

## Beijing City's Charlie Zhu (LEED Fellow) and Sustainability Technology Transcript

Intro ([00:00](#)):

Welcome to Green Building Matters, the podcast that matters for green building professionals. Learn insight in green buildings as we interview today's experts in LEED and WELL we'll learn from their career paths, war stories and all things green because green building matters and now our host and yes he has every LEED and WELL credential. Here's Charlie Cichetti.

Charlie ([00:33](#)):

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Charlie C ([01:01](#)):

Hi everyone. Welcome to the next episode of the green building matters podcast today. I've got Charlie Zhu with us from Beijing City, China. Charlie, how are you doing today?

Charlie Zhu ([01:11](#)):

I'm fine, thank you.

Charlie C ([01:13](#)):

I'm doing great. We're trying to finish up virtual school here with my boys at the time of this recording and they're ready for the summer and I know we're all ready to get back to some semi normalcy. You've got a lot of credentials after your name and I can't wait to talk about some of those. Of course. LEED Fellow, congratulations. I want to unpack some of that as well as Reset. Plow. But if you would take us back, where'd you grow up and where'd you go to school?

Charlie Zhu ([01:40](#)):

I grew up in a small city in the central part of China. I went to college in Shanghai, the largest city in China. During my postgraduate study I learned and I used energy pass building performance stability simulation software to analyze micro, HP systems with our experiments or data back in 2005. After that I was trying to get a job in the market to own the green building consulting firms in China, hiring people from who have Asian Malaysian background. So I joined our company as our energy simulation engineer in 2007.

Charlie C ([02:27](#)):

No, that's fantastic. With the energy modeling and then I see your background, your degrees in thermal energy and refrigeration, even cryogenics you got a master's there. So tell us about that. Why energy first? It's very important there in the region to be very energy efficient. When was the first time you heard of LEED? Was it being brought up in school or not yet?

Charlie Zhu ([02:50](#)):

Not in my school, I low up. I knew that in 2008 when I started working for a theater project for our company and the lab project in Beijing and it was the highest building in Beijing city, Now there's another building that is higher than it.

Charlie C ([03:16](#)):

Oh, taller now. Okay. How tall was it for the listeners here on the podcast? Charlie? You know, I'm used to New York city buildings here in Atlanta where I'm based. We've got some 50 stories, 60-62 courses in New York city, they've got some that are pushing a 100 floors. How tall is that building you're talking about? Just for perspective.

Charlie Zhu ([03:36](#)):

That building is 330 meters high.

Charlie C ([03:41](#)):

Okay. Yeah, that's a very tall building. Okay, great. So while you were working on some big projects there early on, tell us a little more about sustainability though. When did you really realize you're going to be on this

path to do green building? When did you realize that was going to be a career for you?

Charlie Zhu ([03:59](#)):

It actually happened in 2008 when I started working for various \_\_\_\_ We had a project for my company and I pretty much enjoyed being a consultant and I think sustainability and the green building industry will prosper in the future. In 2008 I checked the record, the number of \_\_\_\_ projects in China doubled in that year. That's why we think that we will be in this industry. It's pretty new in 2006, 2008 they're only maybe three or four companies doing the Nita consulting business in China back then. So

Charlie C ([04:50](#)):

How many of them are today? Would you say? 14 years later, Charlie, still not a lot. Just a handful.

Charlie Zhu ([04:58](#)):

It's pretty common a lot. I think maybe they are 200 or 300.

Charlie C ([05:07](#)):

So LEED was booming from 2006 to 2008 and doubled the amount of projects in China. You already had the energy modeling background. So tell us about some of that early part of your career. Right. Anything else stand out there? Was there anything that maybe opened the door for you? Did you have any mentors or anyone that really helped you along the way?

Charlie Zhu ([05:26](#)):

Yes. Dr. \_\_\_\_ Who is my director backing in 2008. He hired me and guided me during the artists' stage of my career. Actually, he was the recommender for my LEED fellow application.

Charlie C ([05:43](#)):

Oh, that's great.

Charlie Zhu ([05:44](#)):

I learn a lot from him, but unfortunately he left our company in 2009. So, after that I have to learn from my boss, my colleagues, and the client and

people from the project team. After that, I actually sent a lot of emails to the US.

Charlie C ([06:06](#)):

I think we all need to realize that. So tell us about the USGBC China chapter. Are you pretty active there with helping grow LEED over the years? Tell us more about that.

Charlie Zhu ([06:18](#)):

Oh yeah, I think the USGBC care basically to promote LEED in the greater China region in 2000 maybe 2011. Right. We are very close to all of them. Actually the director of this local company, the chem trial office and apparel and have a discussion about local markets in 2020 after the COVID-19 pandemic is getting better in China.

Charlie C ([06:55](#)):

That's good. It's a lot. This is the one thing that's brought the whole world together on this one, but we're getting through it. I want to talk more about those healthy buildings in a minute, but Charlie, tell us more about your company you've been at now for, maybe 15 years. Tell us about Das Daring Energy Technology Co What kind of work do you do? It looks like new buildings, existing buildings, air quality. Tell us more about your company today.

Charlie Zhu ([07:22](#)):

Okay. I have worked for Das Daring Energy for more than 12 years. Actually my whole green building career is in this company. Our company started in 2005 and we started our website to green building and we wanted to balance the website and change into the industrial culture for the green building and the real-estate industry back in 2005 but we did not succeed in that part. Since the needle in 2008, we shifted our staff and the energy into the green building consultant. After that we have been working for more than 300 green building projects. And we finished 100 project in 2009,

Charlie C ([08:19](#)):

That's fantastic. That's a lot of projects. Wow. Tell us about some of those projects. So if you're working with a client, is it almost assumed that you're going to do LEED or just creating building best practices or, WELL or you

know, in some parts of your region there's other programs you could use. So tell us what's it like to work with a client there? Do you tell them they should do LEED or is the client asking for it? How does that work?

Charlie Zhu ([08:44](#)):

I think there are two stages 2007 to 2012. We have to introduce the needle system and that concept of Green Building to our clients and tell them what's the benefit once he gets the costs and why you should do LEED certification for your project. After that from 2012 since the Chinese government required that all newly constructed buildings should be green buildings in the major cities. We have a local green building standard, which we call green building labels. It's similar to LEED certification but has different requirements and a different process. But it's mandatory from the government. So nowadays we don't need to persuade our clients to do green buildings anymore, we just tell them and they usually choose us.

Charlie C ([09:49](#)):

Fantastic. You've mentioned some pretty big buildings you've worked on Charlie, what are some of your proudest achievements?

Charlie Zhu ([10:04](#)):

Great pressure at the moment because I should do a lot of things to quantify as a LEED Fellow. I don't think I have done enough, but besides that, I think our most significant green building project is called a giant world trade center. It is a 370 meter high building. I mentioned that before it's in the city area of Beijing and actually the area is named after this project. Before the project, there's another name for the area, but after the project is developed, four, about 20 years, the name for the area changed into the name of the project. Yes. It's a very famous project in China, I think.

Charlie C ([11:00](#)):

Yeah, no, that's a really impactful project. Right. But I needed to start with the work you guys were doing. You've got all these credentials after your name, with all the online education we do with gbes.com, we're a fan of credentials, the latest on green building and healthy building movement. Charlie, if you could tell us a little bit about some of those credentials LEED , FITWEL ambassador. So the healthy building movement, especially getting a spike during the pandemic but also RESET, we don't see that as much in the

United States, but I know it's bigger. So could you speak a little bit about how is the healthy building movement and then also tell us about RESET.

Charlie Zhu ([11:41](#)):

When the WELL rating system was published in the US and they promoted the WELL certification in China as well at the same time. So, all the consulting companies here started a new business for WELL Certification. But I think healthy building is a new trend. So the market nowadays, we don't think that the demand market is as large as green building certifications. When the pandemic occurred a lot online. Webinars talking about healthy building and the WELL certification and FITWEL and RESET. The actual number of WELL projects in China has not increased very fast. I think the main reason for this delay is there are a lot of requirements on health building that are more related to the operation and the material stage. For new projects in China, the design team and the construct team, I don't have the responsibility to solve the problems at the operation stage. I think it will take another maybe four or five years for the WELL certification or healthy building to catch on in the future to get those official certifications.

Charlie C ([13:14](#)):

I guess we need to just apply the best practices, right? More fresh air, better filters, better indoor air quality monitoring, better janitorial and sanitation. So I'm sure we're doing a lot more best practices, but before we go for the official certifications the marketplace needs to be educated about it and measure that productivity and less absenteeism. So that's a good segue to my next question, which is if you had a crystal ball, you know, what should we be reading up on now? You've been doing green buildings for a long time now. What are you researching? What are you excited about? What's coming up?

Charlie Zhu ([13:54](#)):

Please think about the future for a long time because for our company and you know, a new target or a new path for future development and the first idea is I think that we are still far away from the zero carbon buildings. So if the technology and the science can get more developed in the future we should do some buildings that conserve energy. Better water or better waste? This is a very tough target for the buildings, but it's a good way to

improve the performance of our duties. It's the aim of leaving great legacies for our next generations.

Charlie C ([14:41](#)):

Carbon targets. That's where a lot of laws around the world and here in the US and not just our new buildings but regenerative net Positive. That'd be amazing.

Charlie Zhu ([14:53](#)):

Yeah, because for the rest of the year, maybe three or four years, there are a lot of voices in China talking about the rejuvenation of the older buildings in larger cities. It's called the renovation of cities. I think these kinds of concept, we are doing some projects actually for our client in Beijing for instance, there was a very big iron factory in Beijing, but nowadays to improve the claims of the air, improve the air quality in Beijing, the factory is moving through another province in China, but the sides of the factory are being retrofit into offices, hotels and apartments to create a new industry for the local people. During the retrofit process, all these outer buildings and new construction buildings need to be green buildings.

Charlie C ([16:00](#)):

It's so great. I mean we love to go in and retrofit, not always build new and that's another way just to get a jumpstart on sustainability. Charlie, talk a little more about what you think is your specialty or gifts you're really good at?

Charlie Zhu ([16:17](#)):

I think about one thing is that during a recent discussion with one of my favorite clients, she told me that I could give her the impression of being very professional. You need a certification and that's why they keep choosing, me as a consultant for their projects. That's a specialty or maybe a gift for me. This my job in this business.

Charlie C ([16:45](#)):

Absolutely. I like it. Let's talk about any good habits you have, any routines that help you stay successful?

Charlie Zhu ([16:54](#)):

Oh yes. Actually I'm a big believer of time management. I have been recording for more than 10 years.

Charlie C ([17:06](#)):

Oh wow.

Charlie Zhu ([17:07](#)):

Yeah. I can actually have a lot for me to write the application for new LEED fellows, because I record everything even my calendar, For me to do something to me or either certification or something else.

Charlie C ([17:24](#)):

Well, give us a pro tip on time management. Do you plan a week at a time? Do you plan a month? I mean how far out do you plan and how precise do you make your time blocking?

Charlie Zhu ([17:36](#)):

I do a weekly plan for my entire life. I think all the things are recorded in the calendar, not only the working stuff and the shortest time block is 15 minutes.

Charlie C ([17:52](#)):

Yeah, that's great. I like to plan my week and also kind of visualize that next day. How do we want it to flow? Right. So that's fantastic. Let's talk about a bucket list. I'm a fan of the bucket list. Are there one or two things on your bucket list? Maybe some travel or adventure or write a book. Who knows what else you want to get done? What are one or two examples?

Charlie Zhu ([18:16](#)):

Charlie, can I talk one more thing about the time?

Charlie C ([18:19](#)):

Yeah, let's go back to time management. Absolutely.

Charlie Zhu ([18:21](#)):



Actually I've made a time management rating system. In the beginning of this year for my colleagues and friends. To evaluate their performance in the time management practice.

Charlie C ([18:35](#)):

That's okay. Yeah. You need to gamify. You need to, you need to be able to measure it. So that's really exciting. Are there different levels of success? Like LEED, gold or platinum? How do you do?

Charlie Zhu ([18:46](#)):

Yes, I actually copied the frame of the LEED system into my time system. There are four levels. There are requirements for time record and time management best practices and some good habits you should have to catch more credits.

Charlie C ([19:13](#)):

That's really neat and it sounds like you're using it within the company and just measuring it. That's great. I'd love to see that one day and check you could make your own system or book about teaching others. That's great.

Charlie Zhu ([19:25](#)):

Yes, I think about it. But before writing the book I found that there are a lot of books talking about time management, personal productivity and method and some tricks to increase productivity for people, but I think the major problem I have meeting this year's optimal load is people can get familiar with always of concept habits or tricks. That's is very hard for them to keep going. They'll really need a rating system to tell them how far they have gone in time management practice. Okay. About the bucket list. I thank you very much for asking me for it. I know the concept of bucket lists from US TV series, I never thought of it before. There are two things that I wanted to do for many years. I think maybe I will put them into my bucket list. The first one is renting a small fishing boat and floating it down to the river in my hometown. I think it's very relaxing. A good way to have a personal space to think about life or maybe something else.

Charlie C ([20:42](#)):

Sure, sure.

Charlie Zhu ([20:45](#)):

Yeah. The second one is going somewhere that can set up a robot. I think maybe somewhere large enough. I don't know. I would check the world.

Charlie C ([20:58](#)):

Thank you. I love going back to your hometown and floating down the river and the fishing boat because it forces you to slow down. So that's important. Seems like a busy guy.

Charlie Zhu ([21:10](#)):

Yes. The pressure of teaching to the employees. In China there are not many universities here teaching sustainability or green buildings in the college. So we're having to train our staff after the graduates and join the company.

Charlie C ([21:31](#)):

A lot of training. Yeah, you're right.

Charlie Zhu ([21:33](#)):

The second thing I think is the one that is Aurora, I think.

Charlie C ([21:39](#)):

Okay. Yeah. Good.

Charlie Zhu ([21:40](#)):

Something happened in the north.

Charlie C ([21:42](#)):

Oh, the Aurora Borealis, the Northern Lights. Yeah, that's supposed to be amazing. That'd be great to go see. Absolutely. Well that's the bucket list. I like both of those. Make sure you plan them out, make them happen. And I think as we go to our next question, are there any good books you'd recommend?

Charlie Zhu ([22:03](#)):

Yes. I'm reading books in recent years and I am going to recommend two books, the first one is a green building related to books. I read the Chinese

version, but the book's name is Sustainable Design Critical Guide and the writer David Bergman is an American architect? I read the Chinese version during the spring festival and I think it's very good for the starters to learn about their process and good practice in green building.

Charlie C ([22:37](#)):

I'll put the link to that book in the podcast show notes. So Charlie, is there one more book you'd recommend?

Charlie Zhu ([22:43](#)):

Yes, another book it's related to the philosophy of life because I'm 40 years old next year. So I think about it quite a lot of the time and I find that good a book named, For the Brand New Start for life after 40. It's rby a Japanese writer Matsuura. The writer encourages the 40 years old to find his or her own way to make continuous contributions to other people and that's who the society is for the next 30 years.

Charlie C ([23:28](#)):

Wow. Yeah, that significance sounds like a great book and certainly that's still young. I'm 37, so right behind you there. I'll put a link to these show notes. These books in our podcast show notes. Two more questions as we start to come to a close. The first one, Charlie, is there anything you wish you would have known earlier in your career?

Charlie Zhu ([23:51](#)):

How can I say? I think I've been very, my career in the early, well, first of five years of my career were very smooth I think. I do a lot of great projects and express my success.

Charlie C ([24:12](#)):

That's fantastic. I think you 're early in this so you had to figure it out on your own and you had a good mentor early. It's just exciting to see all your rituals, your advancement on RESET and WELL and FITWEL back up all the green building work and LEED. So Charlie, my final question, let's say there's someone listening right now to this podcast, they're just now getting into the green building movement. Maybe they're going to read the book you recommended, but if you have any words of encouragement for them.

Charlie Zhu ([24:44](#)):

Yes. Maybe I can say two things. The first thing is I think we're in a good industry. It's very new in comparison to other industries. So there are a lot of potential and opportunities in this industry. I hope that young people can join this industry and find a lot of fun and success in this industry. The second one is that I think to be a great green building consultant, you should keep learning and keep studying to improve your professional levels continuously.

Charlie C ([25:31](#)):

Absolutely. And have a great time, right Charlie. So I just want to say thank you for sharing your time today and showing us your journey and I hope you do a fishing boat soon. This has been Charlie Zhu, coming to us from Beijing City, China. Probably. Thanks for your time today.

Charlie Zhu ([25:50](#)):

Thank you very much for inviting me.

Speaker 6 ([25:54](#)):

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 are stoked and just so glad to continue to listen every Wednesday morning to a new interview with the 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. Podjacks@gbes.com our mission is to advance the green building movement to 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, yes, 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.