

Vice President of Sales for Fujitsu General America, Dennis Stinson

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Charlie: 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.

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Charlie: Hi everybody. Welcome to the next episode of the Green Building Matters podcast. I'm your host, Charlie Cichetti, and once a week I get an interview, a green building professional somewhere in the world. Today I've got Dennis Stinson. He's the vice president of sales at Fujitsu General America, and he's normally based out of Lancaster, Pennsylvania. I think he's traveling here today, and I can't wait to hear more about Dennis' story. Dennis , welcome and how are you doing today?

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Dennis: Charlie Doing outstanding. Thank you for inviting me and inviting Fujitsu General America onto your show and for the opportunity to have a conversation with you for your listeners.

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Charlie: Excited to have you here. I always like to get a background. Tell us a little more about where you grew up and where did you go to school?

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Dennis: I'm from Pennsylvania, I grew up in the suburbs of Philadelphia. I went to school in one of the counties of Philadelphia, and ended up going to college in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. I went to Millersville, University of Pennsylvania, got my Bachelor of Science degree in business administration, minored in marketing and management. As most stories go, I met a pretty girl and I never left Lancaster. So 35 years later, I went off to college and never came home.

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Charlie: Well, congrats on that longevity. That's amazing. Getting a business degree and then how the heck did you get into HVAC?

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Dennis: I got into HVAC as most people in HVAC get into it and that was our family business. Growing up, my mother and father ran a manufacturer's rep firm along with other partners. Our family business was in the manufacturing representative side, primarily in plumbing, but also some heating products as well. Charlie, I was that guy when I came out of college. I aspired to be on Wall Street, I aspired to be on Madison Avenue and thought the lights were a lot shinier there. After a period of time I saw that the industry is very exciting and it offered some great opportunities and my mom and dad will never be on the cover of Rolling Stone, but they can make a difference in the world with some of the products that they have and and represent. I was attracted back into it by the opportunities I saw through family. I never worked directly for the family business, but I had the opportunity to get in the business as a manufacturer's representative through plumbing products, grew into HVAC products, and then made the migration over to manufacturer about six and a half years ago.

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Charlie: I love the family business and that influence. What else had influence along the HVAC journey, how did you know?

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Dennis: Looking back in my career, I really started in the plumbing side of the business. I started as a manufacturer's representative selling plumbing supplies to wholesale distributors and eventually to contractors. We saw some of the changes coming on the plumbing side of the business when we went from three gallon or five gallon of flush down to a gallon and a half. We started seeing some conservation happening. Charlie, I'm that guy when I look at sustainability, I really think there's three motivators for sustainability. I think there are those that are very emotionally charged to it, that want to be sustainable and are willing to bear additional cost or maybe even inconvenience to be able to achieve sustainability. The second are those that are doing it because they're mandated to do it. They're required to do it by a code or a law. Then there's a vast majority and in my humble opinion, the vast majority of people are doing it when it makes a lot of sense. When you look at some of the spaces we work in, whether we're talking about water conservation or efficiency, there is a payback. There's a strong economic reason and comfort reason why you would do that. You can bring in the emotion and you can bring in the mandates. The more we move into the mainstream this just makes really good sense and you almost get to that point of why wouldn't you do it? Then I think that that's when our movement gets momentum.

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Charlie: That's a good assessment there. Those different buckets. I'm here and I need to do it. But there's different reasons and a lot of times it still needs to make good business sense. I like to ask about mentors. Who might you call a mentor over your career?

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Dennis: Well, so you can look at that a couple of different ways. All good upbringings begin with your parents. Good morals set in there. I like to believe I had that, but I also had some great business leaders, people that I worked for, people I've worked with over time. And whether that was a customer that showed that doing the right thing is eventually rewarded or working for a particular manufacturer's representative where a conversation that when all partners succeed, then everybody succeeds. When you take a look at a business opportunity or a proposal for a project, you don't have to have the best solution. You're never always going to have the best solution. You have to have a reasonable solution that everybody involved can stick their thumbs up and say, Yeah, that makes sense for me and my company and my people and my client. Getting in that mindset through those mentors of people I've worked with and people that I've been fortunate enough to engage throughout my career.

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Charlie: Thank you for giving us that perspective. Along the way, almost 20 years on the one manufacturer side and now here Fujitsu excuse me and you've moved your way up there. Where do you seek out sales, mentorship, where you just born that way? I enjoy business development sales. I'm trying to peel back the onion here a little bit. How do you learn business development and sales? Is it more relational sales, technical sales? What's helped you be successful?

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Dennis: I was just having this conversation with my son who was doing a project for school, one on sales and the different types of things. Whether you're talking B to C, you're talking B to B, whether you're talking A one hit wonder type sale, whether you're talking a relationship type sale. Our business model is built around a B to B sales. It's an ongoing relationship. One project begets another project, which begets another project. Then at the end of the day, you really only have to do business with your friends.

When I say friends, I don't mean people that you hang out with. I mean people you trust and you know you have a common goal to be able to get it done. I think the epiphany for me, Charlie, was some time ago when I moved the mindset from sales to consultative sales. When you put yourself in the mindset of what is the challenge in front of us and what is the reasonable solution for me and my partners and their clients? You move to a much better spot of being a better partner. If you're looking to make a sale, then you're looking to make a sale. But if you're looking to make a relationship or a partnership, it's an entirely different mindset.

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Charlie: That's now people buying from people they like and trust. I think you're nailing that. Let's talk about careers and buildings. Looking back, what are some of your proudest achievements?

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Dennis: I would take a look right now at what we're doing right now with the evolution of inverter driven heat pumps. When we take a look at what's happening in the marketplace, the shift from fossil fuels, whether we want to talk about strategic electrification or for a variety of other reasons, but the heat pump side of the business is growing and growing dramatically, and it's growing for a couple of reasons. Number one, because of strategic electrification and the incentives to be able to do that, but also because heat pumps have come a long, long way. These are not the heat pumps that we saw back in the eighties, when it got cold, we had backup resistant electric come in and that's when it didn't make sense. We've crossed that threshold now. Not only does it make sense, but it makes really good sense to be able to do that. I'm really enjoying riding that wave of momentum and watching where we were single digit market share in the entire HVAC market for so many years. We're growing leaps and bounds, really, really quantum leaps over what the industry is continuing to do. I find that to be really exciting,

to be able to get out and talk about that message and show where it fits and and help guide some of that development.

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Charlie: Let's talk about heat pumps for a minute because of our podcast listeners. I'm fortunate to see the laws in California going to electrification, we're going to get off of gas, etc...I see some of my clients in New York City who are renovating or building a new building, and it's some of the first all-electric skyscrapers. Even though they're steam and natural gas in New York City. As a company, maybe as you lead your sales team, like look at a map and say, hey, here's what the mandates are. This is where the heat pumps will be needed over the next five years. Like how do you kind of tackle?

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Dennis: Absolutely. Absolutely. We have some great resources. We've got a gentleman that's dedicated to that good industry veteran that's dedicated to spending his time on what the utility companies are doing and what's happening on the regulatory side. We have a regulatory team that's watching what's happening with DOE and EPA. We've got to be in compliance and we need to be able to stick our neck in there and say, this makes more sense than that. We also have a gentleman that monitors where all that is and we actually post on our website on the residential side an eco rebate finder where you can go in and stick in your zip code or it's a little creepy. It'll figure out where you are and tell you exactly what rebates apply to exactly what product. The incentives are very strong for heat pumps, for high efficient heat pumps, not just the heat pump. It makes it back to that conversation. It makes good sense to take a hard look at heat pumps. They are year round hole comfort or year round hole building comfort. They perform and there's some good financial incentives to be able to to move over to that.

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Charlie: I was going to ask, where is the money for sustainability? When I'm asked that question, it still goes to energy efficiency first. Good point is maybe it's the Desire USA website, maybe it's your local utility company. And if it's an electric company, you're right, they want you coming over here on the electric side. And there are incentives there even on the commercial. Right. There's some Customer rebates. What's keeping you busy today. Tell us a little more about your company and your tea We're in an exciting part of the industry right now. The HVAC industry is going gangbusters. Over the last two years, we've seen demand more than double for our product. We're challenged with the supply chain issues like most in the industry are. It's a bit of managing that. We've also got some pretty strong mandates coming down the road. When we look at 2023, we have the MX one or commonly referred to as the year two changes. We're looking at the efficiency ratings for HVAC equipment to change. A little wonky, to be honest with you, Charlie, when we look at what happens in the South. In the South, it's a sell by date. In the north, it's a manufacture by date. There's some hard cutoffs and it's different from one region to another. So that's going to take a little bit of managing. And then 2025, we look at our refrigerant change. We're looking at upping pretty dramatically the global warming potential of the refrigerants that we're using. We're talking about changing refrigerants. It wasn't all that long ago or it doesn't seem like maybe I'll show my age. We move from 22 to 410 and now we're making another change. There's a lot to do when you make a refrigerant change, there's there's equipment change there design change, there's testing changes, there's efficiencies, incompatibilities and phase out and reclaiming and recycling. And there's a lot that happen with that. What keeps me busy? Business keeps me busy.

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Charlie: I love it. You love the relationships leading a team and Dennis educate us about refrigerants for me and I've taught LEED classes for a long

time and LEED says, hey, no CFC based refrigerant, get rid of the R11. Oh, we've got to phase out our 22 if we had it. You made an interesting comment, it's almost like we jump from 22 to maybe 410A. Now what about in the middle? Where do you see 134 A Is that only on certain types of equipment? Maybe, yeah, but it's almost like we skip past that. Tell us about 134, 123 and 134.

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Dennis: Yeah, I'm not going to, I'm not going to profess to be a refrigerant expert. But I will tell you that when we look at it in terms of our equipment, that all of our equipment today is used for ten A, and we're not going to be able to continue to be there. I fully expect that when we get to the mandate in 2025 that you will see manufacturers possibly have more than one refrigerant based on the size of the equipment and the volume of the refrigerant on the inside of it. There are a couple of things that we have that the new refrigerants are going to bring in some different elements for us in terms of handling the new refrigerants by design will be considered flammable, not combustible, but will be considered flammable. So Charlie, stop and think about that for a minute. What does that do? What does that mean to transportation? Does that mean DOE has to handle it separately? Do we have to placard delivery vehicles now? How do we store that? Can a manufacturer or distributor store that correctly? How does a contractor ride around with cylinders in his truck now? Does he need a different level of certification? Does that change the insurance of a building? Does that change the fire code of the building? So that changes a lot of how we look at it. When we look to get more efficient than doing what we're doing, there's always another piece that comes into it. But before we move too far down the road, just keep in mind when we talk about these new refrigerants, we're talking about flammability and not necessarily combustion ability. There is a difference and we have to be cautious about that. So we know the difference between kerosene and gasoline. I just want to put that out there.

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Charlie: I grew up in a very rural part of Georgia, so I know you definitely put kerosene on a fire. Not gasoline.

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Dennis: You better run quickly.

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Charlie: That's great. I'm going to get some comments about that being the green guy. But that's okay. You do what got through the bonfire. If you had a crystal ball, what's next on the sustainability energy side and with your business and manufacturing. And you had an interesting comment there about 2025. So what's next?

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Dennis: I think that we are on the equipment side, if I had a crystal ball, Charlie, I would say that as a nation, we're going to continue to embrace the Douglas VF side of the business. The reason I say that is, is because we're going we're coming to the conclusion that moving heating and cooling is much more efficiently done by moving refrigerant than by moving air or water. Putting an air handler in a point of distribution, as opposed to putting the taking the air down the hall and pumping it down through some ductwork for a variety of reasons is going to be more efficient and is going to LEED to greater comfort. When we start taking a look at the commercial side of the buildings, when we have one thermostat that's doing the entire building, and I realize that that's not always the norm, but the center core of the building may need heating. The exterior of the building may need cooling based on the time of the year. When we start looking at all the different loads that are in a building, that zoning capability is going to start making a lot of sense and moving temperature control through refrigerant as opposed to a four pipe chiller system or an air system. I think we're going

to find seems to make a lot of sense and that's where we're chasing efficiency. On the base level, I see the demand for our equipment continuing to climb and climb and climb. As we all take a hard look at what makes sense, I see greater integration of all things Internet then all things smart for our equipment, and I'm seeing that leaps and bounds. We've created some new relationships to be able to enter into the building management side, but also create some open protocol platforms where we can get into the Internet of all things and have things tie together so that both residential and commercially have the ability to monitor systems and to have other systems tie into it seems to make a lot of sense. Charlie, I see where we're going to start tying more mechanicals into a common system. So if I have a heat pump and I'm making air conditioning on the inside of the building, I'm dumping heat to the outside. Wouldn't it make a lot of sense if I was using a heat recovery system and I'll dump that into a domestic water storage tank and reclaim that heat, if you will, to make some domestic water. I see more mechanicals being tied into a common system. And then do we take that down the avenue of some type of energy generation? Do we get more aligned with a solar system or a wind system or some type of onsite generation system? I think we're in a really exciting part of the business and a really exciting time in our industry's lives. My first 15 years in the business, my catalogs I sold looked a lot alike from the first year I started. 15 years later, not a whole lot changed. The last 10 to 15 years, it's been quantum leaps and changes.

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Charlie: A lot of options, a lot of connectedness and the renewables coming in. Let's talk comfortably for a minute before we move on. I'm sure you have that challenge between energy efficiency and giving people in a building or a home more control and more comfort. After the pandemic hybrid workspaces. How do you tackle balancing comfort?

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Dennis: Comfort is balanced in a couple of different ways. Whether we're talking residentially or commercially, there's two types of comfort. There's temperature comfort and then there's wallet comfort. You've got to make both masters comfortable. When we take a look at comfort, the best way to address comfort is through zoning. If you want to control the temperature in a space, then you need to have a state in that space. If you want to control temperature in a bedroom or in a corner office, you really need to have an individual control in there to be able to monitor that. You can put some common spaces together and you can do some things that make sense. But when you are metering comfort through the control of refrigeration to individual air handlers, then you have the capability of doing that. The funny thought is everybody always says, if I have different temperatures, then I have to have a heat recovery unit. Well, you don't, you can have the air conditioning on, have somebody at 68, 72, and it still be 90 degrees outside. You don't need heating to get the guy to 72. When you look at a mode you have a variety of different set points in there to meet the needs and the comfort of the inside. On the comfort of the wallet side it's it's silly. I take for granted we have a piece of equipment that's 33 here. I mean, pause on that for me. It's 33 Seer. And it's crazy when you think about that. I remember when I started in the business, when we got to ten here, we were giddy, like a bunch of high school girls. We got to double digits on on ten year and now that's not even allowed anymore. It's interesting to watch how that happens. But comfort is done through control and control is done through zoning.

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Charlie: I love your answer there. Thank you. Let's do some rapid fire questions. Get to know you a little more. What's your specialty or gift?

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Dennis: I think my wife and kids would probably say my ability to have a conversation with anybody about anything at any time. I really enjoy

spending time with people. Obviously you do as well, and just find out what makes them tick and what's important and really what their passion is. If I have one thing that I like to do, it's I don't do silent, so I like to communicate.

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Charlie: With people or a lot of like they're I love having just great conversations every day. What are some of your routines, rituals? Do you have any good habits?

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Dennis: I try to exercise, eat well and I try to read. I've had some good people over the course of my career that remind me how important it is to read, to always have a book in the stable and to be working your way through that. As you are well aware, your education never stops. When it stops, it stops. If you're continuing to read and broaden your horizon and get different viewpoints, particularly those you don't agree with, it makes you a much more rounded person.

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Charlie: Great. Thanks for sharing. I'm a fan of the Bucket List. What are one or two things maybe on your bucket list?

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Dennis: I would tell you that I don't have a lot of things I'm more about experiences. When I take a look at it, any time I can spend with my wife and my kids is a bucket list for me. My son and I have a retreat that we do every year to go see some Division one football. We pick it out and go and look forward to that. I look forward to spending time with my family and my daughter and her new husband. My bucket list is as much time as I can get with my family, to be honest with you. Wherever that takes us, if that's to the backyard or that's Niagara Falls or that's Oahu, that's it's all those

places. My bucket list is more about it, more about people than it is about destinations. I would tell you that it's we're in Pennsylvania. We're in Nignity lion territory. My son is a is a true Alabama fan. He came by it the right way. He's not a front runner. He long story there, much more than we need to know. So we've done some SCC. We made a trip to Texas last year. We've done West Virginia. So we're mixing it all up. We're looking at a PAC 12 next year. We're mixing in college ball on Saturday and pro ball on Sunday. We're morphing into something bigger.

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Charlie: Very memorable, great stadiums and campuses. Thanks for sharing. Is there a book you'd recommend to the audience?

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Dennis: I've read a couple of different styles of books. I like a good autobiography. I just finished up the Pixar book. I read the book of the last CEO of Disney. That was very, very good. One of my favorite books and it was recommended to me by my daughter is Outliers. I find I could read and read and read that book. it's a great read on what makes people different. It's not necessarily a self-help book. It's a good read on circumstances and drive. And when you take a step back and you see somebody that's really successful, you say, Well, what made them successful? And there is a lot to nature and nurture. It's an interesting read. I'm a big fan of Patrick Lencioni. I read a lot of his books. I think I like the way that his books are read. They read a fable, and so I find them both entertaining but also informative. I like his methods of consulting sales. I like his methods of being hungry, humble and smart. I like how he brings common sense to me. He brings common sense to management and business decisions and culture, which can be an overused word. I reread Blue Ocean Strategies again, love what they're doing there, and so it can go on and on and on. My reading list is varied. I like a good biography of what made somebody tick. I

love a good series, whether that's Patrick or some of the others. I also like a good surprise book like *Outliers That Comes* and kind of grabs you.

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Charlie: I'll comment. I like to mention one of my favorites is *Death by Meeting* and a lot of good ones. Always high or humble, hungry and smart. Great recommendations. We'll put some links in the podcast show notes, Two more questions as we start to come to a close. If you look back on your career, is there any advice you wish you'd have known a little earlier in that career?

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Dennis: I have no regrets, but there are some things that if I if I go back and talk to myself 25 years ago, I would have. If I could have embraced the consultative selling earlier in my career and realize it's about us and not about me, it would be different in getting the true concept of people. People only have to buy from their friends and being a friend is not being a buddy, it's being a trustworthy partner. Those are probably if I'd have learned that earlier in my career, I didn't learn it late in my career, but if I do earlier when I first started, I would have been better off. They'd have taught that in college, or if I'd enlisted in college, maybe they did.

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Charlie: But it takes both of those. If I went back to college now, it would be totally different. I'd pay attention a little bit more. Let's say someone's listening to this podcast. They're getting inspired by your story and they're jumping in to this movement. Whether it's the product manufacture side, maybe it's the green building movement. Any words of advice for someone that's getting into our industry now?

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Dennis: I highly encourage it. This is a great industry. This is an industry of really, really good people, people looking to make a living, but then also to make change as well. And whether you're on the manufacturing side, the installing side, the specification side, the utility side of it, this is an exciting industry that I don't want to say is recession proof. But at the end of the day, our industry is always needed. It's not a fad. People want to be comfortable, they need to be comfortable. They need to be tempered. They need space, and need to be conditioned. Our industry will continue to change and morph. But the need for our industry can't be farmed out, can't be farmed out to offshore, can't be automated to the point of obsolescence. Our industry will always be here and we'll continue to grow and become an important part. So if you're going to invest your time, it's a really good place to invest.

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Charlie: What a great conversation. You got me excited today. I hope everyone enjoyed listening and make sure you connect on LinkedIn here with Dennis Stinson, thanks for spending time with us today. I really appreciate it.

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Dennis: Thank you. Great conversation, my friend.

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Charlie: Hey, 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 glad you 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 podcast at GBES.com. Our mission is to advance the Green Building movement through best in class

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