

## SIG's Senior Energy Consultant Dallas Terry | Transcript

Introduction ([00:02](#)):

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 ([01:00](#)):

Hi everybody. Welcome to the next episode of the Green Building Matters Podcast, where I get an interview with a green building professional. Usually each week, somewhere in the world. Today, I got to interview one of my colleagues, one of my colleagues on our consulting and engineering team at SIG. Today I've got Dallas Terry coming on the podcast and he's a senior energy consultant at our green building consulting from Dallas. How are you doing today?

Dallas ([01:24](#)):

Doing pretty well, Charlie, thanks.

Charlie ([01:26](#)):

You've got an interesting background and I try to get to the origin story and then how'd you get into green buildings and what got you to where you work today. Let's just start, Dallas, where'd you grow up and where'd you go to school?

Dallas ([01:41](#)):

I'm from a small town in Southeast Iowa called Fairfield, known for transcendental meditation and that's where I grew up and then went on to get an undergraduate degree at the local university there in sustainability as well as a green MBA.

Charlie ([01:59](#)):

We're going to unpack some of that. You've already got my attention Dallas and I hope to learn even more about you than I already know. You mentioned sustainability when you were going to college. How did you know? Was some of it your upbringing in that part of Iowa? Was it influenced by your parents? Did you like to go on hikes? How did you know sustainability?

Dallas ([02:20](#)):

I would definitely, my folks are from the Northwest. I grew up spending a lot of time up there, Montana, Idaho, Washington state in nature, really pristine and beautiful so that had something to do with it. It was kind of funny when it was time to declare a major, like many undergrads in my bachelor's and wasn't totally sure because it was kind of a hot new thing. Our local university had one of the few programs in the country at the time, I believe. I kind of did it because a lot of my other friends were doing it, not totally sure of what it was or meant and just kind of went from there and it slowly grew on me. Once I realized what it was and what it meant, and by the time I was ready for an MBA, then I was like, "Okay, I know this is what I want to do. Let's try to specialize a little bit further."

Charlie ([03:20](#)):

Getting that inspiration at first you trusted these friends. They're kind of into it. Then it's kind of cool. Let me tag along and then you're like, "Yeah, this is validated." Along the way, did you have any mentors, maybe someone you read their book, you followed them, or maybe someone you could call a mentor you met with along the way?

Dallas ([03:40](#)):

For sure various teachers bosses throughout my academic and professional career. I would call them all mentors. In terms of inspiration some of the big shots definitely stand out. Amory Lovins, hearing about him in my undergraduate and then my MBA and just learning about what a brilliant man he was and the broader clean energy and sustainability field, that was very inspiring. I would say my dad on a practical level, he was a GC many years back. He did instill in me a little bit of that appreciation for buildings and that continues to grow. He continues to be a sounding board for me.

Charlie ([04:26](#)):

That's great. Maybe that's where you got some of the building knack and obviously buildings, new and existing buildings. Connect the dots in the career. You get your degree, you get an advanced degree and you're like, "Okay, sustainability, I'm going to do something here." What were some of those early positions you held?

Dallas ([04:45](#)):

Unfortunately for me, right around the time I did the MBA and was ready to go out into the workforce, it was the post financial crisis. Many people my age had to wrestle with that. I think every generation has their things they have to wrestle with in that regard. I kind of quickly realized it's going to be tough. I got to stand out. I really pushed to try to just lay on a bunch of certifications and accreditations and definitely think that helped me. One of the first ones I got, actually before I got a LEED AP, was some special training in conducting feasibility studies for renewable energy projects, solar and wind to be specific was kind of an extension of my MBA in a way. Those studies really do focus on the business case. They're highly technical, but in the end, they're trying to prove is the project feasible, technically speaking, and is it financially viable? They were definitely helpful. From there went on to get my LEED AP, BD and C and yeah, the rest is history.

Charlie ([05:57](#)):

One of the companies you've worked for before you joined our team was Cushman Wakefield. Well respected, obviously real estate company around the world. You were on some special projects there in the Bay Area. Tell us about that time and Northern California, your work with PG and E.

Dallas ([06:13](#)):

I was fortunate enough to get a sustainability manager role with Cushman and Wakefield serving PG&E as our client from about 2016 to 2020. It was certainly a bit of a rollercoaster ride just given the things that PG&E went through during that time, bankruptcy and wildfires and all that. Got some interesting exposure to all of that. As far as my role was concerned, oversight of a portfolio of around 250, 250 sites with multiple buildings, just a great opportunity to exercise and develop my program management, project management skills as they pertain to sustainability. I've got to work with a lot of great people, learn a lot. It was a great learning experience,

Charlie ([07:01](#)):

And then that's what our paths had crossed. You joined our Green Building Consulting and Engineering Team. You've been having that engineering, what we call "technical services mindset." Tell us about some of the work you're doing today, Dallas. Some of the projects you're working on.

Dallas ([07:16](#)):

Love, love working at SIG under the engineering team. I'm really focused on our full suite of services that ranges from energy modeling and commissioning on the new construction side to audits and retro commissioning and energy star certification on the existing building side. What comes to mind? I've been more focused, I would say, on new new construction projects given the pandemic. We just saw a lot of that for whatever reason. I would say project wise, a couple of multi-family projects up in Minnesota that were assigned to me for the energy modeling and commissioning scope, stand out as just a really cool client. They're really trying to push the bar, meet SB 2030 in the case of one of the projects, which is a Minnesota, uspecific standard. That's trying to push projects towards net zero by 2030. Unique projects. I'm pretty lucky to be working on them.

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

This pandemic hit and as a business, as a small business, right, everyone had to be flexible. Let's talk a little bit about geography and maybe sustainability in different regions. You really had a lot of experience in the bay area, and then we've got your managers for the projects there. You lived there for several years, get back to Iowa, right. To your roots. Sometimes you gotta go to Chicago or Minneapolis. Give us a peek at these different cities. What do you notice? It's a little different from the work we do in these cities. Maybe mandates, maybe it's easier to have a conversation in California than somewhere else. I don't know, but you get to go to some different cities. I'm just kind of curious how it is in these different markets?

Dallas ([08:55](#)):

I think right away about the difference between California and maybe even the rest of the country. Obviously New York and some of the other markets on the east coast, I think are pretty progressive, but I think California definitely has this reputation of being a real leader in our space and pushing a lot of net zero projects. In particular, that was something that I kinda got some exposure to in my last role. A number of my previous clients pushed for a number of net zero

projects. I see that I saw a lot of that there, and now I am seeing some more of that, even in the Midwest, which is super exciting. I think the rest of the country may have a little bit of catching up to do, but I do think there's a bit of a perception that places like the Midwest are further behind than they actually are. I think there are, if you do a little bit of research, plenty of great examples of projects that are pursuing net zero or just very high performance designs and that's encouraging.

Charlie ([09:56](#)):

I'd agree with that. A lot of markets, benchmarking first, then there's some transparency mandates about ordinances depending on just makes good business sense to save energy even where power is less expensive. We're starting to see a lot of that across the entire country. Who's going to really push for net zero building or living building? Maybe you gotta be in a certain climate for now, or you have to have some mandates like in California to push it all the way to do that kind of stuff a little sooner. I observed that as well. Let's look back on some of your accomplishments. What are a few things that stand out? What are you really proud of as you looked back career wise, personal wise, whatever comes to mind here?

Dallas ([10:41](#)):

I had a daughter three years ago, my first and only child currently. I would have to say it was my biggest accomplishment, a huge life-changing event. It's been totally wonderful. She teaches me a lot every day, a lot of patients among other things. On the professional side, actually just finally getting into a role where I'm working actively on LEED projects was kind of a dream. In my past role as a sustainability manager at serving PG and E my role was kind of higher level. I didn't get into some of the nitty gritty of LEED that was always a dream. From the time that I pursued my accreditation many years back. It kind of just goes to show if you want it and you really go for it, it's just a matter of time.

Charlie ([11:34](#)):

Good stuff congrats. I know you're an awesome dad and husband. Tell us about the family a little bit, your wife is from South America. Tell us about that.

Dallas ([11:45](#)):

She's from Columbia in a little town near Metagene. We met, about six or seven years ago in Fairfield, in my hometown at the university. I was teaching some classes, MBA sustainability classes, and she was studying computer science. We got introduced by a common group of friends. Again, the rest is history, as they say.

Charlie ([12:08](#)):

Let's talk about this pandemic and how most businesses are going to have to respond. A lot of the work we do, fortunately we can do remote or sometimes strategic site visits. You've been able to work from San Francisco, from Iowa, maybe even international a little bit. We're kind of a results oriented company, so I know we're speaking for us, but I hope those listening can have these conversations with the companies you work with. Have you found any challenges, being able to just work remote and have strategic visits? How's that going for you?

Dallas ([12:39](#)):

Honestly, it's kind of a dream come true. I always did a lot of remote work throughout my career and just found it to work really well for me, obviously, acknowledging the importance and need for human connection with the other people you're collaborating with at least on some interval. I just find it works really well for any type of heads down desktop work. Why commute for that? But that being said, it's really great in my current role to be able to go out for site visits, see the project, see the equipment, feel it, touch it, and just connect with some of those team members on the client side in person, develop a little bit of that rapport. As far as travel is concerned. I think being able to go on these trips to other states, maybe at some point in the future, other countries will just also make it an even sweeter deal and make balance out all that time. Just sitting in front of the computer at home.

Charlie ([13:39](#)):

Until those lists, they have these counts of patients. I hope the company you're working at maybe is more flexible, especially coming out of the pandemic and we can all still get some work done and stay productive. Give us a couple of tips though, Dallas. If more days than not, you're not coming into an office or you're not going to a job site visit, if you have a couple of pro tips on working from home or working remotely.

Dallas ([14:03](#)):

I guess two or three things come to mind. Funnily, as it may seem connecting with your team via Zoom or something, even though we're all doing that excessively lately. A daily check-in for 15, 20 minutes that's what we do on my team. It is just really nice to see where everyone's at, have a little bit of that connection with your folks who are distributed across the country and take a little break. A perfect segue into number two, which would be to take breaks. Get up. If you have a sit-stand desk, great. Use it. If not get up and take walks every hour, at least I would say, make it fun, grab an espresso, grab a coffee a couple of times a day as you do part of that. Definitely take a break from just staring at the screen and then get exercise. Number three, that's just key. I, like many people, fall into the trap where I'll miss it for a couple of days and then I just start to go crazy. I think that's pivotal.

Charlie ([15:01](#)):

Those are some great tips. I can tell Nick who leads the team is rubbing off on you with all those espressos. Good to hear. Let's talk about the future of this green building, this healthy building movement we're in that you and I have chosen to make careers out of. If you had a crystal ball what's kind of exciting down the road. What's coming at us?

Dallas ([15:22](#)):

It's kind of simple for me and we already know what needs to happen and is happening, but it just needs to be accelerated. The transition to net zero, net zero carbon. My take from participating in a number of webinars and talking with different experts is that we're not doing enough fast enough, as far as both individual net zero energy or net zero carbon projects and whole portfolios. You've got your Hudson and your Kilroy who are leaders, but there's others. We need a lot more of those and it needs to happen fast if we hit the milestones that we need to hit by say 2030 and beyond.

Charlie ([16:05](#)):

That's good stuff, man. Thank you for that. I know you have a personal passion for decarbonization and renewables, and you've worked in that role before. You're on to something, Dallas ahead of others, which is real estate portfolios. They might not be mandated to do it yet, but they need to know what would it take on one hand, go all electric and on the other hand to really be a net zero portfolio? At

least deep retrofits save energy and maybe buy some offsets. Have a strategy, but tell me a little more about that. You're really passionate about it. You and I spend time talking through that. Why is that so important?

Dallas ([16:48](#)):

That's something that I've been thinking a lot about over the past months and years. Given my background doing feasibility studies and thinking about the need for all these big real estate portfolios, national and global to kind of look at it through that scrutinous lens. It needs to make sense for their decision makers, financially and strategically. If the industry can come up with better frameworks for portfolios to simply assess their current buildings, their plan buildings, the condition of those buildings, plan projects, so on and so forth. What is the right roadmap to get them to net zero as quickly as possible, and possibly even looking at different scenarios. What did the financial metrics look like for those two different scenarios? To me maybe that would help more portfolios get on board and make those public commitments to get to net zero carbon sooner.

Charlie ([17:49](#)):

I love it. It's happening. I'm glad you're early in it. Dallas, let's talk a little more about you. What would you say is your specialty or gift? What are you really good at?

Dallas ([17:59](#)):

I suppose a couple of things come to mind. I think I'm pretty good at connecting and bringing people together. Something I like to do, I like to think that I have a knack for it and bringing the right people together, whether it's a team of business professionals or it's a team of soccer players, I love to play soccer. It can mean the difference between winning and losing or performing or not performing. I like to think that's some value I bring in. In addition to that, I suppose I have some ability to identify process improvements and have some strength in that area as well.

Charlie ([18:37](#)):

Those are great skills to have, but so soccer what position do you like to play?

Dallas ([18:42](#)):

I kind of tend to drift towards a central midfield, but a little bit more on the defensive side. I'm not super fast, so I kind of have to make up for that with other



ways, but love to play soccer. I always like to think of the parallels between soccer and business and again team building and having the right group of people working together to achieve a common goal.

Charlie ([19:07](#)):

Sounds like a blog posts we should have. Let's keep this going. Let's talk a little bit more about good habits or routines or rituals. You just told us earlier about the remote work or the work from home, some awesome pro tips, but what else has really helped you say successful? Let good habits.

Dallas ([19:29](#)):

I practice meditation twice a day. Something I've been doing since I was little and that definitely helps just with clear in my head managing stress and seeing energized. I find that to be very useful. In addition to that, I would say again, exercise is critical. When I fall off the bandwagon for a few days, I start to feel it right away. I just find that if I can sweat at least daily or every other day, that makes such a difference again, especially in the remote work environment that we're in.

Charlie ([20:07](#)):

Tell us about meditation. If someone's listening or saying to me who doesn't meditate, maybe as much as I like where should we start? What are those beginner tips you might give to someone?

Dallas ([20:20](#)):

I think there's a lot of different meditation techniques out there. I think they're all good. I've been practicing TM, transcendental meditation, my whole life. So that's kind of what I'm used to. It works well for me, but do some research, find what works well for you. I would say don't just go off of what you read off the internet. If there's a proper instructor, you can find one. Just try it out and see how it feels. It should feel good. There should be some tangible result I believe. But that being said I think the fundamental idea is just to give yourself that break. If you have all these meditation apps coming out and sure. I think that's better than nothing, even if that's all the time you have, or you just want to start really small, do that and give yourself that break every so often to refresh because a little break just goes a long way as everyone knows.

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

Thank you. I'm just curious, so one more follow-up on that. Do you have a certain place where you meditate, right? Do you get out of your office there? Do you, does that help the environment?

Dallas ([21:30](#)):

For the meditation, I do part of the TM, part of the idea is just to be easy and flexible with it. Ideally you want a quiet place, but I've had times where I'll be traveling and in a subway station, maybe not quite that dramatic, but on an airplane. There's people talking and you just do it and you still get benefit. Obviously you're going to be more comfortable. It will be a little bit more enjoyable if you're in a quiet space. So I'd say that and try to make yourself comfortable in a comfortable seat whatever's available

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

Let's talk about bucket lists. I'm a fan of a bucket list. Is there maybe one or two items you could share? Is there any adventure, any travel? Do you want to write a book one day? What's on the bucket list?

Dallas ([22:16](#)):

Certainly I love to travel, love to travel internationally. This kind of just occurred to me, but, starting to get some experience with some international projects, I think would definitely be a dream come true. Something that I've always thought would be so cool. Being able to travel with some friends and colleagues and serve clients in other markets, other cultures that would be one as far as countries that I'd just like to travel in regions that I haven't really hit Japan, South Africa, those are on the list. I think there's great food in both places. I consider myself a foodie so there's that draw. I would say again on the Workfront, getting more involved in a net zero carbon net, zero net, zero carbon projects and programs is up there. Getting some opportunities to kind of get a little bit more strategic, helping to orchestrate again, their roadmaps and plans to help them achieve that.

Charlie ([23:24](#)):

Thank you, man. That's really good. That's an exciting bucket list. Let's go get some more international projects. I'll travel with you. A couple more things here. Let's talk about books. I'm not sure if you like to listen to audio or like to hold a book in

your hands, but is there a book you'd recommend to the podcast listener sharing it? It doesn't even have to be industry specific.

Dallas ([23:46](#)):

Yeah, definitely. I love to read. I haven't been reading as much recently as I would like, so I need to do more of that. I think the one that comes to mind that would be great for this in this context will be The Lean startup, which I'm sure a lot of folks have already heard about or read by Eric Reese. At first glance it seems like it's something that's just maybe more pertinent to the tech industry, but I would say no, absolutely not. There's some real valuable advice in there about innovating with new services and it's really, it's really palatable. Certainly recommend anyone and everyone check out who is interested in service innovation.

Charlie ([24:29](#)):

We'll put a link in the podcast, show notes to that book Dallas, thanks. Two things as we start to come to a close, the first one is, is there any advice you wish you to know a little earlier in your career?

Dallas ([24:41](#)):

It's more about listening to the advice of people who are older and experienced and wiser than you are, and trying not to have an attitude. Getting started early, I think is really key. It's what you hear all the time, but it's really true. I would be like anyone I would be even further than I am right now, if I'd just gotten a little start a little bit earlier, found some valuable internships earlier, been willing to say, it's okay to start as an intern with low or even no pay. If it's going to help put some milestones on your resume and beyond that. Just go for any and all certifications, accreditations that you're interested in. Those also help a lot to show your worth to potential employers.

Charlie ([25:33](#)):

That's good advice. Building on that in closing, say, someone's listening right now. They're hearing your story. They're really enjoying it. They're just now getting into this green building movement. What words of encouragement do you have for them?

Dallas ([25:46](#)):

I would say go for it. If you have any uncertainty, just cast it aside. It's such a cool field to work in. Great people work in this industry. It's competitive, but there's still kind of a familial vibe about it. You get that when you go to the green building conferences and everything, and there's so much opportunity right now. There's never been a better time to be in this field. So absolutely

Charlie ([26:10](#)):

Dallas, I've learned more about you today and we work together. I hope everyone here has been inspired by Dallas, his journey. He's continuing to grow his green building career. Connect with Dallas on LinkedIn and everyone. This has been Dallas Terry. Thanks for your time. Thanks Charlie.

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

I just want to say thank you to our loyal listeners celebrating over one year here on the Green Building Matters podcast. Me and the entire team were 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.

Charlie ([26:52](#)):

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