

Beyond Carbon: Why the Future of Sustainable Materials Requires a Holistic Approach with Annie Bevan | Transcript

00:02

Speaker 1

Welcome to Green Building Matters, the original and most popular podcast focused on the green building movement. Your host is Charlie Cicchetti, one of the most credentialed experts in the green building industry and one of the few to be honored as a lead 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. So settle in, grab a fresh cup of coffee, and get ready to find out why green building matters.

00:34

Speaker 2

Hey, everybody. Welcome to the next episode of the Green Building Matters podcast. I've got the easy job. Once a week, I interview just someone brilliant in this green building movement. Sometimes we're going tech decarbonization. Just, you know, who knows where the conversation will go because these are just fascinating careers. I've got Amy on today. Can't wait to unpack her story. Amy, how you doing?

00:54

Speaker 3

I'm doing great, Charlie. Thanks for having me today. I appreciate being here.

00:58

Speaker 2

Well, you were recommended from one of our previous guests and a friend who's elite fellow, and I've been checking out your background. I know this is going to be a fun conversation. So for our listeners, if you would take us back. So where did you grow up and go to school?

01:11

Speaker 3

Yeah, great. Thanks, Charlie. And so I went to the University of Delaware, but that wasn't where my sustainability journey started. My mom likes to tell me tell a story, in which case she found me at 5 years old surrounded by books about the earth and the environment, and I just fell asleep with like, all these books around me. Yeah. Some of the reason, though, Charlie, was because I was terrified of thunderstorms when I was a kid. I was, I was trying to learn more

about what made these, like, loud, scary noises. That was. I just didn't like them. And I actually studied the earth because of that fear and then actually went to college studying upper atmospheric climatology and geology to become a tornado chaser, of all things, is what I thought I wanted to do in school.

02:02

Speaker 3

Of course, when you're 18 making these decisions, you then realize the ramifications of that. I would have had to move to Iowa, Kansas, what have you. And I decided I didn't want to move there at the time. And so I got into sustainability right after going to the University of Delaware to start and got a job right in the green building movement right after that. So that's sort of little history of how I got to where I was based on being scared of thunderstorms when I was a kid. And then Turning that into learning about the Earth and then seeing how we can, we could save it from there.

02:32

Speaker 2

So fascinating. I, you know, I know we're recording this now here later in the summer and we had a crazy storm last night and at the end of 2020, a hurricane came through Atlanta and actually knocked a tree down on our house. It landed on top of, you know, me and my wife were okay. And so let's just say one of my boys is pretty scared too of these storms that we get a lot here in the Southeast, even outside of Atlanta. So. So yeah, that's kind of even a personal connection here. Later you can tell us, do you like movies like Twister and the sequel Twisters? You know, I didn't mind or Glenn Powell.

03:07

Speaker 4

Okay.

03:07

Speaker 2

So yeah, I mean studying literally a different part of the environment, but then you start to understand and discover green building. So. So yeah, I, I do ask about sustainability. Like what were some of those early sustainability projects maybe you were working on early in your career?

03:24

Speaker 3

Yeah, so I actually got my start working for Tad and Tara Radzinski. They own this sustainable solutions corporation and Green Circle Certified and I was one of the first employees and took Green Circle Certified, a third party verification

organization, from its start to in its early phase and grew that in the beginning of my career. So I got a lot of really great opportunity and traditional sustainability consulting as well as learning how things are made, how to verify claims, what is a valid environmental claim. Tad was a technical mentor to me and really helped me in my first position to get a lot of experience not only in going to manufacturing facilities, but also in how to run a business. Dara really helped me grow up, if I can be honest with you, a little bit of an embarrassing story. Charlie.

04:11

Speaker 3

I'm a 22 year old kid and I'm now a CEO. I tell the story often just to reflect on where you come from in everybody's learning and a human and growing. And I forgot my shoes for work one day. I used to wear, this is. I used to wear flip flops to the office and used to take my flip flops on, walk in the house, no shoes on. And I got to work one day and realized my flip flops weren't in the car. And so I had to go in and tell my boss that I forgot my shoes and had to go back and get my shoes.

04:43

Speaker 3

So the tolerance and the opportunity to learn and grow and my first job was, I will always remember that and the respect and teaching that they did and they still are running their company and love to see their continued success as they've continued on here as well.

04:59

Speaker 2

Well, great mentors to teach you Grace. Yeah. Now in a little bit we'll talk about you and your position CEO and I'm sure you give Grace as needed to and benefit of the doubt. So yeah, thanks for telling that humbling story there. So, okay, so early sustainability green buildings may be starting to show up, but yeah. Any other mentors though? Sometimes a mentor, Annie. For some people you read their material, you see them on stage, they influence you. Sometimes it's someone that challenges you. Open doors. Any other mentors along the way so far?

05:30

Speaker 3

Oh, there's been a ton. You know, you do the evolution of anyone's career is always interesting to unpack and learn about and I'm don't have to get into all the twists and turns, but I've really appreciated learning from other peers more recently. So I've been able to talk to the folks like Wendy Vittori, who's the

executive director of the Health Product Declaration Collaborative, and learn from her and her 45 years of experience in tech and then running nonprofits and other experiences she's had. Gina from Habitable, CEO of Habitable has been a tremendous mentor and peer to think about strategies of how to accelerate impact reduction at scale globally.

06:13

Speaker 3

Linda Sorrento, who used to run education with the United States Green Building Council, she has been and was the COO emerita to Mindful materials when I was the CEO there and just a tremendous leader in governance for proper governance for nonprofit that I learned a lot from. And then Colleen Hamilton, who's my chief people officer at my company, the Sustainability Management and Strategy Collaborative, really helping to unpack business strategies as it relates to employee support and continued evolution and expectation setting and clarity and transparency and leaning into hard conversations, but that being actually the most respectful thing to do rather than shying away from those hard conversations. So rallying off a lot of names.

06:58

Speaker 3

But there's been a lot of incredible people that I've learned from that I've gotten the opportunity to work alongside to really build a movement over the last decade plus in this work.

07:09

Speaker 2

So that's amazing. You know, for our listeners. What I'm hearing here is that Annie, you must be coachable. I think to be successful on anything, you got to be coachable. So it sounds like you like to learn. I love chief people officer because you know, even though we're in this green building movement, in this mission driven work and that rallies a lot of people, especially young people. You still need to have great leaders. You know, there's a big difference between managers and leaders and just this influence. So I'm seeing what you've picked up on your mentors there. So. Okay, so next let's kind of look back on the highlight reel. What are some of your proudest achievements so far?

07:49

Speaker 3

So I started my own company in 2017, the Sustainability Management and Strategy Collaborative. I have now successfully run a profitable business for the last 10 years, which is not for the faint of heart. Charlie, I gotta tell you know, everybody wants to be that CEO, wants to own company. And man is it harder

than anyone would ever is what I've learned over the last 10 years. But gosh, what a great opportunity. And I'm so honored to have worked with such amazing folks that have come in and out of the organization and respect every single person that has contributed to growing the Sustainability Management Strategy Collaborative. The SMSC collaborates with industry leaders to co create tools and resources to accelerate sustainable action.

08:34

Speaker 3

So some of the holdup for any progress being made across any industry is that there isn't a roadmap and there isn't collective tools that really speak to the business value for anyone to do anything. So SMSC collaborates with nonprofits or other industries leaders to create these tools and resources to accelerate business value and also to see sustainable action move forward. So we focused our work in the built environment, in the life science industry and now more recently in the EPR packaging industry. Some example of that is my tenure as the CEO for the last five years of mindful materials, helping the industry create a common language for sustainable building products aligned with five impacts. Really connecting third party verification and eco labels and the data certified within them and connecting that to impact so we can all start to think about sustainable products holistically.

09:28

Speaker 3

The impacts holistically, but also communicate. I come from a manufacturing background. A lot of my work is Charlie. And the thousands of spreadsheets that any manufacturer receives from any given architecture and design firm. The system to be able to determine what is a sustainable building product is flawed. And then also the sheer amount of requests that are inconsistent and all over the place, just right wasting time, energy and money. How can we make this more streamlined? This vision really started back when I was leading The Living Product 50 Work with Living Future with a colleague, Alex Muller. At the time it was a place where building product manufacturers were assembling and I was the global head of sustainability for Superior Essex through my company smsc, we provide sustainable staffing services through parallel, our division of SMSC.

10:16

Speaker 3

But you know, that was the time of 2010 where these letters were going out within the industry. If you don't have an HPD or an epd, we're not going to specify you. There was every major firm sent these letters out to these building product manufacturers. It was at the time when Leap version 4 first was published. Building products were like, oh my gosh, we got to do this because

our customers are asking. So they invested hundreds of thousands of dollars to understand their environmental and human health impacts and got to interact with their supply chains, creating all these EPDs and HPDs. And my company, the Spirastics Communications at the time invested, were the first communication cable manufacturer to invest in EPDs and HPDs and remain to be a leader in the sustainability industry.

10:59

Speaker 3

The president came to me and he said, hey Annie, can you show me that this has an roi? We just spent all this money and I need to make sure that it matters to the business or the customers actually specifying products because of this. And I was like, oh my gosh, I, I can't tell you Brad, and thank you for asking because it's obviously a very valid question. So I'm like, is it just cable? Like because, you know, it's cable behind the walls and we touches feels sees that it's not front of mine. Once my peers in the industry, the directors of sustainability for carpet, flooring, furniture, et cetera at the LP50, none of us saw that it was actually making a change in the way decisions were. Sustainability wasn't a decision part of the decision making practice.

11:41

Speaker 3

So that then had the all of us come together. About 90 building product manufacturers signed a letter to the architecture and design community saying, hey, thank you for asking us for this information. We've done a lot of work. Now we need to see that it matters. And that was actually the impetus of the Mindful Materials movement all the way back 10 years ago, starting with the Living Product 50 this letter exchange that then caused the AI materials pledge to be released as a response to that letter. And then the common materials framework needed to be created so that we could have a way for manufacturers to address those five impact categories that the AI Materials Pledge developed and released. So background story there Star that was so long winded, Charlie.

12:21

Speaker 3

But there's a lot of highlights and it's all about moving people forward and the industry forward with a vision and a way to make it easier to make decisions that Affect impact reduction overall.

12:33

Speaker 2

Well, what an accomplishment too to just, you know, be challenged and say, gosh, we need to be able to answer this question, like it or not. And to our

listeners, a lot of this still has to make good business sense. Right. Then we're going to get a lot more of it done. So yeah, that's pretty cool on the mindful material side. So before we talk about SMS and present day, just educate us a little bit. What's the difference between an EPD and a hpd? And you know, I'd argue that, you know, pandemic hit and it just was all about healthy buildings and now it's about decarbonization. That's more EPDs. But yeah, you're saying something here. No, there's a heck of a lot more out there about materials. There's \$13 trillion in construction every year in the world. That's a lot of materials.

13:16

Speaker 2

So I don't know, what do we need to know about materials? And could you clear up the difference there? EPD and hpd.

13:22

Speaker 3

So I'm going to. Yeah. Take a step back and just note that buildings are made up of products and we have done a really decent job as an industry to be able to measure the impact, the operational impact of projects, of buildings themselves. But what we haven't really been able to unpack is what is the impact of the products that make up the buildings, the embodied impacts of the products. EPDs, HPDs, declare labels, cradle to cradle certifications, these are all certifications for products to start to address the impacts that come with producing them. What we're seeing, the industry and lead version 5, even to start to expand to that was based on the impetus of the AM Materials pledge and then the common language, the common materials framework looking at products impacts holistically. So there's been different aspects of this movement that you mentioned.

14:22

Speaker 3

Healthy materials were king. What's the compositional chemistry and how toxic are these materials? That was sort of the first wave. The second wave was what's the carbon impact of these products? There's been third, fourth waves. What's the social equity impact? What's the forced labor impact? What's the end of life impact? Is this recyclable at the end of life circularity. Then we're starting to scratch the surface on biodiversity and the ecological impact of products being made. All this goes back to every single product has impact in multi areas. We're starting to see an ability and a realization that it can't be carbon or health. It needs to Be both. And because if you just look at the carbon impact, you actually could be finding the most carbon reduced impactful product, but it could be the most toxic.

15:22

Speaker 3

So we can't have regrettable substitutions by just looking in tunnel vision in one area. And so this whole movement is actually enabling the industry and people who don't know what an epd, HPD is, but they know what climate health is and they know what human health is and they know what social health inequity is. The common materials framework actually unpacks the details, the science into just normal terms that anyone can then say, hey, I don't want products. I want to find the product that addresses and reduces impact on climate health the most or human health the most and then be able to look at those and saying is there any toss ups or is this the most, is this the least impactful carbon product and the most impactful human elf? Well, what do I do now?

16:08

Speaker 3

And so it's just starting to shed light on being able to make these impactful product decisions, but not just through one lens, through all of the impacts that a product could have overall.

16:18

Speaker 2

I love that climate health, they need to be together in sales, right? Are we selling vitamins? Are we selling painkillers? I think for many years and I built up a lead consulting firm. Some might look at it as a nice to have a vitamin, but no, there's local mandates, New York City, Local Law 97, there's penalties and I can't lease this building unless it's got this certification. And but the other painkiller here, you're right. Of health, I mean, could you imagine as a landlord and someone getting sick in your building? I mean like you can't do it. So. So just remember and to our listeners, you're in this movement or some of you are joining this movement. It might feel like vitamin is nice to have, but it's okay.

16:54

Speaker 2

We're positive people and I can tell you and I probably the glass is pretty full, the whiskey glass is pretty full, so to speak. And over here it's okay to say, hey, let me point out this is actually a painkiller. We got to do it, you know, so. Okay, so let's talk present day. Tell us a day in the life of Annie. Tell us more about sms, the kind of work you and your team are doing.

17:15

Speaker 3

So Charlie, just to actually reflect on what you just said there, the ultimate goal

of all this is actually to support the investor and insurance communities, which is where the money flows from for projects. If an investor can understand the reduction of total impact of a project or the limited liability or risk associated with the products that are making up the building itself. That's the type of reporting automation that we're going to be able to provide if and when this system starts to accelerate and identifying what is a more sustainable building product. Also what is the limited limitation of risk associated with insurance so this building actually has less toxic materials that make it up. Think about the risk mitigation opportunities there. With that realization, there's going to be more to come and more deep, you know, efforts that go into this.

18:02

Speaker 3

But yes, it is all about business and it's all about streaming time, energy and money to make it easier to make these decisions. So I just want to point back to what you just said from a business perspective here and the depth of the business realities of all of this.

18:16

Speaker 2

Thanks. That's foundational. Okay, so yeah, what keeps you busy? Tell us more about your company and you've got a couple big things going on.

18:24

Speaker 3

And what's so SMS Collaborative, I explained that parent organization and the efforts we do to support industries to move work forward in collaboration. We have two divisions within SMS Collaborative, which is Parallel Sustainability and Verico. Our divisions bring the industry leading work that we support to life. So Parallel is a fractional sustainability staffing organization to building product manufacturers. So we help put wind in sails. And coming from building product manufacturer myself or traditional sustainability consulting background that I started in, I just realized back in 2017 there is just such a need to have fractional support. Headcounts can't be realized. But sustainability within any organization is not just one person can support. So how can we bring fractional help, expert help to integrate overnight to accelerate sustainable strategy implementation and leveraging sustainability to the forefront of organizations. So that's what Parallel does.

19:28

Speaker 3

And we have Victoria Owens who's the managing director of that division and she's been doing a great job in growing a great team and supporting a lot of

manufacturers in accelerating their work. And then Verico is a third party verification organization. We do not create standards. We partner with standard bodies to be a true third party verification organization. We do third party verification in the built environment, in the life science industry and in EPR packaging. So that organization focuses beyond the built environment where Parallel focuses solely with building new product manufacturers. Rebecca Backer is the managing director of that organization. Again also growing a great organization with valid third party verification claims in mind. So that is a separate entity and they're both separately run by these Two amazing women.

20:16

Speaker 2

Got it. Okay. And, you know, I mean, you're in the. In the Philadelphia area, right? So just, you know, where do you want to take things, though? What's. What's your vision for. You want to take this?

20:29

Speaker 3

So, yeah. Born and raised outside of Philly, but I have worked mainly on the national and global scales for the majority of my work for the movement.

20:39

Speaker 2

Work.

20:40

Speaker 3

There is a need to globally accelerate awareness of the tools that nonprofits have brought to the industry. Nonprofits like Habitable, who've created the inform tool product categories ranking products green to red, and their goal is to eliminate the red products from existence in the built environment. And that would systemically change the impact of the built environment globally. These are programs that I'd love to see proliferate at a global scale. The other aspect we started to talk today a little bit more entirely is technology. Some of this has been so hard because we haven't been able to say this is what a sustainable product is really until now. And then also it's been manually done through spreadsheets. And every individual firm, every organization is communicating a slightly different way manually. We need infrastructure where data quality, data can flow where decisions are happening.

21:34

Speaker 3

Make it easier to identify what is a product that meets your firm's requirements

or lead requirements, automated, and that takes data infrastructure on the back end. The stuff nobody really wants to talk about but must happen in order for this movement to actually proliferate so globally. These areas of focus that I am excited to continue to support and more to come on both of those fronts in the near future. From an SMSE perspective, from a parallel and Veraco perspective, I'm excited to see more support to building product manufacturers to meet the ongoing demands. And then from Veraco, just continuing to validate sustainability claims. And all of these aspects are part of like this growing how to make it easier and more affordable to do this work into the future.

22:17

Speaker 2

A couple of things there. You know, I'd love if later you could send me. Here's a cheat sheet of these amazing tools out there. Right? There's a lot of tools you're involved with. Some is, you know, where do I go for this? Where do I go for that? And that's something I'd like to share with our listeners. I can put it in the podcast show notes. I can tell Annie, as a leader, you give a lot of credit to the team around you and the folks running these different organizations and tools. So that's amazing.

22:43

Speaker 5

Hey, quick question. You spent months, maybe years earning LEED certification So why are you still hanging a generic plaque on the wall? With buildingplaques.com, you can showcase what actually made your project achieve LEED. Highlight your scorecard, your design strategy, your team, architects, engineers, contractors, owners, all in one clean, modern display. Their plaques are fully customizable in minutes, built with durable architectural grade materials, and arrive ready to install. This isn't just a plaque, it's a storytelling tool for your building. If you're proud of the work, show the work. Go to buildingplaques.com and design yours today.

23:26

Speaker 2

All right, we've got technology before. We totally go to what's next in our rapid fire. I learned earlier you're a big fan of technology. So can AI help with this? There's so much data. You said spreadsheets a few times. A lot of this industry is still in spreadsheets. I don't know, what do you think AI could do to maybe help?

23:44

Speaker 3

Well, it can help, but harnessing the power of AI with human experience is what

I see the industry in the world really being at the precipice of AI and so much chatter around the capabilities of it. But the reality is that we haven't harnessed the power of it effectively because there's a infrastructure that needs to be created for AI to actually support what AI can do. And that is only able to be provided through collaborative, the collaborative spirit of multiple organizations working together to accelerate an ecosystem, to get that data to automate and get that data to work for them. And AI is a tool to accelerate that. I'd say there is a lot of value AI can bring. I use AI Claude, you know, often, even just business decision making, but, you know, other things.

24:37

Speaker 3

But the power of IT needs to be harnessed and it's not going to be able to support anything unless there's a consolidated, focused effort to use it in the right ways.

24:48

Speaker 2

That's fair. And I'm currently building a AI startup, so we'll compare notes on that.

24:53

Speaker 3

Yeah, that sounds good, Charlie.

24:54

Speaker 2

So we've connected a lot of things. Your background, gosh, you got so many fun initiatives going now. So let's talk about. Yeah, what's next? So in this, maybe on the material side, for example, what's the crystal ball show you? What are you reading up on what's next?

25:13

Speaker 3

So I am really excited about some of the work we're doing with the Living Future organization. We just supported them in expanding the role of declare, I think continuing to help the industry unpack multi attribute impacts. And so their evolution of the Declare program, the three sister label program will be really exciting to see come to the forefront. So what that is. And Living Future has had the Declare program which basically describes through an attrition label format does this product have some of the worst chemicals in it or not? Transparently. That's what a Declare label has done. That Declare label and that Declare program is evolving to now become Declare Health.

26:04

Speaker 3

And then later this year they're going to release Declare Equity which would actually be the first third party certification that certifies social equity claims for product manufacturers both in supply chain and at their company. And then Declared Environment will be released next. And so all three of these labels will become the new Living Product Challenge certification to provide another multi attribute evaluation schema that actually helps onboard manufacturers to just what is table stakes now and then how can you actually move forward on a path to reducing those impacts not just being transparent about them, which is exciting to see. And they are building a new platform which will help enable that data that's verified within that program to flow into workflow tools. So like aslab and Building Ease and Eco and Sustainable Minds and others like them out there.

26:55

Speaker 3

This data will then be available and able to be used when in decision making tools that architects and designers are using in their workflow compared to firm standards automated. But that program and this system is an example of the next phase of what's coming. And so I'm excited to see that continue to proliferate, see programs like Cradle to Cradle start to proliferate and See lead version 5 actually becoming on the market as the only rating system versus continuing to see version 4.1 project still allowed till next year. So this is one example of a direct project that I'm excited about. But there's so many that EPR regulation upcoming and what that's doing to packaging and how people are considering plastics. There's a lot of aspects of sustainability I think is moving forward despite headwinds that we've all been facing recently.

27:47

Speaker 2

It's exciting. Those are some great initiatives. I need to read up on more of those. So we'll put some links for our listeners in the show notes. But some would say there's sustainability but maybe now there's decarbonization, maybe there's resiliency. This work we do maybe needs to fit under those. But let's not forget about just overall health, wellness and what you said climate health. And I like that new umbrella. I'm gonna, I'm gonna use that. So. Okay, well let's Go to the rapid fire part of our podcast interview. Annie, this is awesome. Getting to know you well. What's your specialty or gift?

28:21

Speaker 3

I have an opportunity to understand pain points and be able to vision out how, through collective action, those pain points can be reduced for all stakeholders across industries. I would say is a gift I bring and have brought. I'm excited to continue to accelerate some of that visioning so that we can make this easier. Holistic impacts has been scary. You just mentioned resilience, decarbonization, health. These are all topics, but they all can be brought in together and it doesn't have to be as hard as it has been. And that's something that I believe is a gift of mine to see and that I'm excited to continue to support the industry in accelerating so that we can collectively reduce our impacts while still building businesses that are profitable.

29:08

Speaker 2

Awesome. Well, and it seems like, you know, you've got all this experience in this industry and you can just, you know, see things that some others don't see. Like you said, just looking at some materials with these manufacturers and just get right to it. And here's what we can do better. So how about habits or routines, rituals, you know, anything you could share that helps you?

29:27

Speaker 3

Well, I'm a huge proponent of therapy and I'm a huge proponent of working out. And so I do try and get out there and go outside every day and go for a run. Trying to go more. Recently started running five miles every Sunday just as a routine to just try and, you know, get it all out there and be able to be healthy in the long term. Trying to be a little less on my computer all the time and a little bit more able to take a step back. And I've noticed that by taking a step back, it's actually enabled my brain to think better and more clearly. And when you're not in front of your computer all the time, it actually unlocks a lot more.

30:05

Speaker 3

So trying to give and build in space to take walks and think as opposed to just being, quote, productive all the time and calls these zoom meetings really do suck the soul out of your body if you're on all the time.

30:17

Speaker 2

So, yeah, no, right. We need more walking meetings and just let's get moving. And those are great. So thanks for sharing there. I'm a fan of the bucket list. Not everybody has a bucket list for some mania. It's a travel adventure, maybe write a book. I don't know what's on the bucket list.

30:36

Speaker 3

I have two bucket list items that I am continuing to support my businesses to grow. And as I build a business that I am handing off to folks to continue to run into the future, which I'm excited to work on and focus on right now, my partner and I want to start a glamping site that then could be built out into a restaurant. She's a really great cook and I would love to see her cooking talents and community building talents to help people restore, and really connect with nature in a nice way where you don't have to worry about setting up a tent. You can just arrive, have a really nice experience, and then have some good food and cocktails alongside it. This is our dream, sort of our next phase of our world that we want to create together.

31:20

Speaker 3

And then right before that, in between, maybe, you know, moving on from running a business. And that's not anytime soon. Just noting we do want to go on the Great Loop, which is a bo the Great Lakes down the Mississippi, around the coast of Florida and up the Intercontinental Intercoastal Waterway. We want to see the United States through a boat and meet a lot of people that way. So those are two bucket list items. We don't know the timing, but they will happen at some point and hopefully sooner rather than later. Alongside continuing to support this industry to do great work.

31:54

Speaker 2

All right. I'm glad I had a mask. That's a very exciting pair of bucket list adventures. I recently took my family glamping outside a Great Smoky Mountain national park just north of us. I'm in Atlanta, kind of just outside of Gatlinburg. Yeah, forgot how nice it was. We set foot on the Appalachian Trail, which goes right through there too. So just. And for our listeners, by now you might have picked up on it. Not shown because this is audio. I have a bunch of rare bourbon behind me and I love the idea of some good cocktails there at the glamping site. So.

32:29

Speaker 3

Hey, would love to have that bourbon collection. Sometimes you Charlie dreams. Now that's on my bucket list.

32:37

Speaker 2

I'll come up when you get the glamping open. I'll do some bourbon tastings on me. That'll be fun.

32:41

Speaker 3

There we go. We got it. We got it all planned. That sounds good. I'll let you know.

32:45

Speaker 2

Books. I love to ask my podcast guests, is there a book you'd recommend? It doesn't have to be about buildings. If not a book, could be a podcast or documentary. Just. Just kind of a pro tip. This inspired me. Anything you'd share?

32:57

Speaker 3

Yeah, I just recently tried to make more Space for reading to just check in. You know, you do the best you can as a leader and you're a human and you're continuously learning as you're building a business. A book I just recently started to re pick back up is Good to great by Jim Collins. I think it's a fit if anybody, if you're start thinking about running a business, currently running a business. It really is five great focus areas to build a business that is great, not just good. And so that's something that I have just recently repicked up and have appreciated that perspective.

33:33

Speaker 2

Oh, such a good one. And even for those listening that maybe are just part of an organization, part of a business, you got to read that one. It does such a good job of not just flywheel and momentum and just, you know, hedgehog, but just, you know, at the end of the day it's. There's brands you'll recognize, right? Kodak this, but this one's out. And so I think it's good for anybody here.

33:55

Speaker 3

Great, Charlie.

33:56

Speaker 2

So I love just productivity books, business books, you know, just atomic habits. James Clear. I mean, you know, you don't rise to the level of your goals, you fall to the level of your systems and habits. So yeah, you and I can riff on that.

So yeah. All right, last couple things here. Annie, this is awesome. As you look back on your career so far, is there. What, Is there anything you wish someone would have told you earlier? Any career advice you wish you'd have learned earlier?

34:24

Speaker 3

It's a great question, Charlie. And you know, there's. It's actually like my brain's like overpowered with thoughts, which is why I'm. I can't actually get a thought out there. But there's going to be a lot of the world that tells you should stop for whatever reason. But if you believe in something, don't let the world tell you not to keep going. It's important. And if you care deeply about making change, no, it's not going to be met with open arms all the time. And that you need to have your own respect for your own self to be able to accelerate what you believe in, despite what anybody might tell you. Keep going.

35:02

Speaker 2

That's amazing. Absolutely. No, this world, we. We need to give each other not just benefit of the doubt, which I picked up from you early, but encouragement. Man, this is tough. It's crazy out there. I've got my oldest son. He's 18. We're, we're happy. He got accepted to a local Atlanta college. So we get a bonus year with our oldest son, and he'll keep.

35:21

Speaker 3

There you go. Good for you guys. Big changes for y' all this year, it sounds like, though.

35:25

Speaker 2

Yeah, we got three boys, 18, 15, and 13. And. But you're right, encouragement, especially as an entrepreneur, right, Annie? In the same day, you can have the highest of highs and the lowest of lows is like, oh, man, I gotta make payroll on Friday. So you're right. You need to give more encouragement. So. So for our listeners, I would second what. And he's saying is just. Just be the one to give some encouragement. Someone probably needs it today.

35:48

Speaker 3

I think our tendency right now is to tear it down, when really it's. Actually, could you imagine what if positive reinforcement was given more and more as opposed to the, you know, I don't like that person. I don't. I don't think they.

They should be doing what they're doing. And it's like, that isn't productive and that's not going to help us get to where we need to go. And so how can we, you know, pat each other on the back despite differences? That might be an opinion. Being more positive to each other and supportive and caring because we are all human beings and all of us are here to try and make a change while grow our careers. And if we're all understanding that's the common ground, then let's not try and tear each other down. Just encourage each other.

36:29

Speaker 2

I can tell we need to hang out and drink Suburban. I'll come up to Philly. This will be fun. But to our listeners, you probably heard it before, but Gandhi said, be the change you want in the world. And you're hearing it here from Annie. And Annie, I agree with you. So. And my mom, she taught me she's a very positive person. Any. Where there's a will, there's a way. So just, you know, hey, we're. We're right there. So to our listeners, here's that encouragement you needed today. But so lastly, let's say someone's just now jumping in. They're jumping into this sustainability movement. It's been good to you. It's been good to me. Any words of encouragement for them, Annie,.

36:58

Speaker 3

As we wrap up, the community needs all of us. And there is a role for all of us to play. And if you. If anyone listening wants to talk, to unpack what roles there are to play, I'm an open resource and here to make connections and share my perspective if and however, that would be helpful. But know that there is so much to do and so much manpower and bandwidth for passionate people who care to make a difference. And even if you're met with not exactly the support you're wanting from your own organization, there are so many things to do and so many ways to combat this problem. There's a place for you here.

37:33

Speaker 2

Well, I've been inspired on this chat. I do hope we get to hang out so to our listeners. Connect with Annie on LinkedIn, check out all these amazing tools and these organizations she's involved with. And I just want to say hey, thanks for listening to the podcast, Annie. Thanks for sharing some time with us today. Thanks so much.

37:49

Speaker 3

Thank you Charlie. Thanks everybody.

37:53

Speaker 4

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38:23

Speaker 2

Enjoyed it, leave a comment.

38:25

Speaker 4

Positive review on itunes.

38:26

Speaker 2

Thank you so much and we'll see.

38:28

Speaker 4

You on next week's episode.

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