over a big conference table way up near the stage. It was like a. It was like a sign out of, like, what's going on here? And so I walked in, I said, I think I'm in the wrong place. Like, what are you looking for? I was like, well, the Scottsdale Green Building said, well, this is it. We're actually forming a chapter of this new organization called the U.S. Green Building Council. And so there are about 12 of us. And I just instantly volunteered to help write the strategic plan and the marketing plan. And we became the third chapter in the US Green Building Council. And that was the gateway drug. It just brought me in and started my green building career.

**08:10**

Charlie

Whoa, man, what a great story. And the legacy there in Arizona too. Okay, so that was the big aha. Had a couple layers to it. I love that I've studied your background and not only did you graduate from Arizona State, you ended up spending, I guess, the next big part of your career there. Right. So can you talk about that next part of your facilities career and sustainability and how'd you get to that?

**08:33**

Mick

I was trying to figure out how I use my film industry background to support sustainability. I started doing documentaries and short films and things like that. Use that to support the chapter in various projects. And we hosted a green build in 2009. So there was a lot of work was there.

**08:52**

Charlie

That was a great one with, that's when Al Gore spoke. And my Sheryl Crow was entertainment. I think that was a good one.

**08:58**

Mick

Yeah, it was great. It was a lot of fun. I mean it wiped our chapter out for about a year because it took so much effort, but it was fantastic. It was such a great experience. It's such a good team building experience. And so I actually started a green, an environmental building supply store with an architect, Jeff Frost, who I met on a green building tour in Green Building Portland next year. And so we started this environmental building supply. It kind of became an anchor institution for the green building community in central Arizona. And, then the whole financial collapse happened and took us down with it. We kept our architecture firm open, but we closed the environmental Building supply. And then Arizona State was looking for somebody to run this massive \$25 million DOE project to retrofit as much of downtown Phoenix for energy efficiency as possible. So it looked like it needed all the skills I had learned to fill a business and running a business and all of that. I took that role, kind of managed all the research for the project. So it was about a three and a half year project. Two thousand plus housing units, millions of square feet of building space, lots of energy. We had people doing geographic studies on how contractors move through time and space to retrofit as many projects as possible. We did econometric analysis, engineering analysis to figure out how much energy was saved. We did behavioral studies, like using energy dashboards and using different marketing techniques. It was a fantastic opportunity that actually made a real impact using taxpayer dollars to save a lot of money and save a lot of energy. So that's really how I got into one night as a vice president. The business vice president was a former Marine, and he said, when are you going to. When are you going to come over and run the sustainability operations for the university? And so I ended up doing that, and that's. That's kind of how I got into the sustainability operations side of the university.

**11:09**

Charlie

Okay, well, I love how you use the storytelling, too, in the film side of it. And as I've learned a little bit about Arizona State University, I've taught lead classes to architects that work on projects there. I think because I think you help with it. Our education company, gbs, actually has an annual enterprise subscription for the entire facilities team at ASU to actually use all of our lead material and continue in ed. And so just very proactive there on the learning side. I think there's a lead mandate. I'm sure you had a hand in that. Tell us a little more about Arizona State. And then of course, we're going to get to the present day and what you're doing there at USC.

**11:49**

Mick

Sure. Arizona State was great. President Michael Crow is a real visionary leader and very, very adept at leading. And so over a period of like 20 years or so, he's kind of shaped a culture. He immediately came in and started breaking down silos and started creating interdisciplinary centers and the Global Institute of Sustainability, the School of Sustainability. And so having that strong leadership, really encouraged, actually attracted people to come work for Arizona State. So over a period of 15, 20 years, totally transformed the culture where sustainability is this priority. And so. But of course, you still have to pay for all this stuff. So that's where the CFO came in. How do we creatively find resources in order to do this? So we have various things, like the sustainability initiatives revolving fund.

**12:44**

Mick

It was a \$35 million fund at the time I had left, that basically was just a revolving fund for sustainability, specifically energy efficiency projects that all the savings were plowed back into the fund. It's an investment vehicle really. So we had that. We worked on sustainability, graduation requirements or general education. That actually was like a seven year project and just came over the finish line recently several years after I left

and we just were just growing enormously fast. Arizona State has, it had about a hundred thousand students at the time I left. It's up over 124,000 now. And so just growing. One of the big projects was really adjacent a business park adjacent to campus called the Innovation Center.

**13:40**

Mick

And so there was a lot of debate about how to develop that. And we ultimately decided to do lead for neighborhood developments and put that through the whole process. And that actually made all of the private developers really supplied a lot of credits for them to achieve higher lead certification on their buildings. We put in a fairly robust system for all of that as well. It's a lot, there are a lot of people involved having sustainable design guidelines. We essentially moved a lot of the sustainable guidelines from a separate guidelines document into the actual technical requirements that all design contractors, sorry designers and contractors need to follow. So. And then a massive solar deal as well, and then a massive wind deal as well. So just a lot of different pieces. The emissions are made up of so many different elements. And so you got to kind of attack that whole portfolio and use whatever tools you can appropriate to that specific.

**14:42**

Charlie

Source of emissions, set up that infrastructure and play proactive developer when you have that chance. That's amazing. A couple look backs, then we'll get to the present day. I'd like to ask about mentors. Sometimes if you mentor someone, you read their material, you see them on stage, they inspire you. Sometimes it's someone that you meet with, they challenge you, they open doors. But you've given a shout out to a couple so far in your story. But were there any other mentors that you could kind of look back to?

**15:08**



Mick

In the film industry, mentors in higher education and mentors and green building. Some of the early ones were when I was a student lobbyist. You know, we're always, we're here to change your mind, not to learn from you. But we couldn't help but learn from them. They were really smart people. And Dudley Woodward was our dean of students and he once told me just say it's much easier to tear things down than to build things up. It takes a lot more work to build things up. And just always kind of stuck with me that's the hard work is building things up. The provost, Neil Tasemo, Ben Tucci, our cfo who taught me all about, somebody's got to pay for it, right? Where's the money coming from? Those were great from that standpoint. And then Mo Udall was a. There's a. There's a line between mentoring and the gray zone between mentoring and role models. A lot of my mentoring really came from really good role models. So they weren't specifically telling me to do this, but they were actually exhibiting certain behavior. So Mo Udall, famous representative, Ranford president, He was just a fantastic role model on the Green Building side. Anthony Floyd, Scottsdale, Green Building program Manager. Just an amazing, quiet guy who just makes everything happen. David Eisenberg. Annie Peterson is a great education lobbyist advocate that I learned a lot from. Katherine Hammock. She was our first chair of our USGBC Arizona chapter. And then on the board of USGBC. Bob Burkabyle, Vivian Locked, William McDonough, Kath Williams, Gail Vettori, David Gottfried, and then quietly, Anthony Bernahan.

**16:56**

Mick

He's a great quiet mentor role model. Of course, Rob Watson. Rob learned so much from Rob. So just a lot of really brilliant people. It's great to be around such inspirational people. Not only are they super smart, but they just have that solutions attitude of like, let's get this done. And that's probably what I've enjoyed the most.

**17:18**

Charlie

And you had access to some amazing people there. And I know others I'm sure may call you a mentor, too. What's on the highlight reel? I like to ask this question. It's kind of a permission to my podcast guests. What stands out? What's on the highlight reel as you look back so far?

**17:35**

Mick

I've had a real kind of varied career. Not one you would probably recommend to people, but I've really enjoyed, used everything along the way and. To me, my proudest achievement is actually sticking to the values that my parents exhibited and taught me. Honesty, hard work, accountability, public service and doing unto others the golden rule. I think that no matter what you go through and what you achieve, if you can stick to those core values, that itself is an achievement in a very challenging world where there's a lot of incentive to do otherwise. So I think that's really what I'm proudest of than other practical things. Most of the achievements I've had were real team efforts, not individual efforts.

**18:27**

Mick

The USGBC in The early years and the LEED for Homes program building the USGBC Arizona chapter, representing the USGBC community on the ICC 700 development team. Getting a movie made, that's quite an achievement. Actually happened after I left the film industry, which is pretty even more. And then building AKA Green into that anchor institution. And then when I was at asu, I did a stint too for three years working for the Walton family and this thing called the Global Accessibility Consulting Services and our solution services. And I did a project from the Albanian Ministry of Education where we basically had an interdisciplinary team, analyzed the 5000K through 12 schools in Albania and developed a whole roadmap cost analysis for what it would take to rebuild their school system and inject green sustainability education into it.

**19:24**

Mick

And it was just very proud of the team that we had that was able to do that under really difficult circumstances. And then at USC too, when I arrived, I thought I was going to be finishing one of my screenplays at night when I got here. And then the president said she wanted a sustainability plan in three months and that kind of threw that whole plan out the window. So. But we came up with Assignment Earth as a USC sustainability framework in a very quick timeframe with about a hundred people all volunteering their time to get that done. And it's really been around for three and a half years and it's really already shown how solid it was to begin with. So very proud that were able to take a collection of ideas in a three month period and create a sustainability framework for a universe.

**20:15**

Charlie

A heck of a highlight reel, man. I'm glad I asked. Holy cow. Let's go to the present day. So tell us about your current role, what we need to know about USC and maybe in a minute unpack this 20, 28 target that now you're working on.

**20:28**

Mick

Assignment Earned is across the operations. Education, research, engagement, equity and inclusion. So it's got five pillars to it and 27 goals. And the one that we're probably working on that I'm most excited about and is the heaviest lifting, is developing a decarbonization roadmap for both of our campuses. Before I got into university operations, much of the focus was on building, but this is on how you take an entire campus, decarbonize the utilities. So we're getting close to wrapping that up, fleshing out what a first phase project will be. We're also working on bus fleet electrification, which is 12 dimensional chess in California. And so that's taking a

considerable amount of investment of time, but it's a great progress there. And then we also.

**21:25**

Mick

One of the things that just really happy about is some students surprised us and got the undergraduate student government to pass a resolution recommending imposing on the students a mandatory sustainability training. And we have one already, but it's voluntary. And so they want to actually require all students. So we're in the process of kind of navigating through how we institutionalize this student resolution. They want to go through training. I think another thing unique to USC is how we work with the entertainment industry to use the arts and entertainment as a way to open people's hearts and minds, to infuse behavioral messaging in that, to get people to adopt the solution, the climate solutions that already exist. There's so many solutions out there that are already on the table. Just haven't gotten people to use them. How do we use the unique aspect of being in Hollywood entertainment capital to really get that message out far and wide, to show people what these solutions are and make it normalize. Everybody just picks them up.

**22:43**

Charlie

There's some of that student activism. I love that. And I know a little bit about education. You'll have to probably meet them where they're at. And microlearning, maybe even text delivery. There's some different things if you want to unpack it. I have all kinds of ideas. And maybe you could get some help from the film industry there. That'd be amazing, man. So Chief Sustainability Officer, right? Arguably that title is still relatively newer in the big scheme of C suite titles, but what does that mean to you?

**23:11**

Mick

Kind of like a chief cat herder. That's really it. It's basically using. You have a lot of influence and very little authority. So it's basically trying to understand your different stakeholders and audiences, understand and remind people of what the goals are. And then figuring out how do people bring people from different units and different disciplines together to look at the systems of a problem or a challenge or a goal, like, what are the systems that are affected? Who are the stakeholders that are affected? And then coming up with solutions and figuring out how to actually implement those solutions. And so it includes everything. A little bit of cheerleading, a little bit of. Or a lot of analysis, some budgeting, and then basically just kind of keeping everybody. I don't want to say keeping everybody on the same page, but basically getting people to flock in a similar direction. And if you can do that, it's amazing what people can do when they're kind of working in synergy.

#### **24:16**

Charlie

And that whole crowdsourcing. Your storytelling is coming up again. That vision over and over and over. Some say that a CEO needs to be the chief repeating officer. So maybe you can steal that one from Mick. You're the chief repeating officer. Over and over, man. Mick keeps saying that a lot. Maybe that's important. Chief repeating officer, so how do we get to carbon neutral zero waste? You've got this aggressive target. Do you have to benchmark first? Do you. You go all in on the big ticket items. I don't know, like someone listening right now. If they're in charge of laying out a sustainability plan and they have a portfolio of, say, buildings, maybe on a campus, where would you suggest they focus first?

#### **24:58**

Mick

I guess the first thing I would say is you have to. It's easy to get distracted and it's easy to go with good stories that maybe aren't actually meeting the moving needle. But in the end, actually both are important. So you've got

this really heavy lifting of invisible stuff like utilities, infrastructure. Nobody's interested. They want to hear about that. And it costs a lot of money, so people don't want to face it. And then you've got other stuff like trees that are really important and really fantastic, but also make a great story. But planting trees is not going to get you to neutrality. Right. So. So how do you balance both where you've got things that excite and energize people and then you also are moving things along kind of like in the quiet almost on the really heavy lifting stuff.

### **25:52**

Mick

So you do have to pick your priorities. And because you can't do everything, you need to think about both of those. You can't just do one or the other. You have to work on both. And so that's kind of where the engagement side comes in as well. So that's really what we've done is we tried to make all of our 27 goals very concrete, smart goals, so that there would be a metric and we can measure the project. There'd be a baseline and I'll tell you, it took. We're still working on it three years later. There's not always easily accessible data sources to support benchmarking or baseline on each of these goals. So there's a lot of work that goes into that. How do we find the data to know where we're actually at?

### **26:33**

Mick

But you can't let the data or lack of data paralyze you either. You have to be doing things as well. So. So it's kind of like a business school, they treat you, teach you the 80% rule, get 80% of the information, because if you wait till you've got 100%, you will have missed the window of opportunity. So, it's a lot of that. It's like, okay, which are goals, our priority goals? Who are the different stakeholders that can work on different goals? We're not overloading any one specific group of stakeholders. And how do we move heaviest, lifting ones forward while also keeping people energized with the ones that really relate to sage advice there.

**27:12**

Charlie

I think sometimes we want to go to where the energy is, that story, and it's tough to focus. And actually, I think what I heard from you is those smart goals make sure it's actually measurable, right? So you can actually see you're making the right progress here. Let's talk about the future. I love asking a green building expert like you what's kind of exciting coming at us down the road. What are you reading up on or what do you think is next in this green building movement?

**27:37**

Mick

I'm really excited by all the progress and all the different innovations that are happening out there in the concrete world because that's such a major source of our mission. That there's four or five, 10 different new technologies that are kind of coming out there to how serious?

Decarbonizing concrete, that's very exciting to me. But another thing that I haven't really seen a lot of work on yet, but really, this is kind of tying my IT background with my green building background is I really think there's huge potential to use AI to tie together biomimicry with structural engineering and learn how to build structures that are dematerialized and decarbonized. Looking at how nature has solved these problems, right? So if you look at a bird skeleton or something, it's super lightweight, it's flexible, but it's strong.

**28:30**

Mick

How do we use that knowledge that 3.8 billion years of R and D experience that nature has to figure out how to do the same thing with our structures? And I think that would. So then you combine that with decarbonized concrete and then suddenly you made this huge dent in the embodied carbon of our built environment. So I'm really interested in exploring that.

I've been talking to various faculty members that have different pieces of this knowledge and how we can build a team to look at.

**29:00**

Charlie

Well, that was an excellent 60 second elevator pitch. If a VC was listening, I bet they'd give you money to pull that off. That just makes sense, right?

There's something there. I love that man. In concrete. You're right. I mean, it's just I've interviewed some of the largest concrete manufacturers too, and they're doing these projects, but usually in different countries. We need that here. We need it on all these big projects that we have.

**29:24**

Charlie

The second largest part of our GDP is construction, behind healthcare.

Let's go for it. Okay, so let's kind of go through a rapid fire section, get to know you a little bit more here. Mick, this has been great. What would you say is your specialty or gift thing?

**29:39**

Mick

I would say it's interdisciplinary and systems thinking. I've had a much of a career, but that's actually helped me in this regard is that the ability to understand the perspective of different stakeholders and bring them together to work out a common goal.

**29:55**

Charlie

So that's the materiality index or different stakeholders of all levels of systems thinking. Help us with that. You know, you hear someone like Elon Musk, first principles, I mean, are you breaking things all the way down to



that or just what do you mean by systems thinking? Give us a. Peel that back a little bit for us.

### **30:13**

Mick

Well, a lot of modern science is about reductionism. How do we break something down? And this is what engineering teaches you. How do you break it down into individual steps or pieces and work on those pieces? The opposite is systems thinking. How do, how does everything affect each other? So complex adaptive systems is actually a really great field relative to this. And so I kind of like Buck Mr. Fuller's quote. If you can't seem to find the solution, draw a bigger box around the problem. And then if you look at the whole system, it's possible that a piece of the system is just outside of your vision of what you're looking at. And so if you kind of conceptualize the problem a bit broader, you might find that solution because now it's within your box.

### **31:00**

Charlie

Love that. That's a good point. And I know in our lead classes we even teach whole building design. You might want to switch from fluorescence to lead, but next thing you know, that's going to affect the sizing of your H Vac system because this used to put off heat and now it doesn't. And so you're right. Just this systems thinking, the whole building design. Do you have any good habits or routines, rituals that keep you on point?

### **31:21**

Mick

I started listening to podcasts and stuff and I started working out and then I listened to podcasts while I worked out and I. That helped clarify things. Five in the morning, kind of think through the day, but I'm not really great at the work life balance thing. And some. That's something I want to work on more. But I think one of the things is it's taken probably 10 years, but I kind

of started rewiring my brain from focusing on the problem to focusing on solutions that it's fine to analyze and be critical of a problem, but what you really need to do is change your mindset of how can I actually turn that into a solution?

**32:06**

Mick

And so that is something that I actually believe in the plasticity of the brain, that you actually are able to rewire your neurons over time. And something that takes a lot of practice. It has a huge benefit.

**32:20**

Charlie

I love that. All right, so you're in the 5am Club. I love it. So next, I like to ask about a bucket list. As we get to know each other more, you'll learn. I'm actually a fan of a bucket list. Not everybody has one, but is there any adventure or travel or read a book? I don't know. What are a couple things maybe on the bucket list?

**32:38**

Mick

Well, you just named them. That's great. So one of them is to finish and get this one screenplay made that when I first came out to la, that I intended to finish, but it was actually supported by a social justice foundation. They thought it was. So I want that to be my second movie. I've got another 15 screenplays and I realized you have to pare it down and focus one to get that screenplay done. To have some kind of a gallery exhibition of photography at some point. I always get a lot of complimentary photography, so I'd like to do that. And then I'm big into travel, so I've got so many places still that I've traveled a lot, but there's. There's so many more. I've only been to Asia once, to Thailand. Go back to Asia, to some other. Some other countries as well and explore some more of Asia.

**33:28**

Charlie

It's an incredible bucket list. I approve. I was fortunate to take my family to Japan in the last six months. If you ever want to go there, I've scouted it out for you. It's a beautiful place.

**33:38**

Mick

That's great. I would definitely love to do that. My wife and I were just talking about that last week that Japan's on our list, our niece just came back from there and she confirmed you gotta go.

**33:49**

Charlie

We hit four cities. I'll give you tips on what we did. Let's talk about a book you might recommend. Doesn't have to be about buildings or podcasts. Is there a pro tip, something you could share with our listeners here?

**34:02**

Mick

While I'm working out I listen to a variety of things, but one thing I always liked is I kind of followed bioneers for 20 plus years and when I found that they actually had podcasts, I started listening to them while working out. And I always get inspired by the topics that Bioneers talk about. So that I would recommend. And then there is a book that I've had since I bought it in the bookstore of Thunderbird during graduate school. It wasn't from my class, it was from a class I wasn't taking. But I've never gotten through it is the world's religion. If you really want to understand stakeholders, the majority of the world still kind of has a religious backbone to it. I think it's really important to understand different perspectives. I really think by going back this has little bits and pieces of the key texts of the major world religions. And so going back and reading those to kind of understand where

people are coming from globally I think is a really beneficial thing. So my goal is to get through that book.

**35:07**

Charlie

We'll put a link to the podcast. That book and I had a special moment with a LEED Fellow a few months ago. I was in Istanbul, Turkey at a building conference, a beautiful city by the way. And Jamil Elite fellow opened up his green building he had built 10 years ago, whereas this 20 person firm. And I was on some zoom calls for work and he came up and he prayed five times a day. And next thing you know, at the end of the day we had some tea, we talked about prayer and Christian and we just had a beautiful connection. He told me when he prays five times a day, he knows he's about to talk to God in a few hours. So he's not going to do any wrong because he knows he's about to have to talk to God again.

**35:46**

Charlie

And then he told me about the Quran and I told him about the Bible and we just agreed that both kinds talk about just hope and love. And I think you're right. It's good to see where there is a lot of commonality. We've made differences. So I'm going to check out that book. It sounds like it's a tough one to get through, but there's the perspective you need. You get it from traveling, but maybe even for those that haven't traveled as much as you and I. Let's get that book.

**36:09**

Traveling always grounds you as to understanding advantages and the benefits and the detractions of your own society that you come from. You know, you're the place that you come from. So it just always creates a great appreciation. And then as well, I think basically all major religions have some version of the Golden Rule. So if you think about that's the commonality we have.

**36:33**

Charlie

I need that. Just a couple more things as we start to wind down. As you look back on this, but of a career, your words. I love what you've told me about your career or your multiple careers. Is there anything, though, you wish you'd have known earlier? Any career advice you wish you'd have known earlier?

**36:49**

Mick

I've had a lot of really great advice throughout my life. And I think if I just learned earlier, you can't make lemonade without lemons. And I think that helps change your perspective a little bit. And then also the kind of a corollary just creates. Sorry. Crisis represents opportunity. So if you just. It changes your mindset when you see something that seems potentially bad or even relevant today, potential chaos and things like that, it's like, okay, well, sure it could be really bad, but that's also the ingredients that you need to make something really cool. So I actually see what we're going through now as the crumbling of a system, a global system that didn't work.

**37:43**

Mick

And so the key is, how do we make the new green economy and the green society emerge fast enough to replace the crumbling of the system that doesn't work. So I think if we keep focused on that, how do we build the solutions and bring them to reality fast enough? That's what our key is.

**38:02**

Charlie

And what I heard there is, it's not even broken pieces. It's. We have the ingredients, right? Pick up the ingredients and let's put that new recipe back together. It's not. It's not just pieces, man. That's good stuff. Okay, last

question. Let's say someone's listening to your interview here and they're getting inspired by your story and they're just now jumping into the green building movement. It's been good to you, it's been good to me. Any words of encouragement as we come to a close? For someone that's just now jumping in.

**38:30**

Mick

I think there's so many interesting, cool developments out there and we are in this massive period of transition that there's just a lot of opportunities and it's find what you're passionate about, find what keeps you excited even when you're exhausted and tired and latch on to that. But also don't focus on it so much that you neglect the system around you. Right. Be aware of the context of everything that you're working within. Find that thing that energizes you and the solutions that are out there. There's just so many. Just pick the one or a couple of them that you want to focus on and use that. And then realize too that we aren't in the old era of you go work for a company for 40 years, you get the golden Watch and you retire. That doesn't exist. Long gone.

**39:21**

Mick

That was gone when I was in college. And so you don't have, don't worry that whatever you're doing now you're going to have to do for the rest of your life. There's so many industries that haven't even been created yet. So just pick something and go for it and make sure that it's something that excites you.

**39:40**

Charlie

Oh, man, well said. Life's about seasons. The Greeks have something called kairos, seasons of opportunity, instead of just Kronos chronology. And that's what I heard from you. You've had a few different amazing

seasons in your career and so jump in to those listening. Let's get going. In this green building movement, we've got all the right ingredients. Make sure you connect with Mick on LinkedIn. Check out the amazing work that he's doing there at usc. And Mick, thanks for being on the podcast today. This was a lot of fun.

**40:06**

Mick

Yeah, thank you. And I learned a lot from you just doing this. Thanks. Thank you very much, Charlie.

**40:10**

Charlie

Thank you, sir. 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.

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