

# Solving Building Performance Issues with Matthew Warren | Transcript

## Speaker 1

[00:00:00] Welcome to *Green Building Matters*, the original and most popular podcast focused on the green building movement. Your host is Charlie Cecchetti, 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 stories, career advice, and unique insights into how sustainability is shaping the built environment. So settle in, grab a fresh cup of coffee, and get ready to find out why green building matters.

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## Charlie

[00:00:38] Hey, everybody. Welcome to the next episode of the *Green Building Matters* podcast. Every week, I interview a green building professional from somewhere in the world. I'm in Atlanta, Georgia, and not too far up the road, we've got Matt Warren with us today. Matt, how are you doing?

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## Matt

[00:00:57] Fantastic! Getting better by the hour. How are you?

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## Charlie

[00:01:01] Good, man. It's sunny, and I'm at my home office—that's where I like to record these podcasts. You came highly recommended by one of

our previous podcast guests from here in the Southeast. I'm excited to learn about energy efficiency, green buildings, and your work in HVAC. Let's start by getting to know you—where did you grow up, and where did you go to school?

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**Matt**

**[00:01:23]** Sure. I grew up in Aiken, South Carolina, where my dad owned about 100 acres. I'm the middle child, with an older brother and a younger sister. My dad was a PhD mechanical engineer who designed the first solar home in South Carolina, which made the front page of the *Aiken Chronicle*. Growing up, I didn't realize how unique this was, but it shaped my mindset about energy conservation and sustainability from a young age.

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**Charlie**

**[00:01:56]** Wow, 100 acres connected with nature and an early influence in sustainability. Did you recognize at the time how significant your dad's work was, or did that realization come later?

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**Matt**

**[00:02:09]** That's a great question. Growing up, I didn't think much of it; it just seemed normal. Looking back, though, I see how ahead of his time he was. For example, he and my grandfather built a section of our roof with glass panels instead of shingles. Inside, the sunlight would warm black-painted jugs of water, creating a heat sink. A fan system in the basement circulated the warm air throughout the house. During the summer, the process was reversed, using cool air stored in river rocks beneath the house. My mom would always say it was the warmest house in the neighborhood.

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**Charlie**

**[00:02:52]** That's brilliant—such a simple yet innovative design. Tell us more about your early career and how you got into energy efficiency.

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**Matt**

**[00:03:06]** I've always been a serial entrepreneur. By the time I was 25, I had started and sold two businesses. One was a lawn service, which I ran from age 12 to 18, cutting 35 yards a week. The second was a pine straw delivery business I started right before going to Clemson University. I studied agricultural economics at Clemson, which tied my interests in business and the environment together.

**[00:03:30]** After graduating, I worked for a large-scale commercial landscaping company. When the 2008 economic crash hit, I transitioned to managing agricultural operations for a vegetable producer. It was during this time, managing a \$100,000 monthly power bill, that I began exploring solar energy and energy conservation. I had already installed solar panels on my own house, so I proposed using our open land for solar installations. That experience sparked my passion for energy efficiency.

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**Charlie**

**[00:04:10]** It's amazing how these experiences build on each other. You're currently focusing on building performance and energy efficiency. What sets your approach apart?

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**Matt**

**[00:04:21]** When I moved into the solar industry, most companies focused solely on installing panels. But I realized that 50-60% of a building's energy

use comes from HVAC systems. Instead of recommending oversized solar installations, I began analyzing buildings holistically—insulation, HVAC maintenance, and system efficiency. By optimizing these systems, we could significantly reduce energy consumption and install fewer solar panels. This "efficiency first" approach really resonated with clients.

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**Charlie**

**[00:04:59]** Efficiency first makes so much sense. It's about optimizing what you have before adding more. What's next for you in this evolving field?

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**Matt**

**[00:05:11]** I'm now focusing on the industrial market—data centers, grow rooms, and manufacturing facilities—which are some of the largest energy users. It's exciting to work on projects that have a huge impact, from electrification initiatives to designing energy-efficient systems tailored to industrial needs.

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**Charlie**

**[00:05:39]** That's incredible. One last question—what advice would you give to someone starting in energy efficiency or green building?

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**Matt**

**[00:05:49]** Not everyone will embrace sustainability, and that's okay. Focus on the clients who see value in energy efficiency. Tailor your message to their priorities, whether it's cutting operating costs or improving building performance. Stay curious, learn continuously, and don't get discouraged. There's always an opportunity to make a difference.

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**Charlie**

**[00:06:12]** Thanks for sharing your journey and expertise, Matt. To our listeners, connect with Matt on LinkedIn and check out his work. This has been a great conversation.