

Ben Tacka, Sustainability Program Leader at Trane Technologies

(00:01):

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. Settle in, grab a fresh cup of coffee and get ready to find out why Green Building Matters.

Charlie (00:34):

Everybody. Welcome to the next episode of the Green Building Matters Podcast. I'm your host, Charlie Cichetti. One of the fun things about my job working on some cool LEED and WELL projects and ESG projects, teaching. I also get to interview green building professionals and hear their story. Today we've got Ben Tacka with us. He's with Trane Technologies outside of Charlotte, North Carolina. Ben is the sustainability programs leader at Trane Technology. Ben, thanks for joining us. How are you doing today?

Ben (01:01):

Thanks Charlie. I'm doing well. Appreciate you having me here.

Charlie (01:04):

We're excited to hear more about how you got to what you're doing and what you're up to today. Let's go back. Where'd you grow up and go to school?

Ben (01:11):

I was born and raised in the Dallas Fort Worth Metroplex, North Texas. Arlington, Texas is where I'm from. Growing up there actually ended up going to engineering school at Boston University. I graduated with a degree in manufacturing engineering, but then went right into sales and marketing actually after that. I lived in and worked in the New Orleans, North Shore area for awhile. Moved to Houston and I was in Houston working for about five years and decided to really get heavily involved in the sustainability movement. Seeing that business had a big opportunity to make some

significant changes, called the sustainable innovation MBA. I was a member of the first cohort up there. Moved from Houston to Burlington, Vermont, and finished that. Did some project consulting work with PepsiCo on some projects they had in Central and Latin America. I was working with another sales and marketing firm for a little bit on a company's full funnel marketing and sales attribution. Ended up finding this great role that I have now with Trane Technologies, about three years ago and moved down to the Charlotte, North Carolina area in September of 2018.

Charlie ([02:25](#)):

Thanks for showing us that. Walk us through what influences you had to go engineering, building sales, sales, and marketing, and then even Texas, totally different even terrain and environmental stuff than Vermont. What pushed you towards sales and marketing? Let me ask that question first at that point in your career.

Ben ([02:46](#)):

I think one of the reasons I went into engineering undergrad was math and science just kind of clicked a little bit easier for me than some of the other subjects. I didn't really go to college thinking I would be an engineer but seemed to be the right fit for me. I did actually get an opportunity to live in Eastern Germany for about a semester in the summer for about nine months. I was in Dresden Germany on an exchange program. My first opportunity to step foot inside of a large manufacturing facility and kind of see what that's like almost like a living, breathing entity in how these factories all work. I really enjoyed the idea of systems thinking and lean engineering, 6 Sigma, those big principles, really where the major focus for my undergrad training. I got an opportunity to run a franchise office with a wonderful American cutlery manufacturing company called Cutco.

Ben ([03:44](#)):

It's funny, a lot of college students work over the summer. I actually ended up being a manager and I ran a territory, like I said, in New Orleans and then in Houston I got a larger opportunity in a larger territory there. I got into that because I always had a little bit of an entrepreneurial spirit within me from stuff that I did growing up in the neighborhood. It was nice to have an opportunity right out of college at 21 to essentially run a territory and kind of be my own boss. I got that experience and really enjoyed it. I was a manager, set up two and a half years in New Orleans and then five years in Houston. And that's really what got me in. Sales and marketing was kind of

the effort of the office. I also really enjoy recruiting and managing people, helping them learn a new skill set, develop something and really succeed at something that many of them didn't expect to be successful at when they first stepped foot in my office.

Charlie ([04:38](#)):

I love entrepreneurship, but also something about intrapreneurship. How can you be entrepreneurial within a company and get resources, try a new revenue stream. A big fan of that. We talk about that a lot here on this podcast. I think naturally the green building movement, the health building movement, you gotta be entrepreneurial. There's some really cool companies that are helping this cause. Sustainability, did you have an aha moment? When in this career journey did you say, "Okay, I'm going to do a lot more sustainability."

Ben ([05:08](#)):

Great question. It wasn't a one specific aha moment, but near the end of my time with what I was doing in Houston, I loved the aspect of that business and being kind of a small business owner and really that freedom of flexibility. I also wanted to expand my capabilities outside of people's kitchens. Obviously, Cutlery is a great thing and the product is incredible. It's American made and I do appreciate that, but I wanted to really be a part of something that would be transformational in terms of how we live our everyday lives and the global underpinnings of the global economy. I know that sounds kind of grand in scale obviously, but I started to watch a lot more sustainability talks from C-suite executives that were kind of rolling out. This was 2000 ish. That was when I really started this journey. I started buying as many sustainability and conscious capitalism books as I could and absorbing those and how the algorithms on our social media work. I think literally Facebook showed me an ad to the University of Vermont's Sustainable Innovation MBA program.

Ben ([06:14](#)):

And that got me thinking, "Well I don't know necessarily if I need an MBA to be successful in this particular field", I've got a lot of acumen for running a business. I didn't have millions and millions of dollars in sales worth of Cutlery products over that decade of time. I knew that I would want to network with other sustainably minded business people. I started researching a lot of the green MBA programs that were available. After spending some months doing that, the new program that UVM was kicking

off made the most sense to me because one, it was a new program. I liked the idea of being a member of a first class and having almost a say in the development of the curriculum, but also I love the fact that Vermont really walks the talk when it comes to sustainability.

Ben ([07:00](#)):

If I was going to be in an environment where that's the kind of core aspect of the curriculum and the focus with an MBA toolkit around it, I wanted to also be in that kind of greater environment of the policy pieces that go along with that kind of [inaudible]. Different Lifestyle Choices That People Can Make That They Can Reduce Their Footprint And Be More Sustainable. The Main Point of the program was that this isn't a business and doesn't need to shift just because it's good for the planet. This can also be extremely good for business and can, and can be ways that companies differentiate themselves and grow themselves and triple bottom line thinking, right people, planet and profit, how can you positively impact all of those three things through your mission, your mission and your business.

Ben ([07:46](#)):

And that really was what just kind of clicked in my head. I was like, "All right, I'm going to sell everything that doesn't fit in my car and take this risk and go up to the rocks."

Charlie ([07:55](#)):

The rest is history. Thanks for showing us how you took that leap of faith, and now you've built a career set around sustainability and energy efficiency. Can't wait to learn more about that and those decisions. Did you have anyone that you looked up to, maybe they opened a door for you or anyone you might call a mentor?

Ben ([08:14](#)):

Yeah, absolutely. The gentleman who was one of the main founders of the program in Vermont, pretty famous for his work earlier last decade and CK Prahalad has since passed unfortunately, but he really championed this idea of the fortunate basis of the pyramid.

Ben ([08:31](#)):

How do we engage and develop co-create value propositions and provide more economic opportunity for those that are at the lowest economic rungs global. He really founded the program. His spirit really is what I would say

is really imbued in the program up there in Vermont. It's since become the number one rated Green MBA by all the different US focused rating systems, which is really great. He absolutely was a mentor. He's also funny enough. He's a member of a mortgage, and several sustainability advisory councils that we actually had. Technologies is a 10 person external counsel that basically meets with our executive leadership team every quarter to challenge their thinking and help to move their sustainability initiatives and the actions that we'll take.

Charlie ([09:22](#)):

It's important to give those mentors a shout out. Tell us about Trane Technologies, tell us about what your group does and more about your day to day, any projects you're working on.

Ben ([09:36](#)):

First of all, Trane Technologies, It's this new name in the industry, but it's an old company. We were previously known as Ingersoll Rand. Officially in March of last year right before a lot of lockdown started occurring, bwe finalized with total Reverse Morris Trust. Essentially the company sold off the Ingersoll Rand properties are what we call our industrial businesses. The Ingersoll Rand brand is the power tools, the air compressor pumps, and also our club car property. Our brand there, we sold it off to another company called Gardner Denver and Ingersoll Rand having kind of really strong brand presence and being a name that was known for a long time. They became Ingersoll Rand. Ingersoll Rand is still exists. It's a small business now than it was previously when we were combined and moving forward.

Ben ([10:24](#)):

Officially just as of March, 2020 Trane Technologies is the parent company or the enterprise entity for Trane commercial, Trane residential and our mobile refrigeration company, which is Thermo king. We have a form now really a pure play around indoor air quality, indoor environmental quality, and climate conditioning specialists for commercial, industrial, residential, and mobile transportation. We've really been able to focus on this mission of essentially providing those things, high indoor air quality and environmental quality and the comfort or the industrial application that customers are expecting, but also providing in a way that is significantly less energy intensive than these previous decades. Focusing on effectively providing these products and services in a way where we meet the

expectations of customers, but are also dramatically reducing the carbon footprint associated with heating, cooling buildings and transporting perishables around the world.

Charlie ([11:25](#)):

Okay. I didn't know all that history, thanks. The pandemic hits and some things go a little less noticed and it's a big deal. It's an important thing for our industry. The built environment, you guys cover it, all residential, commercial, industrial, and a lot more. What keeps you busy day-to-day in this role?

Ben ([11:25](#)):

I'm part of what we call the center for energy efficiency and sustainability. If I slip and you hear me say CEES, in a little bit. That's what I'm referring to as our acronym CEES. You made a great point, Charlie, about kind of being entrepreneurial, but also finding ways to be intrapreneurial within an organization and that's really what I would say describes the team that I'm a part of. We're kind of a small team.

Ben ([12:09](#)):

There's only six of us in total but we work within the organization almost as an internal consultant. We are available for any one of our business units in any region. If they are feeling that they need help strengthening their sustainability initiatives or coming up with better, stronger plans for how to reduce energy in their emissions use, or what kind of products and services they should be thinking about developing here over this decade. They'll call us in and we can help kind of with connecting them to the best external information, making sure that that's vetted and is going to provide them with what they need to make better and stronger decisions. We also sometimes will be asked to go into other certain business units or different functional teams within the organization to help again, strengthen those sustainability initiatives.

Ben ([12:57](#)):

We span everything. Sales and marketing is really where my focus is. I spend a lot of time on developing employee education, enablement material, and making sure that our sales and marketing teams understand these kinds of newer terms that are really coming up in the industry. Like decarbonisation obviously is a big, big thing that's on everyone's mind right now. Part of my role is to help them understand what that means and how

we can go about having those kinds of conversations with customers. We have individuals on our team, we have a global policy expert for refrigerants, N Lockwood. She is involved in pretty much any decision or company makes in terms of the refrigerants that we buy and use in our systems. We have an energy efficiency policy expert as well. Jen Kane, who she's dealing with a lot like the DOE for example, in the US and FERC and other organizations that help with energy efficiency policy.

Ben ([13:46](#)):

We're also strengthening our own kind of government affairs, associations and dealings with different policymakers to make sure that we're influencing them as best as possible. What's going to be most helpful in achieving these long term goals of net zero carbon emissions. We have some great data analysis Jessica McInerney. Jess really helps us understand all of our internal data. We collect data from of course every operational location or entire company in our entire company. We get all of our suppliers to submit data so that we have a really good understanding of our supply chain and the energy and water and waste associated with that. She also helps make sure that we are on point for our Gates challenge. I'm sure we'll talk about this in a little bit, but making sure that we are tracking it accurately and that the numbers we're displaying in terms of the emissions reductions we're creating with customers are accurate and defensible. Emily Veselin came to us from our supply chain organization.

Ben ([14:41](#)):

She's been really helpful also making sure that all that data is accurate because you will know no garbage in his garbage apps. We've got to make sure that we have the best and cleanest data coming in so that we can make the right decisions and have the best information for our decision makers. We're all led by Scott, our vice president, and the executive director for the center. He really reports directly to our CTO, all communities and makes sure that everything that our team is working on is in alignment with the mission and vision of the company. Again, like I said, is to really continue delivering or exceeding the expectations of our customers, but making sure that we are also providing ways to dramatically reduce energy consumption. The related emissions that go along with that.

Charlie ([15:29](#)):

Great team. You have your own company kind of footprint and supply chain, but you guys obviously in the business, you're in with refrigerants

and energy efficiency and what's your role within the organization. It's pretty big, it's pretty heavy. Well, if you look back one more time, what are some proud accomplishments of yours? If you look back so far in your career. What are a couple wins you really wanted to kind of acknowledge?

Ben ([15:45](#)):

Oh man. I feel like a lot of things that I did previous to this role really helped prepare me for this role. Might be a little cliché, right. Being an engineer by training and kind of initially out the gate, really helped me understand how to think in terms of systems. Taking in manufacturing engineering, when you're looking at a factory floor and how everything has to work really together like clockwork, one mistake in one location is going to cost backups everywhere else. Systems thinking, coupled with really two things I learned from Cutco. One, top quality products that you really believe in and that you make sure are not designed with planned obsolescence can truly last people an extremely long length of time, if not their whole lifetime, those things can win out. Even when compared against much lower price products, for example, you can still win on quality. The thing Cutco really taught me also was how to engage properly with people, meet them, where they are. I'd say one of the best things I learned from that, which definitely influences my career now is you have two ears and one mouth for a reason, you should listen twice as much as you speak. It really helped me in terms of getting to know and becoming a partner with a lot of internal people in our different business units, someone that they know they can come to and ask questions that are going to be honest and straightforward, but I'm also going to listen and make sure I understand what their issue is before I just start blabbing my mouth on about whatever big sustainability things got me excited that day.

Ben ([17:26](#)):

Of course the MBA program I went to really helped me understand how to take action in a way in which it is profitable and the competitive advantage. Those things really were wins by all means. I'd say the part of the team that I'm a part of now. I'd say one of the biggest wins we have is we really help the business itself. Not only achieve all these great external accolades from the CDP or from the Dow Jones sustainability index, ranking us on all these things. We've really been able to help take this idea of what it means to be sustainable. What does it mean to provide sustainability solutions and we've activated I would say almost all of our employees in our employee engagement scores that come back each year, sustainability is always either

the number one or number two aspect of what employees really enjoy about what they're doing with us.

Ben ([18:20](#)):

We typically get 90% better or 90% or higher response rates. We've got a company with about 40,000 employees. We know that at least 35 to 37,000. I'm really excited about the mission we have of reducing carbon emissions related to the heating and cooling of buildings, homes, and mobile transport.

Charlie ([18:41](#)):

I think you realize the impact you're making there before you look at the crystal ball, I'd like to make sure we give career advice. We're learning about your journey here, Ben. How did you kind of get tapped for this kind of, if I can SWAT team of sustainability in ESG. Were you known as the green guy or the green girl in the company? Did you volunteer, was there an opening or did you just get picked? In a large company, how do you really stand out is to get a little more of that kind of work, this sustainability work? How'd it go for you?

Ben ([19:08](#)):

Another great question. This was one of those situations where it's a little serendipitous. The place that was working while I was living in Vermont was an excellent company. I really enjoyed what we were doing there. At that point it was kind of on the cusp of a small, medium business and we're helping them grow and they've done extremely well since then. I was actually meeting with a new young hire that we had that was kind of wanting to talk about his career path and ended up seeing the mentors. You mentioned Sue Hart, kind of sitting at the bar of this restaurant that we were in.

Ben ([19:47](#)):

I finished my conversation by tapping him on the shoulder. I hadn't seen him in a little while and just asked if I could join him for a drink. He had just flown back to Burlington from Charlotte, where he had been in a two day meeting with our executive leadership team as part of that council. Again, this was at the time the company was called Ingersoll-Rand. He was talking about that and I just went home and I was like, "Let me see what they have available. It sounds like they're making some really exciting choices and taking some responsibility, but also understanding that they

have a big opportunity to grow here with these kinds of products and services. Again, it was one of those things where it was one of the top things on a page.

Ben ([20:26](#)):

The algorithm probably knew from LinkedIn that I wanted to see. I read through the role, which is the role I have now. It just seemed to line up. Scott, my boss, was looking for someone who could speak the language of sustainability and climate change and understood what sales and marketing people needed to know about it and how to really integrate it into their, into their lexicon and just how they approach customers with it. With my kind of background in sales and marketing, but also having the engineering background and having gone to this program and worked for a little while. Pepsico on some of their sustainability projects, I had that right combination. It was one of those odd moments where I saw the opening. I was like, this can't be real.

Ben ([21:08](#)):

This is like, this is mine. This is me. I spent a couple of days putting my resume together. I got auto-rejected actually from the HR software. It's just one of those things where within 24 hours, I got that like, "Hey, thanks for applying. Try again later." This was one of those opportunities where I was like, I'm not going to let that stop me. I reached out. I was able to kind of figure out who in the organization would be the right person to speak to and reach out through LinkedIn. Reached out through what I thought were possible email address combinations. I talked to Sue Hart, "Hey, is there anybody there you can get me on the phone with?" After a lot of attempting to leverage my network anyway that I can, I was able to get on a phone call with Scott, who's now my boss.

Ben ([21:52](#)):

From there he's like, "I think I'll have you in the next round of interviews." That was May of 2018. I remember that was the Friday right before Memorial Day weekend. That May, and it was a long process, many interviews, but eventually I was offered the role in September. It was about four months, at least of some back and forth until I actually had a face-to-face interview where they flew me down from Vermont in late August early September. There was a lot of clawing, a lot of like who in the network on LinkedIn? Can I just get a recommendation from and get a 15 minute phone call?

Charlie ([22:36](#)):

Truly smart. It took initiative. Anyone listening is you just put in the effort and think outside the box. Thank you. That's a great answer. Let's look at the crystal ball. One of the questions I love to ask my guests on the Green Building Matters Podcast. I've been doing it for over three years now and I take notes on what you are reading up on? What's you and your team think of what's coming down the pike or what's around the corner in this green building and helping the building movement? What trends do you see? What kind of themes are you kind of tracking that's coming down the road a little bit? Around the corner, but if there are a couple of resources, that would be nice.

Ben ([23:16](#)):

The first one that popped in my mind when you're asked that question is needed for new IEA reports. The International Energy Agency put out a report on May 15th, 16th of this year. We're talking just two and a half months ago at most. They put out a report specifically on the goal and scenarios that are associated with achieving a net zero carbon economy by 2050. All the things that would have to take now, of course, it's a several hundred page report and it covers all industries, but I focus primarily just on what they're talking about in terms of buildings and what was needed and by what timelines and dates they were needed by. That's a great resource. I would suggest for anybody in the green building movement to take a look through I personally, I love the economists just as a kind of an overview of global trends and global business and economists to be looking at their most recent magazine.

Ben ([24:13](#)):

They put it out last week. The cover of it, I'm here at my desk, it's, "What's it like to be in a three degrees Celsius, higher temperature earth?" I'll tell you that the briefing they did on it was very well-written. As fantastic graphs and data associated with it. It can be a little scary. It's three degrees Celsius scenario is not three degrees Celsius, everywhere, places that will experience significantly higher increases in average temperatures than that. There's a lot of potentially risky situations that arise from that. I like to keep my finger on that discussion overall. I think this idea of a net zero carbon emissions economy can feel very ethereal and hard to grasp, but there are so many technologies and things that exist today that just need to be scaled.

Ben ([25:06](#)):

Another great resource I would absolutely suggest to any of your listeners is a project drawdown. You go to drawdown.org and they are a just phenomenal wealth of information. They have a huge team of scientists, engineers, data analysts, and accounting executives. They've pulled together basically the top 100 solutions that are things that exist right today, right now that we don't have to wait to come up with in the future that simply just need to be scaled globally. We'll get to a point and that's the purpose of their names. We'll get to a point where we actually start drawing down the concentration of greenhouse gases in our atmosphere to get back to more of what's a typical normal kind of climate level pre-industrial age. Those are the three that really pop up right away for me.

Ben ([25:52](#)):

I get tons of emails from Greenbuilder magazine. I keep up on GreenBiz and all those kinds of different sources that provide some great information. It's a lot like puzzle pieces. I try to get little bits of information or data from everywhere. We also deal with solutions for food loss as a culture. World resources Institute and the food accounting organization, which is part of the UN I look at fao.org.

Charlie ([26:23](#)):

Thank you for giving the resources, actually, I don't do that enough. We'll put some links in the podcast, and show notes to everything Ben's kind of talking about, but I totally agree with everything you just said there, and I appreciate you letting us know what you're reading up on.

Charlie ([26:36](#)):

You're right. If you hear from more than one source. Let's talk about you a little bit more, a few rapid fire questions. What would you say you're really good at? What's your specialty or gift?

Ben ([26:47](#)):

Man, it's always tough to toot your own horn, I guess, but like I found one thing I can do very well and it's something I enjoy doing is, taking what can be a very complex, difficult conversation, something around climate change. What's driving it? What's happening? And helping to break that into digestible pieces that are easy for anybody without any prior real knowledge to kind of understand. I think that's probably one of my strengths, which is why even as an engineer, I tend to fade a little bit more with our sales and marketing people, because the reason I'm in this role is

to help them do those same things. We don't need to talk about every single issue or challenge or problem, or every solution for Trane Commercial.

Ben ([27:36](#)):

For that business, it's about electrifying heating. It's about helping whole buildings or whole building systems manage their energy more effectively, making sure they don't over consume or spike their demand too much. Really it's about handling the refrigerants and making sure they're transitioning to lower global warming central refrigerants. It's what there's a ton of things that can happen. If we do those three things for buildings and homes around the world that will enable a lot of the other stuff that has to happen on the supply side of the energy production industry. For example, the things we do on the demand side will enable the supply side of the transition faster.

Charlie ([28:12](#)):

Yeah. I think that is a gift of yours to keep it simple, but relatable too. Do you have any good habits, routines, and rituals you could share?

Ben ([28:22](#)):

I do dedicate some time in my working day, typically at the beginning of the day, to catch up on some of those sources that I mentioned, making sure that I am getting the best information. I try to stay away from any particular news organization, no matter where you can say it's coming from, I look for the underlying reports, the data sets, the things that they might be referencing and they're building their news report on. I don't read the headline or the article. I look for the link to the report. Whether it's a governing bodies report or it's an independent NGO or a scientific report. I want to go to the source and see what from there I can grab. It's usually 30, 45 minutes each day. I would say a habit I avoid is social media during my working day. That's kind of one of those things it takes a while to pull that away but that's probably helped quite a bit in productivity and being able to get things done. The final one, I'd say is I tend to answer emails only during two chunks of the day. Once it's in the beginning of the day, 30, 45 minutes there and once at the end that way in the middle of my day, I have my time to focus on calls or on the meetings I'm involved in or do the work on the longer term projects that I have going on. I don't let a new thing hit my inbox in the middle of the day, distract me from a call or from what it is that I'm needing to do to accomplish.

Charlie ([29:53](#)):

It can wait a little bit. That's really great time-blocking for your email check and thanks for sharing some of the other good habits. As we get to know each other better, Ben, I'm a fan of a bucket list. I'm curious, is there any adventure, travel? Do you want to write a book? What are one or two things?

Ben ([30:23](#)):

Well, I absolutely love traveling and hopefully we're able to be able to really travel and engage here in the near future. I'm very fortunate to have been involved in programs that I learned in my life. I was able to travel a lot in Europe. I was able to travel quite a bit while I was working in consensual and South America. I haven't really visited Asia. So that's absolutely on my bucket list is to hit as many countries as I can on that continent. I'd love to also visit Subsaharan Africa in particular and the middle east. Those are just regions that I've never stepped foot in. I really want to make sure that in my lifetime, my big bucket list goal is to visit a hundred countries. I'm at about 30 right now. I've still got a ways to go and not just a tourist visiting. I love, for example, I love trying street street food. Any country I want to go where the locals go to eat when launching or work breaks or their late night snack spots. I love to do and find someone who knows that area as luminary for a long time and trust them and have them show me off the beaten path kind of places, but travel is big. I intend on continuing in this career path and making sure I get to a place where I can make even bigger impacts than I am now.

Charlie ([31:38](#)):

No, I love that. Getting immersed while you're traveling. Let's talk about books. Is there a book recommended? Some of my podcasts, yes. These green building experts around the world sometimes stick with nonfiction, but sometimes they're like, man, I need a break from nonfiction. I gotta go do something else. I gotta go to fiction. A book or two, I can tell you're looking at your library there. We read maybe some we have not read yet, but is there a book or two you just recommend for the audience?

Charlie ([32:16](#)):

Yeah, I would say Stuart Hart, he's written two books, I'd say anything that he's written, would that still be worth picking up? Particularly in my mind, I remember capitalism, the crossroads, it's one of his top books that I really enjoyed. I have another non-fiction book that has nothing to do with

sustainability, but to me, it's really exciting to kind of understand the American language, which is a book called American Nations by Colin Woodard. I'd never recommend that book enough.

Ben ([32:42](#)):

Everybody who does read it and loves it. For fiction, I grew up loving Star Wars and any kind of Sci-fi exploration type stuff. The Dune movie came out and I saw that trailer, "Oh my God, dune, take that up and put it down and read that book as well as a great.

Charlie ([33:08](#)):

Those are great books. I'll try to put a link in the podcast, show notes and also draw down. As we come too close to two final questions. One, is there any career advice you wish you had not a little earlier in your career?

Ben ([33:22](#)):

Do the things that scare you, but that won't cause you harm. If you're nervous about speaking in public at a young age, get opportunities to speak in public. Worst thing that can happen to you is maybe you get booed off stage. I don't know that that might as long as nothing could physically harm you or hurt you, it's something you're nervous about. Do it. I was in spite of the best things you can do just for personal professional development. One habit I didn't share because it's one of those things where most of the time I do it, sometimes I forget to do it. 10 pages a day is a really easy way to finish 10 to 12 books a year. If you just read 10 pages a day, that 300 that's 3,600 pages, right. Even with five days off. One thing and I'm usually pretty good at that.

Ben ([34:07](#)):

If I miss a day, I'll try to read 20 the next but that helps a lot by expanding your kind of memory and your capabilities of bringing some of that information. You probably didn't even realize you absorb into your conversations in your work. It's a great, simple habit to try to build.

Charlie ([34:25](#)):

In closing, there's someone listening to this podcast getting inspired by your story and your journey. Especially that extra initiative you took to get to where you are right now. Any words of encouragement, or if they're just now jumping into the green building?

Ben ([34:41](#)):

You couldn't be in a better time. That's for sure. The growth opportunity to people who can advise both new construction. How to build new buildings that are greener than anything we've built before that have a lower carbon footprint, or even a net zero carbon footprint, that's really going to become something that there's already builders who are focused on that. I think the wave of we're probably at the first 20% are adopting that, but we're at the beginning of that exponential growth phase where, where the other 60% are going to be adopting it here or over the next five to seven years. What's really important in understanding the green building movement is that there's several trillion square feet of commercial and residential space already existing on planet earth. We're going to need leaders and people who know and understand how to retrofit those spaces. Green building isn't just about building new. There's already starting a big effort on particularly thermal envelope improvements. We're not even talking about technologically advanced things that need to be done.

Ben ([35:49](#)):

We're talking about the basics. We need veterans at our window on the roof. We need to make buildings better thermal envelopes. Things like HVAC have to work not as hard and consume less energy in order to cool those spaces. There's a lot of blocking and tackling. You could have a fantastic quarterback, but if your offensive line can't block you're in trouble. In a building, we need people who understand the thermal envelope is really the first place to start and savings from, from just doing those lower costs. Things can start to fund the next level of retrofits, which may be building automation systems and then higher efficiency equipment. All those things can snowball and start paying for themselves a lot faster.

Charlie ([36:29](#)):

It's a good way to kind of wrap it up and everybody, I hope you heard Ben, the existing buildings, we've got to do it. There's so much to hit our carbon goals for 2030, more new construction, by 2050 there's quite a lot of work to do on the retrofit side too. Everybody connect with Ben, we'll put his LinkedIn profile there. I want to know what you thought of the podcast and his story.

Charlie ([36:50](#)):

All the listeners, thank you for listening. It's been Ben Tacka with Trane Technologies. Thanks everybody. I just want to say thank you to our loyal

listeners. We actually are celebrating over one year here on the Green Building Matters podcast. Me and the entire team we're stoked and are so glad to continue to listen every Wednesday morning to a new interview with a green building professional here in this industry, or just some pro tips that we want to make sure that you are getting straight from us straight to you. Thank you for listening to this episode of the Green Building Matters projects gbs.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 in next week's episode.