

LEED v4 Campus at Orlando Airport with Michelle DeLora | Transcript

Announcer ([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 lead 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 lead and well credential. Here's Charlie Cichetti,

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

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Charlie ([00:58](#)):

Yes. Hi everyone. Welcome to the next episode of the Green Building Matters Podcast. I'm your host Charlie Cichetti. Today we have another lead fellow with us. We've got Michelle DeLora coming to us from the Orlando area. She's a lead fellow and a Well AP, can't wait to get into a great conversation here with Michelle. Welcome to the podcast.

Michelle ([01:18](#)):

I'm grateful to be here. Thanks for having me.

Charlie ([01:20](#)):

Well, we know some crazy times out there right now. And hopefully this podcast is just a refreshing outlet for a lot of you and have some new found head space and maybe less of a commute and maybe less meetings. So you actually have some time to listen, learn, think. The big challenge I'd like to issue to everyone is, what is possible with what's going on out there and we're going to get to that in one of my questions later, Michelle, but I always like to start with, let's go back. You know, where'd you grow up? Where'd you go to school?

Michelle ([01:48](#)):

I grew up in Eugene, Oregon primarily. Where old hippies go to die so I had quite the green upbringing. We had a garden, we canned, we did all of those things, practiced a smaller footprint lifestyle. It was kind of an evolution, I went local, I went to the University of Oregon for my college years. It was a great opportunity to get a bachelor of architecture. I'm an architect and it was local and they were one of the top five universities for architects. It just made sense for me and I really enjoyed it there. One of my professors, John Reynolds, a great guy, taught me a lot about thermal mass and thinking about your building envelope. It really formed some of my early ideas about what you should do. And then I did a 180 and moved to Florida from very green to what I call the transience and disposable side of it, o a tourist area.

Michelle ([02:50](#)):

It didn't have a lot of infrastructure for recycling or anything like that and I started to work for a firm, got my feet wet and switched firms and decided I need to do something different in my career. I started looking around for what was I passionate about and I realized it was green building and I've found Greenbuild. Went to Rebuild 2004 was my first in Portland, I felt like going back home. I've lived in Portland for a couple of years while I was in high school. It was kind of nice to get back there and to get re energized and think about what I really wanted to do with my career and from there it just kinda just took off.

Charlie ([03:31](#)):

What a fun story. Actually my mom's from Springfield, Oregon. So not too far from where you grew up. I remember some of those same stories you just told all of our listeners here, Michelle is "Hey, recycling in Oregon. Like they pretty much invented it there" and "Hey, you don't pump your own gas and we've just gotta be more eco minded" and then you move somewhere else and it's like, what? You don't do that here. I'm sure that had a big influence on you growing up in Oregon and then you had at least one professor there you mentioned as a mentor. Did anyone else early on kind of have some influence on you? Any other mentors along the way?

Michelle ([04:03](#)):

My mother, she could build anything, do anything. She had more tools than I think most men did. She enjoyed that. Maybe that's why I went into

architecture too. I just felt like she'd knocked down a wall and build something back up in our house. And I thought, okay, well anybody can do that. Why would I think any different? So mostly that upbringing and her "you can do anything from shoestrings, some gums and cheese and you've got something there."

Charlie ([04:32](#)):

That's resourceful. What a great influence. That said, I know you've mentioned your appearance. I'm sure you're trying to show your family how to be resourceful. With sustainability, getting out of college it sounded like you knew you wanted to go more towards architecture, but can you show at what point did you maybe learn about, lead or green building programs? Was it at that Greenbuild in 2004 or where'd you figure out, "Hey, there's actually a program for this?"

Michelle ([04:59](#)):

Actually About six months before I went through a time at work where I was just not satisfied. I was having a hard time and luckily where I work, they noticed it and said, we think you could really benefit from a corporate coach. So I started to talk to somebody about what my career might look like and what made me happy and what didn't make me happy and what I needed to do to change. She really encouraged me to go look for my passion. I started doing more and more research and getting back to my roots and I found lead and I said, this is the way to do it. And I actually went to Greenbuild to do the lead training the next day as part of it. Within a month I had taken the test and passed, and was trying to figure out how do I really apply everything that I've learned now and integrated into how I work at the firm and what could happen.

Michelle ([05:56](#)):

And luckily they were very open to it. We ended up building our own building to lead gold at the time and enjoyed having a bunch of tours showing it off. I ended up starting in the chapter and becoming the chairman after probably six years and had a couple terms as chairman and that was the time that we built our building, got our lead goals, we're doing tours, giving back, making partnerships with the first green bank while they were doing their platinum building. I'm really enjoying that and it was kind of funny that it was during the great recession or just at the beginning of it and I was

really just feeling out what was going to come after. This was really not to be, a pun, but sustainable is to think about green building and how do you do this and how it moves forward and what technologies there are and how do you leverage that technology to make a better built environment.

Charlie ([06:56](#)):

Absolutely. past that early lead exam and lead's been a great tool. I know you've worked in other rating systems also. What did you find early in those lead projects? Because in 2004 or so really early adopter of lead Michelle. Why were clients then going for a green building certification versus maybe clients today? Can you give us both ends of that?

Michelle ([07:21](#)):

Part of it was some people like the “new” of it, some people really were visionaries for the bank. They definitely were the leader, he was an exceptional visionary going for platinum for his headquarters and he brought me in as a peer reviewer, it was not my project. It was really nice to learn from reviewing somebody else's strengths early and what they did to document and what types of technology. They had a green wall and they were really thinking about how does it really filter the air for the IAQ possibilities. So I got to learn that portion of it and learned about the EVs that the bank had. A program where if you had the employees, if they had an EV, they got a break, they had parking spaces and they did loans for people who had green possibilities for their buildings, who had actually even integrating it into their policies. They were one of the early policy adopters, which helped influence my firm to adopt a lot of green and health related policies well before Well came out. It was health, it was some of the visionaries, some were just trying to test the waters for energy efficiency and how good can my building be? So it was a myriad of things that kind of came together at once.

Charlie ([08:38](#)):

Thanks for sharing. It's great when you're able to work with some of those visionaries that really can get things done. When you're taking that massive action there. Lets talk about some other projects, so looking back on your career, obviously you've got the design side, you've got the sustainability side, but what is on the highlight reel? Michelle, what else stands out really proud for you along the way?

Michelle ([08:59](#)):

Well, life-wise, my son. I have a little one at home. I had my child a little later in life. I was very career focused and oriented and found my husband a little later in life. We decided that, I kept saying, I'll throw out my green career that was for the health of you and for your children. And now instead of saying your children, I get to say me and my child. It just has a little bit deeper ring when you say it's for you. So that was a big thing. Another proud moment was convincing the greater Orlando Aviation Authority that lead was the way of the future to do 'on their selves, terminal projects to move towards lead. And they ended up taking on a first lead version for new construction in the state of Florida for a large terminal type project.

Michelle ([09:50](#)):

And it's not an air terminal, it's a train rail terminal. It's a very long time period from when we were first discussing it in 2013-14 to eventually having the certification in 2018. So an early adoption from a large entity was probably one of my proudest moments is the influence that you can have if you really believe in what you are doing. When you have solid business case discussions, they're definitely not the visionary, they do it because it's prudent, it's economically feasible and it's the right thing to do. So that was probably in my career right now the most proud moment.

Charlie ([10:31](#)):

Well, that's so cool. I think it's really important to look back on that, that highlight reel and, and, and one thing I want to echo that you said earlier that more and more and more of my podcast guests say is, you know, you really want to find the work you love. And I think along the way it's okay to seek that out and do that work you're passionate about. I think at the end of the day, it's about giving yourself permission. Right. Would you say, Michelle, that's okay. It sounds like that's what happened to you.

Michelle ([10:55](#)):

Yeah, I think I didn't realize that I could do that before. And then when I decided that you could follow your passion and you don't have to be apologetic and as long as you believe in it and you're not pushing it on somebody, you're just giving them the information and seeing how they

react to it. It really changed how I approached things when I gave myself permission to be who I wanted to be.

Charlie ([11:19](#)):

Well that's great. So let's talk a little bit about your work with the USGBC central Florida chapter and then a little bit about the teaching that I know you love to do. So tell us some more about your involvement there. USGBC central Florida and then also helping a lot of folks pass their lead exams.

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

When I came back from Greenbuild and 2004, early 2005, I knew that we had a forming chapter and we had so many, there now regions because right now all of Florida is the community now. But, at the time we had central Florida, we had Tampa, we had the heart of Florida and we're all kind of meeting together. We decided that it was just so spread out and to make the meetings to create our own chapters. So I signed our chapter at the central Florida into existence with probably six other people, one of them my cast, who's been a great mentor and friend to me over this time period as well. I started with that and membership and worked my way through different positions on the board until I became the chapter chair and I was chapter chair when the great recession hit and we had probably some of our most profound growth at that time just because we were open, available teaching, educating people trying to move the needle forward.

Michelle ([12:37](#)):

And through that period there's transitions, what you're going to do. I formed my own small firm with my husband so we could do a little bit of residential work and in the lead realm and some kind of commercial interiors. Then decided to do education for the lead green associate. That's when it first hit and everybody wanted to figure out how do I become a LEED green associate so I can become a lead AP and I ended up teaching a lot of all day seminars or sometimes an eight person or eight times seminar once a week just to different people around town to different organizations. Eventually that led to a friend of mine who I met at the first Greenbuild show in___ he was the marketing director for Teknion at the time and they invited me to teach and I taught their webinar series for a couple of years on becoming a lead green associates.

Michelle ([13:33](#)):

It was a wonderful experience. I'm really kind of elevated how I taught and what I thought about and bringing in more and more tips on how to pass the exam. So it really expanded my teaching ability and I'm forever grateful to him as well. He ended up being such a great friend and mentor through this all. And still to this day we have phone conversations about what you're doing, where you should be, what's the next thing.

Charlie ([13:59](#)):

I'm really glad you do that. It's great to teach this material and help someone understand the latest with these programs and also pass their exam boost their career on where to go. Let's fast forward to today. Tell us more about the work you do at SchenkelShultz and your firm and maybe some of the projects you're working on.

Michelle ([14:19](#)):

Well for the past seven years I've been working at SchenkelShultz, actually I think it's eight this March, it's eight. Wow. Time flies! Started to work for a specific client for the greater Orlando Aviation Authority just to see what we needed to do. It's really evolved into more of a mentorship for all of the firm, for different lead projects, different 20, 30 challenge projects, whatever your sustainability goal might be to really get in there and help them. We have other aviation projects, we have schools, some public work and we have some private work. I've just been branching out and working a bit with some of the studio teams to help them understand LEED version for the differences, what you should do, what you need to do in the beginning. It's been great because I'm teaching as I'm doing how to pursue this, what strategies to look for in the beginning, how to discuss your lead boundary and what makes sense. I really enjoy that a lot of things have solar and EV on the project and learning about floating solar from a project that's going on at the airport as well. So it's been quite a myriad of things to do and a great evolution of my project types and the influence in the teaching. So it's been a really wonderful experience.

Charlie ([15:40](#)):

And I guess some of those lead credits that maybe in the past were so hard to get or gosh, this would never hit one of our project designs. Now it's becoming the norm and it's kind of fun. That's a, it's exciting to hear. For

those that don't know, tell us some more about floating solar. What what do we need to know about that?

Michelle ([15:57](#)):

Well, what I like about it, especially for somebody who's kind of landlocked and Florida, we have a lot of water. It makes sense for aviation because it has no more glare. You have to have a filler glare analysis for the FAA to be able to even consider it to make sure that it would be a possibility and it has less glare than the water that it sits on. So you're looking for a compatibility source where floating solar is something that's very compatible and so now we're in partnership with a local utility. They're the one that's going to put it in and run it for us. But hopefully in a few months we'll see it. One of our ponds, as you fly over, instead of the normal rectangle, you can get a little creative there. You might be able to see our logo within that. I'm kind of excited about that. I think the most difficult part has been trying to figure out how to light it up at night because we want to make sure that you see it when you're flying in the nighttime as well. Other than that, it's been pretty simple in the design and execution. It's, it's more of just getting everybody's ducks in a row and getting it in the right spot.

Charlie ([17:11](#)):

Thank you for sharing that. I learned something there. Michelle, you've been doing this awhile. You're lead fellow, you're definitely a sustainability guru. I've got to ask if you had a crystal ball, you know, what's around the corner in this sustainability and this green building movement? What should we be reading up on now?

Michelle ([17:28](#)):

I've always thought that sustainability and technology has gone hand in hand and the more control and education and knowledge that you have, I think that it's going to move more towards app based products that are an easier interface to understand the information of why you're doing something and what your benefit is very quickly. I would be looking for more, you have it on your phone handheld, here's the app, it tells you what you should be doing, how you should be changing your shades if they changed on your building, why they changed? And so that you have that transparency and that immediacy in the information. I just think it's going to become more and more immediate.

Charlie ([18:08](#)):

I really agree with that. Everything from not just real time data with wellness thermostats to your point that app and that kind of building operating system. How do we get quicker access to our sustainability data? And if you click on an object in a BIM model, Hey, here's your bleed cut sheet who knows where it could go? Awesome. So thank you for giving us that peek into the future. Anything else though that maybe you and your team are kind of spending extra time on for example, Well and Fit Well, you're a Well AP. What are you doing with the wellness movement?

Michelle ([18:44](#)):

I've been looking at some projects, a few consultants or clients that are interested in, not quite ready to dip in, but I do use those strategies towards my innovation points for lead whenever possible or just to talk to them about the policies and what they're doing and what resonates within my find anything. And you're talking about Well, it really resonates with the client much more than lead does because first and foremost, your conversations are about people. And so when they get to understand that and understand they have more control and some of the building is there, but it's more about your people and the information. They pick up a lot more. I'm getting more interest, but I haven't gotten somebody to dive in yet.

Charlie ([19:32](#)):

Yeah, it's coming. I really think after the current crisis settles out, I think people are gonna really be curious, what do we need to be doing? How do we have a healthier building, et cetera, et cetera. So what would you say Michelle's your gift? What do you, what are you best at so far in your life and your career?

Michelle ([19:48](#)):

Well, luckily the firm that we went for LEED gold, we did a lot of work with the project managers about knowing yourself coming in and talking about the future of the firm. And I didn't realize it at the time, but somebody said something and I realized that I was a visionary, that I could see what was coming up and I didn't quite know what to do with it yet, but I could see it. And then I'm also a planner by nature. So I will write down a plan and a list and break it down and knock it down into little pieces so that it's bite-sized

and accomplishable. I think it's kind of a great way to marry the, I can see something and then I can figure out how to make it happen.

Charlie ([20:31](#)):

Yeah. That is a gift when you can have both of those together usually. You know, there's some that are really good starters, sometimes finishers but not necessarily the planner in the middle too. So that's what's cool. Thanks for sharing. Let's talk about best practices. You know, do you have any routines, rituals, any pro tips, any packs that just help you stay productive?

Michelle ([20:52](#)):

Well, I've always been a self care proponent. I do yoga and lately in our own home we've been practicing well by creating green walls. So biophilia is a big thing for me. So you have interior and we have some exterior and I try to spend time out there thinking, focusing, being in the moment as much as I can. And then I really find that that lets me come back. That's my list, making time, I Zen out then I make a few lists and then I start thinking, okay, what's more important in this list? With my priority and move on from there. So I'm pretty intentional about slowing down and taking everything in before I move.

Charlie ([21:35](#)):

Good. Oh, thanks for sharing those best practices. As we get to know each other more, Michelle, I'm a fan of the bucket list and I'm curious, what are one or two things on your bucket list?

Michelle ([21:45](#)):

Well, you know, everybody has the travel, which now it's a little bit more difficult to do, but I really do want to see the United Kingdom, England, Ireland, Scotland, take my family. I think that it would be a great trip for my husband and my son and I to do together. But when I was thinking about where my career would go and where I eventually would, what I would do when I retire, I probably ended up teaching, but I really wanted to be a found object artist and figure out, inspire, and bring that back. And I've actually won an art contest for some found arts. That's a possibility. You might see me doing art more than lead now.

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

It sounds like you know what to do. You know it makes you happy. It's pretty cool and thanks for sharing. And the travel will come back. It's just wild times right now of course. So let's talk about books. Is there a book you've recently read or listened to maybe make a great gift? Is there a book you'd recommend?

Michelle ([22:54](#)):

Well, I'm not a really big book person, but if you hand it to me and you sign it, I tend to keep it.

Michelle ([23:02](#)):

One that I've really enjoyed is Sessions of Radical Industrialists and Ray Anderson came to speak at one of our USGVC events and really got to spend some time with him. And he's an amazing storyteller and facilitator and listener. And that book really was, I thought it was great, anybody should read it. If you just want to learn about somebody, not necessarily the green movement. I mean, you'll learn about it, but I think that's a great book. I've also been given the Big Pivot and Innovation in a Hotter, Scarce or more Open-World by Andrew Winston. I like it because it's very research filled and I love to do research. Now I don't like to read books but I love to research, which is kind of strange. And so that book had a really poignant business case and examples of what people are doing research that's relevant. So if you want something that, everything you're highlighting and underlining everything in the book, that's the book.

Charlie ([24:04](#)):

Wow. All right. I'm going to put those links in the podcast show notes and yeah, I'm based here in Atlanta. I went to Georgia Tech, so Ray Anderson, a pretty critical figure early on. So we'll make sure everybody gets access there and can link over to that book. Michelle as we come to a close two part closing question one is, you know, is there anything you wished you'd known earlier in your career?

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

To be agile? When I was younger I was a little bit more sedentary and a little more afraid, but just really to think about being agile, evolving with the times and thinking about what you could do. Always search for the next what's next.

Charlie ([24:38](#)):

That's really good. Thank you. That might be related to really the last part, which is some listening right now who are just now jumping into the green building movement. I know you love to teach LEED green associates, so do I, you know, get that credential. It helps boost your career, but what other advice would you give to someone that's just now jumping in?

Michelle ([24:56](#)):

Well, I think that you can find sustainability in everything that we do and we are going to become more and more sustainable in every field. So whatever really peaks your interest beyond sustainability to hone your skills on that, to kind of think on that as well. And the sustainability I really think will just come. It's just going to be an integral part of it.

Charlie ([25:18](#)):

Love it. No, this has been a really fun conversation. You know, I just want to say thank you. This has been Michelle DeLora AIA lead fellow. Well AP. Keep up the great work. Thanks for being on today.

Michelle ([25:29](#)):

Thank you so much. I really enjoyed being here.

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

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 are so 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.

Charlie ([25:59](#)):

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