Special Episode: Building Skema.ai - Why AI-Native Building Design Is About to Change Everything with Charlie Cichetti, Robin Bienfait & Jim Grady | 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.

00:33
Speaker 2
Okay. Hey, great to have both of you here. We're talking about Schema and your relationship on Schema. And we have Charlie and Robin, and would. Would each of you give just some background on who you are, how you came to Schema, what your role is? Charlie, what? Let's start with you.

00:53
Speaker 1
Yeah, thanks, Jim. And thanks for all the work we're doing together and the startup cohorts, and I know you've really helped me fine tune my pitch. I've been learning a lot from you. So Georgia Tech grad, got into construction, real estate, then green buildings, built up my own company. Successful exits, thankfully, and went all in on technology. Still in the built environment. Actually co founded another business that Robin was an investor in, and we served on a board together called ATOS Imaging, and they do 3D scans and drone scans. Almost create a video game of your existing building and just help you run that building and do training. So that's where we first met Schema. Though after we exit our companies, I knew there needed to be a change in how we design and build for the unbuilt building.

01:34
Speaker 1
Pulled together some co founders, we had some early tech, and we've been building it for the last few years. And Robin's been on our board and one of our key and lead investors.

01:43
Speaker 2
Okay, and Robin, I know you have a pretty strong connection to Georgia Tech, and how did you get involved with Charlie and tell us a little bit about your background?

01:52
Speaker 3
Well, I'll start with my background because that kind of leads into. So I got my master's at Georgia Tech in engineering, and I did that while I was at and T. And one of the reasons I needed my master's is I was going to go run Bell Laboratories, and one of the executives says we can't run Bell Laboratories. Most of them have masters and PhDs, so you least need to have your Master's. Part of that rationale was I was deploying the first AI in AT&T's backbone network, and it led itself to be a big technology Hit over the course of two or three years, we reduced the workforce by 20,000 employees, which doesn't make you a popular person, but at the end of the day you're there to make the business better for the client and the customer.

02:46
Speaker 3
And reducing cycle times, improving outcomes and actually improving pricing was very important. And one thing I like about all the companies I've worked with, I'll just say this, we did it very gracefully. So you didn't see this big splash in the news where were cutting people and all that type of stuff. We actually did things so that you, the employees that wanted to stay had an avenue to make that happen. And the employees that wanted to take like an early retirement were able to do that. So it wasn't as a lot of people, when they hear AI, they get kind of a ration reaction that it's going to take everybody's jobs. It really doesn't do that. It actually like anything, shifts you to a different type of value added position or opportunity.

03:32
Speaker 3
I served 23 years, almost 24 at&T left the company as last man standing. That's the unelected CEO of the corporation. When were acquired by all people, Southwestern Bell, Ed Whitaker and Randall Stevens that came in and in the midst of all this got a phone call from a gentleman who actually invented the BlackBerry, that was Mike Lazarius. And he said, what are you doing with 35,000 of my Blackberries? And I explained to him that me hacked into it and put a mobile app on it and deployed AI against the back of it.

04:06
Speaker 2
A visionary on that one.

04:07
Speaker 3
Yeah. And he was very excited. So went up to meet with Mike and I became Mike's cio. So when you think of a device company and you think of AT&T and then you think my next job after that was with Samsung Electronics. All three jobs are global. All three jobs sound very technical. But the interesting thing is at&T, I oversaw over 6,000 buildings and over 200 plus data centers. So even though you're managing technology, you're also managing the facility in which that technology is housed. When I went to BlackBerry I had to clean up a lot of things to make us scale, but also had to build the data centers at our physical locations globally. When I went to Samsung, same thing had me look at all the portfolio of their facilities.

05:00
Speaker 3
They even flew me to New York and said, rahman, we want a customer experience center. And I drove around all of New York looking at all the buildings that we could acquire and or purchase and we selected one down in the meatpacking district that had some twisted outside beam structure and it was an area where they don't let you put signage on the building. But the cool thing is we could illuminate the building like Samsung Blue. So I have a nice eye when it comes to facilities and management. I now have opened a tech innovation center. Well, Atlanta Tech Park. You won't be able to see the screen behind me that says Atlanta Tech Park. And I did that for a reason.

05:44
Speaker 2
No, we see it. Yeah, we see it.

05:46
Speaker 3
But you know, on the podcast you're probably just going to hear the verbal. We sit here, three corners. I'm in a almost a 45,000 square foot building. I selected it because it was all one floor, because I believe when entrepreneurs connect with customers, enterprise partners, there needs to be this mingling of ideas and serendipity of bumping into people for thinking about your product and services in different ways. I often get asked to judge competitions because I'm also angel investor along with being a VC partner. And I've angeled a lot of companies and

some of them here at the park, some of them around the world. And in doing so, you meet a lot of founders.

06:31
Speaker 3
And the first thing you want to do in any investment, see how you click with the founder, see how you resonate with what the founder is doing, because you're really, number one, investing in the founder and believing in the founder. And then second, the space that the founder is in and operating in, is that an area that you can help them with, advise, understand. Because if you're going to invest in something you should be interested in and passionate about. I had an opportunity to take a position after all my other corporate jobs. They wanted me in Denmark actually to work with a big architectural firm to actually design how to make a building intelligent and. But they wanted me to live in Denmark. So my husband was a little bit on the side of that because we have three boys.

07:21
Speaker 3
And yes, they're a handful and it doesn't matter what age, they're still a handful. I said no to that and I made my decision to stay here in Atlanta. I bought the building my husband's company is in. He's my first entrepreneur that I've been promoting. We have four companies over there, all of them very technical. And then when I was over there, saw this building across the street and bought it and renovated it. So I have an affinity for facilities and for people that want to make the place in which we inhabit, whether it's for work, life or education purposes, a healthy environment. And when I saw the first investment that I got involved in with was atos and watched Charlie in action with his CEO and the leadership team.

08:12
Speaker 3
And then when he spun off and decided to do Schema number one, you get to see the entrepreneur in action. This is not his first time at the table. And if you're an investor or have been an investor, you know that it's even more important that your entrepreneur, this is not their first time because they have learned a lot and they will leverage that in the next startup for sure.

08:38
Speaker 3
Along with that, I really love the space he's in because no matter how much people love or don't love AI, all of us are going to wind up leveraging in a way that enables us not only to become more proficient, maybe spend more time on value added activities versus the mundane tasks that AI can help us with, but

there's a lot of insights that come with AI and so we'll be able to do a lot more than what we've been able to do and faster. So as an owner and an operator of facilities, having something come to market and allow me to generate revenue off of it or sell it or, you know, decoy it into the marketplace, it's important. Timing is always important. And schema is a way to not only envision what you're seeing.

09:33
Speaker 3
And the funny thing is, all of my buildings across the 30 something years I've been doing this, every architect I've had to meet with, I've had to go and carve out of a piece of foam what it is I want to see. And I wish I'd had a tool in my hand to actually say, you know, I need something that has this characteristic. And it's not that architects are bad, it's just a way to get your ideas as an owner across to the architect, a visual capability.

10:04
Speaker 2
So let's take a second, we can just to for level set people that may not know Schema Charlie and I'll get Robin to echo her thoughts. But what is Schema in its current iteration? Like, what's its unique insight value proposition? Who's it targeted to define it? Treat us like we don't know what it is at all. That'd be helpful, I think, for people that haven't been exposed and I'd get Robin to see what her vision of that is.

10:34
Speaker 1
Yeah, let's do that. And then I'll come back to that last comment from Robin on even others. How can they, before they hire an architect, maybe already had head start. So yeah, Schema AI We've built the fast forward button for how you design and build your commercial buildings. You know, one day we may do even more residential.

10:51
Speaker 2
The commercial is defined as which. Which types.

10:54
Speaker 1
Yeah, I mean it's, you know, everything from your hotels and your office buildings, your warehouses, your data centers, your schools. But you know, commercial buildings, retail. Retail, we do multifamily. We're not doing single family residential. So, you know, who knows. So the unique insight we have is

the, you know, architects and owners have all these previous design files just kind of sitting on a server, collecting dust, so to speak. But it's not been a good way to go back and reuse those design best practices. Because architects and Robin, you were hitting on this. You know, they're paid time and material, they're not paid to go back, they're only paid to go forward. And so yeah, I think any AI startup, me as a CEO and co founder of an AI startup, I want us to shift to value based pricing for different reasons.

11:40
Speaker 1
We do have some perceived pricing, but you know, architects, Jim, they're not going to go back with AI. With our AI, we can mine the previous best practices of the design files and we can help you fast forward and generatively design your next buildings. And so we're saving months and hundreds of thousands of dollars in just design labor, first of all. And where we've taken it, this has been the big aha. Well, now that we have the information and the quantities and really the estimating quantities, let's hand that to the contractor and supplier and let's cut the fluff out of projects. Because when I got out of Georgia Tech, I was doing scroll wheel takeoffs on paper plans and my boss would come around the corner and say, okay, Charlie, now we add 10% contingency just in case we miss something. Right?

12:26
Speaker 1
So how can we, even though labor costs are up, material costs are up, how can we cut the 10 to 25% of what we might call a CYA tax? How can we also cut that out of project budget so that the project's actually pencil? We've discovered, Jim, that's actually what Schema's doing in the marketplace. Yes, we've started with architects. We love architects. My co founders were all architects turned AEC software professionals. I'm more of a construction green building guy by background turned entrepreneur. So yeah, we've built a tool that can reuse your previous design best practices as you lay out your next projects. New construction or a renovation or just a build out for us way.

13:08
Speaker 2
And that's it that's not being solved by someone else today, is that correct?

13:12
Speaker 1
That's correct. I mean you might go to chat GPT and say, hey, design me a 10 story hotel and you know, John Portman style. But that's going to be a large language model. Guessing at what it should look like, we actually are reusing

your previous best practices to redeploy. So it's going to look and feel like what your team would have done. An amazing first draft.

13:33
Speaker 2
Okay, so Robin, as the investor, what would you add to that? What did he leave out or what did you see beyond that? Why you put in money and continue to put in money on the board and getting, you know, other people to put in money?

13:46
Speaker 3
Yeah, you want to not only get your money at the table to help the founder grow the vision, but you want to get others that can help grow that vision alongside. It's not a, you know, one person party, so to speak. When I saw schema and I saw what it was doing, once you digitize a capability and you do learning on your own intelligence, it is what a lot of people don't realize is we're going to have infinite intelligence after that and it's, there's a lot you're not going to see until it actually starts on maneuvering on some of the learnings that you have. And then when you feed the capability like schema, more information as you're building out, it's going to do a lot of things for you.

14:39
Speaker 3
You know, the ability, tell me what my systems look like across my infrastructure, my building, maybe even potential costs that I might have to see after it's up and running. There's all kinds of, I don't want to use the words what ifs because they really are going to be more driven to real costs and real savings. But to be able to say, hey, I'm going to put something in or I'm going to renovate something, or I'm going to actually morph something from where it is today. Because I'm probably going to go and I did this in my data centers. So, you know, when I was at&T, we had 200 plus data centers and I wanted to be able to move a lot of things.

15:23
Speaker 3
As technology shrank in size, which a lot of people didn't realize at the time, it gave me a bigger footprint. So now I needed to move the footprint so that I could offer that footprint to clients and customers to use it. Because I own the facility now, I could have other people in there with Me so I can make better use of my own space and my technology background that's already been deployed and building. But when I see Schema, it's like once you start, get started and you're doing one project and then you do another project, the learnings from each and the learnings that you can take from each are just going to make you

better and then the value added functions will start appearing that you just would have never considered.

16:13
Speaker 2
So what is like on these things? You know, once you flip a card, once you engulf, once you put. I can see how you put. And then I can. So what's the mode that, you know, investors look for a moat that gets deeper, wider alligators then put crocodile razor blades. What, what is the mode that gets created here as you go along? Is it because you start gathering my data and you start, you know, I get locked into a way of doing it?

16:39
Speaker 3
Yeah. Anytime a tool or a capability like a platform like Schema that Charlie is building and will continue to build upon because it will continue growing as well as I'm engaged in it as an architect and owner. If I'm an owner, I'm going to want all of my buildings in there because then I can go and take a look at what I've got in my portfolio. I can maybe adjust some things in my portfolio and I may like I've done with data centers. Hey, I need this data center format and this view now to fit in London on this piece of property and land that I am going to acquire or in Beijing or I need to retrofit inside of what I'm doing in Dubai.

17:23
Speaker 3
So, you know, having that ability to be able to pick up the lessons learned, morph it into something else and maybe actually be able to deploy it in multiple locations, you know, and it fit within that property and I still have the look and feel that I was trying to generate for my clientele and or for my services is. It's significant.

17:46
Speaker 2
The switching costs would be high. Once people get in, they start loving it. They get everything in there, they're getting benefit.

17:54
Speaker 3
You use the language of switching costs. There's a. Yeah, you can say switching costs, but it's the learning. I'd have to go to another platform and start that learning all over again.

18:05

Speaker 2
Right.

18:06
Speaker 3
So I'm with a particular. And if I've picked a particular AI platform, learning is the learning that I'm training it to do and if I've been learning on that platform or engaging on that platform for a year, that's.

18:20
Speaker 2
Your cost, isn't it really trying to relearn everything again, Right?

18:23
Speaker 3
Everything, exactly.

18:25
Speaker 2
Yeah. And by that time.

18:26
Speaker 1
Yeah, I might just add a little bit there. Yeah. Not just retooling and reskilling your team, but you're right. In this world of AI, it's data. And Jim, one of our big competitive advantages and moats is how we treat our customer data. You know, while there might be a couple peers out there training a large language model, we've really made sure we're not going to share any of our customer data. We're really going to keep that where. Yes. The more of your previous building designs you can put into your instance of Schema or online cloud based tool pool with no file saving, the better. You know, we're working with a big box retailer not to be named and they have so many buildings they've built over the last few years that they admitted that they've slightly changed.

19:08
Speaker 1
The architect and the contractor got a little carried away and at first they're going to use Schema to go back and try to see what were the differences in all these. And they're building a lot and they're renovating a lot. And then we'll create what we call a catalog of your greatest design hits and we're going to help you lay out and then solve for your next building. You know, with in our industry, the AEC architecture, engineering, construction, software industry, there's a lot of tools that we might call a throwaway tool. You might start with a

tool called SketchUp that's now owned by Google. Amazing conceptual design tool to get your idea out for the next case for your iPhone or the next home or building. But what happens is when you're done, you have to redraw it in the next tool.

19:51
Speaker 1
And when you're done with that phase, then you got to go to the next one and you lose so much time and data going from one piece of software to another. At Schema, we've done an amazing job to connect all of your design phases. Now do we connect through API in and out with other great tools? Yes. But it's so important that you don't lose that time and that data transfer and we've really nailed that high. So.

20:14
Speaker 2
So that's what I was going to ask you. Like is there, you said you're first. Okay, you're in that market. So is there a net? This is kind of an investor conversation. So is there a networking effect here where you know, once you become Facebook, there's Facebook and okay, and the same with ebay, same with, you know, pick it. Is there a network effect here that builds that moat even further?

20:38
Speaker 3
Yeah.

20:39
Speaker 1
And, and you know, in the work we've done together, Jim, you've helped double down on this is the owners can mandate the sharing of information and which tools you use. One of our investors is Thornton Thomasetti. They're one of the largest structural engineers in the world. They were early in a structural engineering piece of software called Tecla. Eventually, architects and owners mandated in the specifications. You'll use Tecla, right? Since they were 10 years early on it, man, they start really having a huge advantage. And that's what's happening with Schema. As we also work direct with owners, growing brands, Retailers right now are just, you know, we're having some amazing momentum with retailers, but also even data centers. So. So to answer your question, yes, the owners can mandate the information sharing and the use of a software tool like ours.

21:23
Speaker 1

Sometimes they even pay us for it. Right? And then they'll say, hey you, Mr. Mrs. Architect, you don't need to pay for it. I've already paid for it. You will use this. You will share this information that we've always had. And let's really cut the fluff. Let's. Let's get moving.

21:37
Speaker 2
They're the boss, really. I mean, they get behind something, the thing changes, right? That's how you get it done.

21:42
Speaker 1
Let's have this project pencil one more thing on our moat. It is our team and then our tech. So some of my co founders actually were on the original team at Revit, which got acquired by Autodesk. It's the most popular tool in our industry. It does 1 billion revenue. And so we've also got our full stack software developers that used to be engineers and architects turn full stack developers. So we just have a team, kind of like Robin, that has an eye for buildings, a love for buildings, no matter where you're at on our org chart at Schema. And the other thing, I want to go back to Atlanta Tech Park. Just that one story. Communal, amazing experience for any other startups listening.

22:18
Speaker 1
If you're in Atlanta, you got to come up to Peachtree Corners and Robin has someone there, Brock, who he just loves helping other entrepreneurs and startups get their provisional patent and eventually their full patent. And let's just say he gives you the friends and family discount because he's like, let me help you stay protected. And that's just been an amazing thing to be in this kind of startup ecosystem. So I'd say some of the technology we acquired a few years ago in Europe and the amazing R and D team, some of my co founders that have built buildings or built software in this space. Yeah, that's additional parts of our moat right now.

22:53
Speaker 2
Okay, so investors, it sounds like an interesting story, but they always try to figure out what do you have to execute on, what do you have to check off what has to happen and what could go wrong. Like where did you miss it? Right. You were too early to this, to that. A lot of ways to not succeed. So what would be the things you got ahead and that Rob is continuing to and other people and continuing to invest in and what could go wrong and then the last part of that and we can open it up for whatever you guys want to discuss. But you know,

what's the future look like if you hit those things? What happens when some progression of raising additional Series A?

23:38
Speaker 1
How much?

23:39
Speaker 2
Where does it go? So to answer that, what, what are you missing? Right. And what do you gotta, what do you have to nail?

23:46
Speaker 1
Yeah, I'll start. Well, we're getting ready for a later in the year Series A. That's the next logical threshold for our.

23:54
Speaker 2
Startup raising is raising. You continue to raise now on the open save. Yeah, we have a Series A coming sometime six months or we have a safe right now.

24:04
Speaker 1
That's a bridge to point us directly towards a Series A later this year. So we found a lot of our current investors like Robin invest even more. They love what we've done over the last few years and then we've had a few new to US investors. It's been amazing here as we enter the summer here in 2026. And so right now we've got a little bit open, but we're pointed towards a big Series A where I can go hire a lot of great people because I love to hire.

24:28
Speaker 2
What's left open now, Charlie, what kind of money's worth?

24:31
Speaker 1
Yeah, we got about another 600,000 right now in the safe. It's a 20% discount on the next price round, which will be this year. And yeah, so where we're at, Jim, is we kind of have a 90 to 100 day plan to go ahead and get additional contracts direct with owners and retailers. We've got a lot that is just heated up. We're going to go ahead and ink those contracts all while we're going to launch a freemium version of our product to go ahead and get thousands of architects

that. And this is what I think investors do expect from someone like Me, Right. The CEO is what are you learning and how are you adapting? Right. And so Robin's on the board and we talk about these things.

25:07
Speaker 1
We love architects and We've got over 1.4 million in the pipeline and HubSpot and architects and we're getting new firms that are signing up. But a lot of architects say, hey, I love it, I love the tech. I'm going to put it on the next project. Right. Because they're still billing time and material. They've not yet gone to value based pricing. And so who is all about value creation and faster schedule and lower cost so I can build more. It's direct. It's direct with the owner. So what's happened is now we have two customer Personas. And so right now we're going to continue to serve. Architects come out with a freemium model, but its owners. So to be even more Series A.

25:43
Speaker 2
Ready, you're going to serve the other two.

25:45
Speaker 1
Yeah. So there's suppliers and there's contractors who are kind of holding on suppliers, but contractors. We've already acquired one company a few years ago in Europe for their machine learning and their building solvers and just the head start they had and the R D team. We actually are in the process of bolting on some more construction AI technology through one of our partnerships. And so believe it or not, we're going to be able to serve architects, owners and contractors here in just the coming months with our design AI and also with our construction AI. So we're making some big strategic moves even as a running lean startup. But I'm excited for a big Series A, so I'm going to hire a lot more amazing people.

26:23
Speaker 2
So what do you think you're missing then? What do you. What could, what could hurt you that you. What, like what's on the horizon? You go, oh man, this could really hurt us. We got to pay attention.

26:32
Speaker 1
Yeah. I think if we waited a little too long for change management with some of the Personas that we've been targeting. And so that's why we're going to where

the contracts are coming a lot faster. And so just to make sure the whole team with our agentic marketing.

26:45
Speaker 2
So your go to market focus is really honing now. Right. Using that data that, you know, revenue you've got in and all that, you're really trying to learn where to sell, who's making the change, who's got the power. Right. The authority.

26:58
Speaker 1
Yep.

26:58
Speaker 2
And the motivation.

26:59
Speaker 1
And we've been using a lot of AI in our own workflows. Not Just code assist with our developers. While we have a reasonable sized team, they're doing the work of probably 30 over here. We're doing some agentic marketing outbound, getting qualified meetings. So it's amazing. Even as we're building an AI startup, you know, we've got to implement it in our workflows too, especially as a small giant in this AEC software industry. So, you know, Robin, you've invested a lot of companies, you've built a lot of companies. I don't know what any concerns just operationally later in the year just to.

27:31
Speaker 2
Talk to that side, what else, what are, you know, what would they be missing? What would cause it to be slower than we thought?

27:38
Speaker 3
Right now you move as fast as your dev teams can move and you want to be able to fuel the dev teams and fuel the sales and marketing teams. And so getting the last bit of money into the bridge round that help us fuel those activities is extremely important. And that's why I continue to put money in because we're on the right track. And until you start kind of moving down that track, you don't learn some of the lessons that you need to actually, you know, just keep tweaking the direction you're going in. But the engagement that I see from not only the other owner investors, but the engagement from the partners

Charlie has been able to engage with, connect with, actually even he, you know, schema works within the infrastructure that's out there today.

28:32
Speaker 3
So this is not like you're going to go out immediately and display something.

28:36
Speaker 2
Yeah. Take everything out and start over. Yeah.

28:39
Speaker 3
This is not a, hey, I've got to make a big decision. This is, I'm going to make a decision to learn what I've been doing and I can do it better. Now maybe down the road, as we grow to a certain size, we may displace some pieces and, or move some pieces forward a lot faster. But I think we're a good partner and we're good in this space with working with what you already have. So we're not here to make your life more difficult. We're actually making your life a lot easier and allowing you to communicate better with, you know, where you're going and what you want to do as an owner. And I think the owner side of the equation is kind of where I lean in more.

29:22
Speaker 2
So from an experienced investor standpoint, the strategy seems, you know, like it's on, you know, we're mapping a cave still, but we're inside that cave and the shut the Lights are out, and we're trying to map that cave and see exactly where it goes.

29:37
Speaker 3
Well, I would say Charlie's already down the track with what he needs to do. He needs to reinforce it, get more architects on it, get owners engaged, and keep growing that momentum.

29:52
Speaker 2
Got it. And so let me ask you this. On the LLMs, right? Because the benefit of today is you don't pay for them on the R and D and you get to use them. So what effect do. Because, I mean, they're really making huge strides now on the LLMs. What effect does that have on the efficacy of this whole thing? Because

it seems like it's kind of lifting old boats. Right? Because get a new model and bang, your whole thing got better.

30:18
Speaker 1
Yes. At Schema, Jim, we actually built all of our overall machine learning, building solvers, and AI from scratch. 5 Million lines. We've got patent protections. And so now with some of the large language models and the larger AI companies, say, Claude, we're actually adding them in later for a little bit more of some agentic work. So. So you got to understand, like, we started with our own. Ironically, the tech that would become Schema started right around when OpenAI first was building up ChatGPT. So just know we've got some deep tech here, and that's what has to happen in a massive industry. Right. Construction's $13 trillion globally.

30:58
Speaker 2
The other software, second to healthcare. Right?

31:00
Speaker 1
That's right. And in this space, you need really good trusted R and D and tech, and then. Then you can scale it. And that's kind of where we're at this year. But just to go back to overall AI, while we have a core engine that is also part of our moat, that is ours, and there's protections we're starting to see, hey, if we can do an MCP bridge now that our export is your design file that we helped you fast forward and generatively design with your. If you like cooking, you two have heard me say it. So for the listeners, we found some really good ingredients for your next recipe. If you like music, we've got a greatest hits album of pieces of your previous buildings that reuse.

31:42
Speaker 1
Now we're starting to add in some more agentic work, like on our data center solvers, all the way down to.

31:48
Speaker 2
So you're blending basically best of both worlds effectively.

31:52
Speaker 1

Yeah, I mean, I'd be naive to think that we shouldn't tap into companies spending billions and billions of dollars like Mythos.

31:58
Speaker 2
Right. I mean, this new tool, I mean,.

32:00
Speaker 1
But just know we. Our core engine is Proprietary. And now we're adding some features by tapping into some of the bigger companies. 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.

32:55
Speaker 2
All right, so let's kind of wrap it up with this. So the, give us a projection out, a couple, three, whatever, five you want to. What's going on two or three years from now and what's going to happen between now and then in terms of fundraise? So what's happening with the product, the market? Where do you think you'll be? How do you think this will play out? What's the timing? Are these people going to, are they going to move quickly? Is there some impending event or is it going to take some time? I'm talking about the ownership because they're the boss, right? When they start getting excited and saying, okay, we're going to do this, get this 10 to 25% fluff out of this, I'm giving you new tools.

33:35
Speaker 2
So how long does that take and what happens on the funding scene between now and then? How do you keep that momentum up? Yeah, so that creates value, right? That's the value of the company right there.

33:48
Speaker 1
Absolutely. So with owners, right, as the more they use schema and they mandate the use of IT projects of pencil, right, this big box retailer not to be

named right now, they're frustrated with their architects and contractors because they feel they've been taken advantage of because they've modified all these different, what are supposed to be prototypes. And so it's just an interesting situation where they want to get a handle on things first and they want to be tech enabled, AI enabled with their workflows. And they have a lot of business, a lot of buildings to be built, a lot of buildings to be renovated. So we're just going to really focus there at the same time. Data centers, it's just another category that we're really good at.

34:24
Speaker 1
And so I think we're going to get enough proof points this year, move towards a big series A which will find the right overall lead. We'll get some additional VCs involved and then, you know, we'll have a budget to really get another few years of Runway and build out an even larger team. There is consolidation happening in our industry, the AEC software industry. There's been some different M and A, but where we're positioned, I think we'll be the ones acquiring at least one other company and bolting on that tech to us. So I'm confident where we're at, we've had some big breakthroughs in the last six months and one of our secrets to success, Jim, is strategics have been backers. Right. Some of our customers have also invested money in our company over the last three years. Some of the largest architects, construction companies.

35:09
Speaker 1
A shout out to a couple right here in Atlanta. We have Eastern construction, right, Robin, Mr. Kim and Eddie and that team. And then we also have Winter Construction. So we've got mep, we've got contractors, we've got big architects, Jim, that are also on our cap table. And so not only are they advisors and say, hey, we want to test with you, they've put money in it because they think we're doing it right.

35:33
Speaker 2
You want to add anything, Robin, to that future?

35:36
Speaker 3
I will add one thing about the future that is going to be hard for people to understand, but the incumbents that have been running in this space, say for a good 10, 20 years to try to now take what they've built and add AI to it is a big dilemma for them. For companies like Schema that have started with an AI infrastructure from the ground up and built going forward.

36:03
Speaker 2
Native?

36:03
Speaker 3
Yeah, there's no dilemma. It's already built in and it's already growing with. And those of us in the security industry, we say better security is built in, not bolted on. And what you're going to see in this community of companies that already serve this section or sector of the industry, when they try to bolt on AI to something that they're doing because they're afraid of disrupting their current, I guess current revenue stream is kind of a way to think of it, they're going to start charging more money because they won't know how to do one without the other. They have to do both and they'll become more expensive. Whereas when something's built Native in this environment, such as Schema, it'll have a lot of room to grow without the overhead and infrastructure costs that go on building that platform.

36:59
Speaker 2
And for those that sounds like a.

37:00
Speaker 3
Key differentiator is a Huge differentiator. Charlie came in at the right time to build something in this space with AI enablement already engaged. And it was just going to keep going. The scale and pace will start increasing and that's why we need to move quickly and get to our A round so that he can actually take that big leap.

37:27
Speaker 1
Okay.

37:27
Speaker 2
And going back just for a second because I think the timing, I get that. And that sounds like a great architecture to start with and you know, take advantage of the commercial LLMs too. So. But what is there anything in there that's a driver, like an impending driver that you guys can identify or suggest the pressure of cost, you know, inefficiency, all that, what drives these owners to go, okay, we

gotta fix this. Like this ain't. This can't keep going. Because if people are investing now and they get ahead of that, then they really get the benefit.

38:03
Speaker 3
Yeah. Every project you're doing is very human based and every project you do is almost like individually owned and operated. And the lessons learned, you lose them a lot.

38:16
Speaker 2
And so you let the brain drain out the door. Retirement or whatever, changing jobs or whatever.

38:22
Speaker 3
There's this gap of not being able to pick up what you've already learned a hundred percent and then amplify those learnings in your next deployment.

38:32
Speaker 2
That's where the 10 to 25% cost overrun comes in. Right. Which is significant dollars.

38:37
Speaker 1
Right.

38:38
Speaker 3
It's the inefficiency of building. It's the inefficient.

38:42
Speaker 2
Yeah.

38:42
Speaker 3
The inefficiency of rework and you know,.

38:46
Speaker 1
You've got change orders. It's just, it's the most litigious industry out there.

Right. We're pointing fingers at each other when, if it could be a little more harmonious and let's just share and set each other up for success. I mean some projects, the best projects in construction are those where you might have a guaranteed maximum price and if you come in under that, you share a bonus to all the players that actually helped you come in under budget. And so I think we can get back to that. Jim, you said it is the owners and they're going to mandate it. But no, projects just aren't penciling.

39:15
Speaker 1
You know, just with population growth and the number of buildings we actually need around the world, you know, like it or not, there's a lot of buildings that are needed and there's a much better way to get there.

39:24
Speaker 2
And what kind of commitment can you make to the owners if they say, look, I want to get, I've got 25% fluff in everything I do. And I need a commitment from schema that you can deliver on a reduction. What would you tell them now, like you commit to them and say, look, we can deliver it. It's not theory. We can make it happen for you. If you do what we ask you to do, what would that be? Is it a full 25 or is it some version thereof or like what. How confident are you in the sole?

39:56
Speaker 1
Extremely confident. The validated today win is at least two months off your design schedule. And that labor and design fee savings, we're really testing even some project success fees. And so let's just say Mr. And Mrs. Owner.

40:10
Speaker 2
So that's a possibility that you can put it on the come on the backside. But will you pay us based on the result?

40:17
Speaker 1
Yeah, we're going to be testing that more with some of the large retailers. Project success, that would be get trial. Right.

40:24
Speaker 2
I mean that would definitely. I mean, what's the risk? Right.

40:26
Speaker 3
And you've got to think it's not always about cutting costs. It really is about adding value. And if I can have my data center.

40:35
Speaker 2
That's right, yeah.

40:36
Speaker 3
Sooner than two months later. Because often any construction or development or deployment takes longer than what people have expected. If I could even come in at the date I planned or sooner that value creation. I mean, you can't even explain the revenue that I lose every day.

40:56
Speaker 2
Right, the revenue. Right, exactly. Because the store's not open or whatever. Right.

41:00
Speaker 3
So the data center is not open. I can't test things out. I'm holding off an engineering team. There's all these costs that people don't see. Don't open my data center and I've got to wait a month. That means I'm held up someplace else. I'm holding up software deployment, I'm holding up client deployment. There's a whole bunch of things that get stacked up that I get to.

41:24
Speaker 2
And if you've opened plus you leave your competition open. Right. And it lays a window open for them.

41:29
Speaker 3
The gap creation is real.

41:32
Speaker 2
Yeah, for sure. All right, so let's.

41:35
Speaker 3
They're going to go someplace else.

41:36
Speaker 2
Okay, got it. So, all right, so we've been going 40 minutes or so let's tidy it up. So what? What? How can people find out more? What would you want if somebody hears, look, I'm super interested. I want to have another conversation. What should they do, Charlie? How would they engage?

41:56
Speaker 1
Yeah, first just shoot me an email. Charliechema AI S K E M A I and check out our website There especially our blog for the different building types we've already nailed. So you gotta understand, and I think we've gotten to it on this podcast is we're further along here, we've got technology ready to be used in all these scenarios. We've been building this for a while. It's been tried and tested with our early overall proof of concept customers and investors. So that's how you can reach out if you're interested, just to, hey, could schema help my growing brand? Or if you might want to consider investing in our startup, we've got big plans. I think this is a huge opportunity here, especially in this architectural engineering, construction software space. So that's how you can reach out.

42:44
Speaker 1
And I just want to give a thank you to first, our team is hard work building the company, building a startup. So we got a hard working team. And then to both of you, I think to our listeners that are in the state of Georgia, you know, Georgia and especially Atlanta, you know, really is an amazing place to build a startup, especially a tech startup. Sure, we got Silicon Valley, we got Raleigh, Durham, we got a couple other places, Austin. But I mean, just, you know, Jim and Robin, thank you both for what you're doing here. I, I know you've been a big resource for a lot of startups, but I love working with you. I think you're great advisors and I consider your friends and you know, I don't want to disappoint you.

43:18
Speaker 1
So I'm gonna keep working hard and just thanks for everything you've done for me.

43:21
Speaker 2
All right. Is there anything else appropriate at the end here? Anything else? I find a lot of times people come up and sound like. That was a great comment you made a minute ago, Robin, about the, you know, you got real opportunity cost here. These buildings don't come online. So what, Anything else you want to add before close?

43:37
Speaker 3
Yeah, as any other, as an owner, the opportunity cost is bigger than me saving a few dollars.

43:44
Speaker 2
Yeah, okay. For sure. I mean that sounds like. But that's real, right? Especially if you have something where you're putting out hundreds of stores or what, you know, that's times 100 or times.

43:54
Speaker 3
Whatever in a data center space every day may cost me a couple of months.

44:02
Speaker 2
Plus, you know, I, I will have one myself. And I don't know if this is real, but it feels real, is that, you know, when things are, this is the squeeze in the juice kind of thing. When you get a team of people and it's hard to do everything, you have to go back and Start over or, you know, it's. It just doesn't. It's taxing on yourself and on your enjoyment of your job. That's why people think a lot like AI. They like it because, like, my wife is in the education profession. She's been able to put a lot of stuff in that she had to do over and over again for a long period of time. Now she can get the machine to do a lot of it for. It just feels good, and it feels like you're getting momentum.

44:43
Speaker 2
So I wonder in these firms.

44:45
Speaker 1
Yeah.

44:46
Speaker 2
You know. You know, it's just the tax on your employees that also is a cost because they're having to do that work over and over again repetitively.

44:54
Speaker 3
Yeah. I just spent two days in Montreal in an AI strategy session, and it is more motivating.

45:03
Speaker 2
Motivating. Yeah, that's the word.

45:04
Speaker 3
Motivating. That I, as an employee can get my work, job, design, whatever it is I am involved in, done in a way that reduces change management and redundancy,.

45:21
Speaker 2
And it gets me to a higher level quicker. Right. I can do. I can get past the mechanics and get into something that's a little more creative and so on.

45:31
Speaker 3
People don't see. So my first AI deployment was in 1999, and my lessons learned. So you get the first order of lessons learned when you do your first deployment, but it's the second order and the third order learnings that you just will not see until you get that first order in place. So my second order learnings is I found out that I was paying a lot of money in overtime in my second order because I didn't even realize some of the things that were going on within my workspace that the overtime. Because, you know, when I did my calculations, I didn't think about the overtime that was needed in some of my deployment engineering rollouts.

46:15
Speaker 3
But at the end of the day, those savings were even larger than some of the other things that I'd learned because it made my customer happy that I was able to

deploy faster. Yeah, customer first mindset. You don't get that value and feeling until you hit that second order of change with AI.

46:35
Speaker 1
One little nugget, Jim, if I may. Architects, one more time. We love architects, and yes, we want architects to also use schema so that they can be the creatives, so that they can be the strategist, so that they can listen to an owner, maybe like Robin, and be like, what do you really need? Yeah, let's go see what you've carved on that foam for the building. I'm a big sustainability guy. Hey, let's have them spend more time on sustainability and decarbonization. So so we can get rid of some of the busy work and the repetitive work for an architect, which is what we set out to do and we're doing. Then yes, it's going to be more motivating to still enter that profession.

47:11
Speaker 1
Now we probably need a part two so we can talk about how now, how do you get one to five years of experience as a young professional? Is AI eating up some of that work? But stay tuned. Maybe we'll come back on here, but I love that word motivating. AI can help you stay to your kind of zone of genius work, as some of the business books say, which.

47:31
Speaker 2
Might lead to more retention and might lead to because that's the cost. When people walk out the door, give up the profession or whatever, you also start over because whatever they know went out the door. So. Okay, this is great. Thank you both. It was certainly instructive instructional for me. I've learned a lot from and I've been doing this well. Okay, thanks and we will talk again soon. Thanks, Robin.

47:55
Speaker 3
Thank you guys.

47:57
Speaker 1
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