

From BIM to Circular Sampling: Benjamin Glunz on Building Smarter | 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. Green Building Matters. Hey, everybody. Welcome to the next episode of the Green Building Matters podcast. I'm your host, Charlie Cicchetti. And you know, lately some of my interviews have been getting into technology more in the last couple years than probably the first several years of the podcast. And that's what we've got today.

00:47

Speaker 1

We've got Ben with us, former architect turned technologist. I know we're connected through some of my colleagues at Schema. So, Ben, how you doing today?

00:56

Speaker 2

Doing great. Thanks for having me, Charlie. Yeah.

00:58

Speaker 1

Excited to learn more about your companies and definitely talk sustainability and tech. But take us back. I love for my listeners to kind of get that origin story. Where'd you grow up and go to school? Sure.

01:09

Speaker 2

I grew up in rural Pennsylvania, grew up kind of in a farming community and decided to study architecture. Fourth generation in my family to be in the building industry. So definitely runs deep in our family tree. And fourth or fifth generation entrepreneur as well. So on both fronts, I think it was destined and so went out to Chicago to study architecture as one does, and started my career there as an architect. And so kind of the origin story of our company is it's 2010,

the recession is raging and not a great time for architects to be out there young in their careers.

01:48

Speaker 2

And so my co founder and I sat together at a firm and really were early adopters of Revit and had been doing that for the past prior five or six years and so saw a very clear need to bring manufacturers into the conversation with Ben, which at the time seemed like a pretty crazy idea. And ultimately that came to fruition and in what's now Angularis Technologies and counting.

02:16

Speaker 1

I love it. And yeah, Chicago to our listeners that maybe haven't been right, you can take even the architectural boat tour. It's one of the coolest things just to see. Okay, I get it. This is why architects love Chicago and the Chicago River. Splitting there and just going back to what was it, the World's Fair and the late 1800s. Just love that. And that I know, architects love Chicago, so that totally makes sense. So staying with early career, when did sustainability start showing up? Was it in some with the architecture work you were doing, or did it come a little later with some technology?

02:47

Speaker 2

I mean, for me, one of the early lessons I learned about sustainability, living in our rural farming community, which is kind of a. And education in itself on sustainability is as land got used for what I would say is somewhat unsustainable development projects. And so kind of your urban sprawl that you see out there is to me, one of the most unsustainable things that's on the planet right now. So seeing that at an early age, watching a farm get gobbled up into cul de sacs was an early indicator and an early spark for me. But sustainability as we would all define it today, my first interaction with that was at Judson University, where I studied as an architect. And our building that our architecture program was the first collegiate level or institutional level lead goal building in America.

03:44

Speaker 2

And so we had this incredible facility designed by Alan Short, and it was LEED gold at a time that nobody knew what lead was. So got a pretty early introduction to a lot of those great concepts in 2004, 2005, 2006, kind of that time frame. And that was my first introduction to sustainability in a more mechanical sense.

04:09

Speaker 1

But.

04:11

Speaker 2

Throughout my career, layered on any number of things and different projects that I've been able to be a part of and expanding that understanding as that all became a thing, because it really wasn't back then in terms of the way we talk about it today.

04:27

Speaker 1

Come a long ways. It's hard to believe 25 years of lead projects. The first 10 projects were certified in the year 2000. And you know, a lot of my podcast guests, some of it ties back to that upbringing, that childhood, that. That environment. So thanks for showing us that. How about mentors? You know, for some people, Ben, a mentor is someone you read their material, you see them from afar, from stage. Sometimes it's someone you have coffee with and they challenge you or open doors. Have you had any mentors along the way?

04:53

Speaker 2

Yeah, too many to count. I've been very blessed in that way to have a lot of really amazing mentors, starting with my parents. My dad was my first employer. I worked for him from the time I was in middle school through those summers in college. Teaching the value of hard work, teaching the value of running a business and all of that integrity, kind of your foundational character development. And then when I went off to school, I had some really fantastic Mentors as professors. A gentleman named Christopher Miller who is now a leading professor over at Notre Dame's architecture program. He was at Judson for 18 years. John Barry, a fairly accomplished architect who worked in New York for a lot of years and touched a lot of the skyline there.

05:38

Speaker 2

So I had them as sort of professional mentors and then early days and early career. The first firm I worked at, man named Lane Allen, took me under his wing as an architect and gave me my first sort of architectural internship I guess you could say. And you know that relationship was pivotal as well. So along the way of course countless others but those would be some of the main way posts I guess I would say.

06:04

Speaker 1

There sounds like some great folks. I think it's important to give them a shout out. So thanks for doing that. Okay, one more look back. What are some of your proudest achievements? What's on the high real so far?

06:15

Speaker 2

You know I think the obvious answer for me is the team that I've built and yes of course the company that team operates but the people that I've been able to surround myself with and who have come along on our mission as a company, I'd say that's one of the things that I'm most proud of. We, we have a 10 year award at our company and we just had our team conference a few weeks ago. We inducted three new members to our 10 year club. 15 year old company that's pretty wild to have you know, eight 10 year members and you know next year will be three, the night year after that will be five. And you know, I think that speaks to the mission we're all on together. So I, I'm very proud of that.

07:02

Speaker 2

I'm proud of the impact we've been able to have in the industry. It is measurable. It is something that people recognize. With Ben Smith and now as Swatchbox comes more onto the scene, we have had an impact in terms of getting rid of drudgery for those associates and BIM managers, the people who are making the gears turn every day on the architectural projects. That's a key focus for us is eliminating waste. Not only in the way that you would define waste in a sustainability concept, but also wasted time and money for our associates and our people who, you know, really make the projects work.

07:38

Speaker 1

And then you hit on it. As I present schema, sometimes I'm asked about just this industry. I said \$13 trillion in construction right around the world and they estimated 500 billion and wasted, not materials, but wasted what you're saying just labor, counting, recounting things. Things. And that's. That's a lot. So. Okay, so now let's talk present day. Yeah. Tell us more about Ben Smith. A little bit about where you're at, where you want to go, and a little bit of a day in the life of Ben. Sure.

08:08

Speaker 2

Bimsmith is our first hit product. So as Angularis, we started out as a service

provider, spun off BimSmith in 2016. Few years in since then, it's grown to become one of the largest product research sites out there, certainly the largest in North America. And so there are other BIM libraries. Yes, but this is not just a BIM library. We're really focused on our background as architects, taking that really seriously, that it's about helping the architect find the right product. And then ultimately the delivery mechanism is BIM content or specifications or whatever that looks like. But we've really tried to bring the research side of that forward.

08:52

Speaker 2

And so we've only just begun on that front in terms of as we expand the capabilities of bimsmith and making that an indisputable research assistant is really the ethos of what we're doing with bimsmith is that when you're not sure what you want to spec, this is a great place to start. And so being at the drafter designer, architect's right hand as it relates to that's been a really fun challenge. And we do challenge ourselves to use it on actual projects. Many of us are still practicing for pro bono projects and things like that, so we keep ourselves really sharp. And so that's. That's certainly been a lot of fun. We have a whole new wave of tools that we're going to be releasing over the next 12 months.

09:45

Speaker 2

And so a bunch of new areas that are really exciting and first of their kind in terms of solving new problems. So that's. That's exciting as well.

09:54

Speaker 1

Tell us more about your role now at the company. What do you focus on?

09:58

Speaker 2

Yeah, I find where my time is best spent is around solving the hardest problems that nobody else wants to solve, which can be fun. And it can be a real pain working with key customers. I really love working with our clients and hearing what they have to say and helping them solve their problems and then building product. And of course, like any founder, you ebb and flow what that actually looks like on a daily basis. But that's where I want to be. That's where I'm at my best. And as more and more time goes on, I can spend more and More time there. So that's been really rewarding.

10:36

Speaker 1

That's fantastic. Well, let's talk about sustainability. I know you've got some different offerings. You've seen a lot of sustainability in your career. So what's your view on how can some of your tools support a green building project?

10:50

Speaker 2

Yeah, so one of the things I often share with people when they ask me this question is we really view sustainability as how we build this. This kind of dated narrative of like, this is a lead project, I think is going to go away eventually and there will be a certain level of sustainability that is just table stakes. This is the way you do a project. These are the best practices. In the same way you would say this is the way you detail a roof core or an edge condition. There will become these. These commonly accepted best practices. And I think we're on the edge of that in a lot of kind of the core areas of sustainability. So we've tried to build our tools in that way so that it's not just kind of a gizmo or a feature. It's.

11:37

Speaker 2

It's something that's really core to the way we're doing it. And so we feel that helping architects make better decisions around product selection is a way to turbocharge sustainability in projects. So what do I mean by that? Look at any project and how much time goes into just shuffling paper. What if you could reallocate that time towards actual research and making better decisions? And so we feel like time is a commodity that is not valued enough in the architectural practice. In some ways, we're incentivized to take more time to do things because it's dollars for money or hours for money, hours for dollars. And so I think that's a broken model. And so we have to be smart about the way that we deploy that budget we've been entrusted by the owners. How do we deploy that?

12:31

Speaker 2

If there are a certain number of hours that are in the budget for that project in that broken time for money model, how are we going to spend those hours? If it's 100 hours and it's a thousand hours, is it shuffling paper for 900 and thinking for 100, or is it shuffling papers for 100 and thinking for 900, what's it going to be? And so we really want that to turbocharge sustainability initiatives by allowing people to think for themselves, providing them the answers they need quickly standardizing manufacturer deliverables so they're not wasting time rationalizing from one brand to the other and getting down to the brass. Tacks of what is going to make the best building for this community in this moment in time. And so ultimately, that's what bimsmith can do.

13:19

Speaker 2

On the swatchbox side of things, we have a new initiative called Second Life Samples that we launched earlier this year. We had in private beta for about a year before that. Some of the top firms in the world, five of the top 10 firms, are already using the tool. And the way that works is it's getting at the samples waste problem. And so we obviously reduce waste through Swatch Fox by allowing people to place orders in one box. It arrives next day. That's what we've been doing for years. But where we've closed the loop and made samples circular is that we actually place durable totes in firms for collecting samples so that when a project finishes and the samples aren't needed anymore, we can put those into the tote. And so whether it came from us or not, we accept those into the tote.

14:04

Speaker 2

In most cases, those are actually pristine when we receive them at our processing facilities. And we're able to reclaim about 90% of what we collect. And then that goes back onto the swatchbox Pro site, which does two things. One, it saves them from going to the landfill or into some recycling stream, but it also prevents net new stock from being cut to make new samples. And so users who choose to sample on swatchbox are not only being more sustainable with the aggregation and model of, you know, reducing carbon footprint on boxes and shipping trips, but they're also creating demand for the second life samples by ordering on swatchbox. And that creates a pull through effect that keeps it all out of landfill.

14:49

Speaker 2

And so as a data point, in the last nine months, we've diverted over 50,000 samples from the landfill already, and we're just getting started. And so when you think of the footprint of that one small thing, you could say samples aren't a huge deal. But our hope is that Second Life can provide a template or a format or inspiration for the construction industry as a whole to find other ways to reduce waste and be more circular.

15:18

Speaker 1

Well, the 50,000 samples just makes sense. Well, that's very sustainable and helping those green products already get more specified too. Well, before I totally predict the future next, how about AI, right? I'm also reading a tech startup here. We're building a fast forward button, but you hit on something,

architects still charge time and material. We need to teach architects to charge for value. Value based pricing. Right, so it sounds like you're working on that with what you're doing. And we're trying to do the same. You know, just because the architect can now design the building two months faster and now they're the hero with schedule, doesn't mean they should be paid less. Right. Because they're still at risk and they can spend that extra newfound time in some other areas. So, you know, AI, do you have some of that in your tool now?

16:03

Speaker 1

Do you have that on your roadmap? What's your take on it for your business? But also just in general. Yeah.

16:08

Speaker 2

So like everybody, I've been watching it the last five to 10 years. It goes from a side conversation to a more common conversation to obviously chatgpt crashing onto the scene in late 2022. And that kind of opened everybody's eyes further. I think a lot of people just rushed right into this gold rush and I think a lot of people didn't really think through what that was going to mean. And we've taken a bit of a different approach and quietly researching and moving and I think we're very close to having something serious to say about it. But as is typically my style, much to the chagrin of my marketing team or my sales team, we're not going to say anything until we have something substantial to show and say because for us it's about the credibility and the authenticity of our brand.

17:00

Speaker 2

And we're not going to be one of those. Me too. Kind of. Let's, let's throw a wrapper out there or let's reskin this or just vomit this onto the website. We really want to have an impact because we feel that if you don't, you lose credibility. And so we're very close on a number of initiatives and I will say it's been the time of my life exploring what these models can do and what this technology can do. And we're really excited to bring some of that forward very soon.

17:31

Speaker 1

Well, here it is. You're working on it. You got a good handle on it and we just need to. We'll look for that soon. So thanks. So how about the future here? You know, is there anything you're excited about coming out as soon maybe in the technology side of the AC industry or maybe also just the sustainability side. What's next?

17:49

Speaker 2

Yeah, I mean, I love seeing the advent of some of the so called BIM 3.0 tools, O 2.0 or whatever we're on. I guess it's 3.0 but you know, obviously schema and you know, like you said, I'm familiar with some of your team. And I was at the Revit 40th anniversary and all of that, or I guess it was 25th anniversary. I don't remember it was but we had that party and you know, it's really cool to see the way the industry is moving. And I think that old dated anecdote of how we're like worse than mining in terms of productivity, I'm sure everybody's been quoted that like it's mining in oil or something like that's worse than that. But I think that's going to change pretty quickly here and I think that skill is going to tip.

18:33

Speaker 2

And I think if architects can find a way to switch to value based pricing, if contract docs can get serious about working with AIA to change the way the contracts work and if we can figure that out, I think you're going to see that accelerate even faster because that's the key thing. Between that and the municipalities requiring that we roll up a tree cut into slices as a submission, you know that gets me. Every time we're involved with a pro bono project for a nonprofit right now, we had to submit 12 copies. It literally came in as like 12 rolls, like a stack of logs on this guy's desk. And I'm like what year is it? This is a major municipality. It wasn't like some small town. So you know, we've got to get past some of those challenges.

19:19

Speaker 2

But I think when we do, I think the pull through on the technology will go even firms will make more money and they'll be able to tie productivity gains to profitability which right now it's actually counter to that like you said. And you probably go up against this all the time, Charlie, it's actually not in their best interest to do it faster because of dollars for hours. Once we crack that, I think that's going to create a whole new boom for the architecture technology industry because it will align to what capitalism demands.

19:55

Speaker 1

Man, you nailed it. Well, and even the startup, right, we're early but we got some great tech. And even when we go to investors they want to see ARR, they want to see subscription licenses. So it's like yeah, we got to get out of not just the architect thinking they have to take this long. They're paid time and

material. How about value based pricing? But over here too is how about project fees instead of seat fees? So yeah, once that starts changing, you nail the contracts though. And my co founder Marty, who Owen was at that 25 year Revit anniversary just he'll you know, helped build revit. He's like, yeah, this tool puts out contract documents, right? It's so that the contractor says, for about this much money, I'll build as close as I can to that. And, and then sometimes it's not referenced.

20:38

Speaker 1

Right. The, the contractors on big projects are asked to do an as built bim. And there's just that lack of trust still and the overall bim. So, yeah, something's gotta change. I, I think it's changing, but you nailed it. If, if some municipality maybe listening could be so bold and we'll accept it this way, that would be nice. That would help. You know, when I was getting out of construction in the early 2000s, there was BIM on the scene and lead. I went the lead route for about the next 20ish years. And so it's great that BIM's come first full circle in my life. So, yeah. Anything else you're excited about? Just in our industry in general. And then we'll do some rapid fire questions.

21:17

Speaker 2

One of the things I am really enjoying watching is millennials stepping up into leadership. It's the first generation to really truly be digital. They say millennials aren't digital natives. I disagree. I think they are. They were playing Oregon Trail in kindergarten, but call them a digital native, call them not. I don't really need to debate that. But seeing that step into leadership, both at building product manufacturers and at architecture firms and at GCs, albeit a little SL, been a really interesting transformation. I think Covid might have accelerated that a little bit because the boomers are kind of like, oh, my gosh, this cloud thing you've been talking about for 10 years, we actually need that now. And it kind of accelerated it. And I think it was a great opportunity for millennials to build some trust with those upper echelons.

22:13

Speaker 2

And it's been really neat to watch that transpire as the leadership shift happens. Even watching Gen X take the helm in some firms is a very noticeable shift. So I think that's really exciting. I think that's an exciting opportunity for the industry to embrace digital workflows that would have otherwise kind of been distrusted. And it's nothing against the other generations, it's just that's not the model they were trained in. And so it was. I was talking to an architect the other day that still drafts by hand, and it's just because, like, at his office, he asked his

boss, should I learn CAD? And he said, why? It was in the 80s and he missed that window, which then snowballed to not learning Revit.

22:55

Speaker 2

And so now he's drafting by hand and it's, you know, a lot of people don't want to talk about that, but that's still out there and that's still going on. But I don't think we're doing ourselves any favors to pretend that we don't have to make that digital transformation. And I think it has to happen hand in hand with a business model shift as well. And, you know, we're very actively involved with aia. Obviously, I'm a member of. We're a huge partner of aia, so I know it's on their radar. And with the new CEO coming in, I think there's a fresh win that can happen there. And I'm really hoping that in the next 10 years we'll start to see some buds on that in terms of the shift for the industry.

23:37

Speaker 1

Yeah. All right. You got a good handle on it. All right, let's get to know you more here. Ben, what would you say is your specialty or gift?

23:46

Speaker 2

I think for me it's having a dream or a vision and transferring that into some sort of reality. I'm very much a builder in terms of you study, Enneagram or the six types of working genius or strengths find or any of those. I always end up on some kind of spectrum around invention or building and that kind of stuff. And so, like I said, that's really where I can serve any team in the most strong way, I think.

24:15

Speaker 1

Yeah, peel that back. Someone has this idea. Maybe you have an idea. Do you think through the next steps, do you try not to get too detailed too fast or maybe someone that doesn't have that skill. Any tips for them?

24:29

Speaker 2

If somebody doesn't have that skill, find out what your skill is and some of the examples I just mentioned. Enneagram, disc strengths, finder, six types of working genius, kind of build yourself a profile and know where you fit onto the team. Because one great example, I have an amazing co founder. Totally different skill set for me. He's great at figuring out how we are going to get something done that I've kind of cooked up. And then I've got a COO who

completely end of the spectrum. Different end of the spectrum. For me. That's very complimentary in terms of tenacity and getting things through to completion, which is a very nice kind of trifecta there in terms of being able to come up with new ideas and then get them to ship.

25:16

Speaker 2

Because I think a lot of people think they can just go at it alone. And I. I don't know that I could have done that. Honestly, I don't think I'd still be at it if I was in a loan or as a company. And we bootstrapped for 15 years. We've never raised capital ever. So you don't have that kind of traditional VC whatever, telling you, here's the next step. So you kind of have to figure it out. And that's just a different version of hard. And so having the right people surrounding you, whether you're building a firm or a product, having the right team is absolutely critical. And you have to know who is best suited for what position. And we talk about professional sports teams as a metaphor all the time.

25:58

Speaker 2

And you can't pretend that you're suited for one position when you were actually made for another. And the sooner you can figure that out, the more successful you're going to be in that. So that's something that I've tried to do as we build our team, and I think we've been pretty successful with that.

26:16

Speaker 1

And I heard, yes, don't force that if that is not your skill set. And all of those tests are great. Culture Index is another one. All those. So I highly suggest somebody do what you just challenge them to do. Okay, so, you know, do you have any good habits, routines, rituals that help you stay on point?

26:34

Speaker 2

Well, so I'm a Christian, so my faith is a very important part of keeping me grounded. You know, it helps guide my principles. The way I live my life, that's always been kind of the. The base for me. I've got a great family who also keeps. Keeps me humble. Keeps. And I love that. Having that to come home to, wife and kid, you know, it's just amazing. That also kind of keeps me on the right path. But then, you know, professionally, I would say the biggest thing is being a ferocious reader. Really, like an insatiable appetite for reading. A few years ago, five or six years ago, I probably read one or two books a year, and somebody kind of challenged me with the saying, in a year, you'll be the same person, but for the people you meet and the books you read.

27:24

Speaker 2

And I just kind of blew my mind. And as I was building the company, I challenged myself, I'm going to do a book a month. I did that. And then I challenged myself I was going to do two a month. And I challenged myself, I'm going to do three a month. And then a few years later, I looked back and I had read something like 250 books. And I can attest. Like, that is seems really simple. Read books. But honestly, if you can curate a reading list from your network and people that you trust and then pass that on to others, it's what built the Western world. Literature, reading, transfer of ideas, and. And that's definitely key to the way that I've been able to grow and scale as an executive.

28:05

Speaker 1

Thanks for sharing all that. And I'm a big fan of faith driven entrepreneurship, too. It's actually a movement, it's a podcast. So we should connect up that sometime. I'll maybe send you some of that material too. So it's good to hear. That's your foundation, man. Okay, so I love to ask my podcast guests, how about a bucket list? Is there some travel adventure? Maybe you want to write a book? I don't know what's on the bucket list? It's a great question.

28:29

Speaker 2

And I find myself so consumed by what I'm doing. Like, I love what I'm doing right now. And I know, you know, that's. That's a tough one. I. I crossed off a major one kind of inadvertently. I'm a huge coffee drinker. I'm kind of obsessed with coffee. I actually founded a coffee shop about 10 years ago. Not involved with it anymore, but kind of obsessed with coffee. And also, very specifically, I'm a huge Starbucks fanboy. And so one year I was attending the rtc or Built Conference. It doesn't happen anymore, but it used to be this big revit conference every year, and I was attending it in Seattle. And so I'm like, oh, I'm gonna go check out the Roastery. They have this big Roastery there in Seattle.

29:11

Speaker 2

And just kind of walking around, and I saw this guy just go walking across the gift shop, like, casually into the bathroom. I'm like, that was Howard Schultz, man.

29:21

Speaker 1

No way. That's awesome.

29:22

Speaker 2

And so he comes walking into the bathroom, and I just kind of casually went up to him in the bookshelf, And I'm like, Mr. Schultz, how you doing? And he was just so cool about it. That's the CEO of Starbucks. CEO and founder. And he just stood there and talked to me for 15 minutes. And he was just the coolest guy. I got a picture of him, picture with him. We had that conversation. And then he went back and sat at one of the cafe tables, and nobody knew. And it was just the most bizarre experience. But I would say that was definitely a bucket list item to get to meet him and talk to him. And I'm sure there are other things like that. But I love to travel. You know, I have.

29:59

Speaker 2

I have goals for things I want to fund in terms of, like, giving and philanthropy. I'm really passionate about finding ways to invest in the next generation. So I have goals there. Obviously, to have my son grow up to be a successful adult. Certainly a bucket list item. But, yeah, I don't know. I don't. I don't really have, like, a well defined bucket list. So I guess that'll be my homework.

30:24

Speaker 1

Oh, no, these are great. I mean, just you tell where your interests are, your future interests, and, you know, bucket list. Some don't have one, some have a couple things. But, you know, if you're going to start one, my tip would be kind of categorize it. I've got mine. I've got, like, some sporting events. Like, hey, one day I want to go to Lambeau Field. Right? Okay. Yeah, you do that any season, but, you know, maybe I'm not ready for that yet. And over here could be some travel adventure. You know, I've got one on there by everybody at the bar, a drink. You know, I haven't done that one yet. I just want to wait for the right time on it. So just, I can share my bucket list with you if you're interested. That's great.

31:01

Speaker 1

Okay, just a couple more things here as we start winding down. I love to ask my podcast guests, well, about books. If there wasn't a book recommendation. Sometimes we talk documentary podcast, but it sounds like 250 bucks not too long ago. I don't know, it doesn't have to be about buildings. Just what's a book you'd recommend to our listeners?

31:19

Speaker 2

Yeah, one of the ones is, like, mandatory reading. If you join our team, first thing I'm slapping on your desk is how to win friends and influence people. I think Dale Carnegie is, like, to this day a genius. Obviously, he's gone, but all his books, how to Stop Worrying and Start Living. The man was a genius. And so I think anybody, no matter what you're doing, where you're working, that's a really good place to start. 7 Habits of Highly Effective People. Stephen Covey. That's a good one. Big fan of anything. Patrick Lencioni. From a business perspective, that's just like if you're building a team, that's a great series of super series to read. Those would be a couple of my top picks, for sure.

32:00

Speaker 1

We'll put links in the podcast show notes. Those are fantastic, man. All right, last couple things as you look back on your career so far, is there Anything you wish you'd have learned earlier?

32:09

Speaker 2

Oh yeah, I think probably the principle that if you're running into an issue, somebody else has had to figure it out before you. And I think I probably had too much pride early on to think that my problems were unique. And if I could go back in time and meet 18 year old me, I'd say, you know, meet more people, read more books. Obviously Google only crashed onto the scene in 2004, 2005, we didn't have ChatGPT. But finding other people have run into the same challenges and seeing how they handled it. Not to say you shouldn't come up with your own creative solutions, of course, but having more inputs is always to me a better outcome. And so I would say don't be too prideful to think that your problem is unique to you.

32:53

Speaker 2

And by problem I don't mean like problem, like you could have a problem, but more just challenges and things that come up in your career or in business or at home or personally. There are people around you who have lived what you're living before, in most cases, sometimes not. But trying to find it out, find other ways is always a good thing to learn, I think.

33:15

Speaker 1

Well, what I'm hearing then is just meet more people and get all these different perspectives. That's what I like to travel too, is just see other perspectives. That's good stuff. And all right, so let's say there's someone listening right now, man,

they're getting fired up about your story, your journey. Maybe they're getting into technology, but they've got this passion and sustainability. Any words of encouragement for someone that's just now jumping into this industry as we come to a close?

33:38

Speaker 2

I would say show up, get out there. Don't just stay in your basement or your garage, like get out there, go to an event, meet people, put your name out there and then secondly, look yourself in the mirror if you have an idea or something you're trying to do and really question how you're bringing value and how you're solving problems. I think there are a lot of people out there who are just kind of grabbing at things and in the end if you really trace it back, it's like what is the problem you're actually trying to solve here? And I think that sometimes gets lost in the frenzy and so kind of gut checking your personal mission, your personal thing that you're trying to solve for, I think is a really good practice that you should do every now and.

34:20

Speaker 1

Then, man, I've enjoyed this conversation. I know, you know, some of my colleagues. I'm glad we got connected. Hey everybody listening, make sure you go to LinkedIn, connect with Ben and, you know, check out the really cool work they're doing at Ben Smith Swashbox and just Ben. Also, thanks for being on the podcast. I'll look you up if I'm in Chicago, but I'm sure our paths will cross before then. So thanks for sharing your story today. That's been great.

34:39

Speaker 2

Yeah, thank you, Charlie, and best of luck with Schema.

34:43

Speaker 1

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