

## **Integrated Systems and Sustainable Operations with Professor Robert Sroufe**

Introduction ([00:02](#)):

Welcome to green building matters. The podcast that matters for green building professionals learn insights in green buildings. As we interviewed today's experts in LEED and WELL. We'll learn from their career paths, war stories and all things green because green building matters and now our host and yes, he has every LEED and WELL credential. Here's Charlie Cichetti

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

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Robert ([01:01](#)):

Hi everyone. Welcome to the next episode of the green building matters podcast. I'm your host Charlie Cichetti today. We've got Robert Sroufe with us from the Pittsburgh area. He's at Duquesne University. Can't wait to get into the conversation. Actually it was one of his MBA students that stumbled across the podcast. As we were looking towards some sustainable resources, sharing of information, Robert, so glad to have you on the podcast today. I'm thrilled to be here, Charlie, doing fantastic work for the podcast and love to have a conversation with you about what's happening in the world. Thank you. We'll definitely get into some of your campaigns, some of the work that you're doing with your team and your students, but take us back, , where did you grow up and where'd you go to school? Grew up in the bottom of the mitten state.

Robert ([01:42](#)):

So Southern Michigan my background degrees were really involved with environmental law, natural resource technology, water quality technology, and I always wanted to work with the outdoors in some way in the

environment. One of my first environmental research grants was actually in high school and my father was a science teacher for 33 years. I took that undergraduate degree, where I was at Lake Superior State University in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, and tried to turn that into an MBA. And then even some PhD work at Michigan State University. My work there was more on environmental management systems and environmental performance metrics.

Charlie ([02:19](#)):

The environment along the way, was it just kind of where you grew up, maybe it was a family influence or pride. Environmental when you were choosing those degrees to kind of lean into.

Robert ([02:29](#)):

Yeah, I grew up on a Lake and I grew up in a state with 90% of North America's freshwater, 10,000 miles of shoreline, 11,000 miles of rivers. I always knew the environment was important and I grew up around farming communities. If you stepped right outside the Lake system, you basically were either in the soybeans corner of alpha and then environment. I guess I was just outside all the time. I couldn't imagine a world where I would be stuck to a desk all the time and knew the environment was important. I want to get into environmental law enforcement and actually be one of the people that were out enforcing laws to help protect and preserve what we have in the environment.

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

I love that story. Some listening or young professionals, they may be debating on going back for their graduate degree or even more advanced degrees. So can you walk us through that decision making there with your environmental law, undergrad, go back, get the MBA and say, ""Hey, let's keep it going. Let's go for a PhD. So what, what was your thought process there?

Robert ([03:25](#)):

Well, that automatically qualifies me as, some somehow not fit into the regular world to begin with, right? If I'm going to go for a PhD. I think one of the times in which this happened was talking to some colleagues and that

was back in my MBA program. And just thinking that I could do more with this in a proactive approach to it. So I started looking at the law enforcement side of it was reactive to problems that were happening in the environment. I then went into an MBA and was going to be an entrepreneur and wanted to start some companies that could actually help clean up some things. In Michigan we had a lot of underground storage tank issues. There was an opportunity to create a business around that and work with some other people.

Robert ([04:00](#)):

At one time, we were thinking about creating a company that does just environmental health and safety work and removing that kind of business unit from a large organization. It was risky. Some of the venture capitalists were worried about that in terms of liability. But I also had this epiphany that I was mostly looking at reactive approaches to try and take care of environmental issues. And then I saw during my MBA program with some of my faculty and some people I was working with there maybe instead I could actually be a faculty member, a professor at a university, and talk about these things with people so that I could change their mindsets and actually avoid the problems in the first place and have them make better decisions so that we didn't have to deal with environmental issues. Because at one time I was working with people from 14 different countries and I was out in the world and got to pristine parts of the world to collect bacteria that could degrade hazardous materials and then throw them on sites where people make bad mistakes or bad decisions so that bacteria could clean up their bad decision.

Robert ([04:53](#)):

I figured that's not really the best approach to all this and there's gotta be another way,

Charlie ([04:57](#)):

Some set of bandages and band aid. You went to the source ,education let's get it right out of the gate. Now all along the way, have you had some mentors, anyone that's kind of had influence over you? Sometimes a mentor can be someone you actually spend time with in person. Sometimes it's

somebody you look up to you, you follow their work, you follow their publications. Would you call anyone a mentor along the way?

Robert ([05:19](#)):

Yeah, I'm sure there's been many. Most of them ironically ended up being faculty members at universities. At one time, I even went through a book. I think that was called on What color is your Parachute? You actually answered a bunch of questions about what you want to do in the world and kind of helps get you on this trajectory if you're not sure of what that would be. In doing that, it actually pointed to me being in a university setting while I was doing this as an undergraduate student and still trying to figure some of this stuff out. So I had an undergraduate faculty member that was actually a forestry professor that was really influential. One of the classes that he taught was on manning the environment and we looked at things in terms of how we interact with the environment and the state of the world each year in terms of books that were coming out and looking at that interaction.

Robert ([06:01](#)):

I then had another mentor as a faculty member when I was in my MBA program, who recruited me to come in for a PhD and we're still in contact every month and still work together on books and other projects and some research around the world. His name was Steve Malik at Michigan State University. And it's been people like those two faculty members that I mentioned that somehow I clicked with them and I could see the world differently and they could understand that then we can work together to start to figure out what problems we can solve and how we can have some fun doing it along the way

Charlie ([06:29](#)):

Have fun along the way. Connecting dots on that career timeline, you get your PhD. I think you go to Boston College and then maybe tell us about Beard. Can you tell us how that played out after your degrees?

Robert ([06:43](#)):

So my work in environmental management systems also morphed into supply chain management. It was a good place to do that work when I was at Michigan State and Michigan, because everyone's connected to the auto

industry in some way in tier one, tier two or tier three suppliers, Boston college. I came on as my first job really coming out of the Michigan State system. In that capacity, it was trying to develop environmental classes and put them in a mainstream business school. I was teaching operations management and trying to understand how to use statistics and decision-making to eliminate waste. One of the things I really liked doing when I was in Boston, was working with students to actually get inside companies. We did almost, I had probably, I want to say close to a hundred different companies that students were able to get into and actually poke around inside and see how they work and work in ways to collect information across functions within them to see how they create a product or provide a service.

Robert ([07:32](#)):

And while doing that, I started thinking about the experiences that students could have in a program instead of sitting in a chalk and talk lecture, I wanted them to get out and actually see companies and see what they were doing. And that kind of morphed into going from Boston college to then coming into Duquesne University, to be an endowed chair at the university and created a whole new MBA program and be one of the designers of that program and deliver on those experiences. So we are conducting and delivering a one-year MBA program that integrates sustainability throughout international study abroad in that one year and three live consulting projects, one per semester with a different team of students have done almost 200 live projects to date. So the two projects have been the same. It was while I was doing all that work that I created experiences for students to understand buildings and the importance of buildings in the sustainability movement.

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

That's fantastic. You just leaned into that opportunity there with this MBA sustainability program. So let's go there next. You've been doing this for 13 plus years, maybe a little longer with this focus, but it sounds like it's not just the theory, but it's immediately the practice, the apprenticeship almost. Can you tell us a little bit about the program? Do I have that right?

Robert ([08:39](#)):

Absolutely. Yeah. I like the word theory because it sets up conceptual frameworks for us to understand things, right. And based on historical information, we can better understand what's happening in the future, but really what I'm dealing with is our strategic models and how sustainability can be part of strategy. And this program, students come in in the spring to start a summer semester. They get a live consulting project, typically with a large multinational company. They compete against other teams for that deliverable in terms of finding solutions for them. And then in the fall semester, like right now, I'm actually running five live projects with my students. I'm working with an architectural firm for one of them. And one of the first WELL certified buildings in the country actually. And then trying to figure out the value proposition for it. I'm working with a fortune 50 company on how to track products around the world and track sustainability information with those products.

Robert ([09:26](#)):

I've got others that my team is working with in looking at circular economy opportunities within the city and try not to send things to landfills because Pennsylvania unfortunately has some of the lowest tipping fees of most States. So we are an importer of garbage and we don't want those things to be the gold mines of the future. We'd rather get away from them right now and find a different route for these things that were waste streams for some to become raw materials for others. It's in delivering those projects this fall semester that they are seeing their second consulting engagement. So then going into a spring semester while doing some study abroad, typically we'll do live experiential learning projects in other countries. We've been in different parts of Latin and South America. We've been in Europe.

Robert ([10:08](#)):

We've been trying to think how many countries now total for our trips. We usually move the trips around. We're not always in the same location, but it's that kind of an MBA that I wanted to design. I had an MBA myself. It was two years long and I got a summer in between and trying to find some kind of job that was relative to where I wanted to go up in trajectory. But here we try to set up five projects at no cost to our consulting partners. So if there are companies out there that want the help of a team of MBAs we're actually working with a net zero company and databases, I think in the spring

semester coming up we've worked with large multinationals in different country contexts. I've helped whole countries actually try to better understand green building opportunities and also to get to net zero. So I'm actively looking for participants that would want to engage a team of MBAs to figure out how we can solve a problem that we don't know the answer to.

Charlie ([10:56](#)):

I'm really excited about what I'm hearing here. There is just this endless list of problems to solve? How do you filter the needs? It sounds like there's some fortune 100 fortune 500, or you said municipalities, even that may need to come to you and your team and it's not just research. It's like, "Hey, let's get some consulting and let's put a team on this and help you out." So how do you filter the list of problems to solve or projects to take on?

Robert ([11:23](#)):

Yeah, usually it's up to whoever I'm talking to. I asked a simple question, what keeps you up at night? What kind of problems do you have? So if you're a small business owner, that problem can be totally different than someone like Nike right, or a large multinational company. But I want to face real problems with student teams and then apply a framework for this. So the framework is a strategic, sustainable development framework, looking at understanding systems that are involved with us. What is strategic, how we define success when actions are available to us and what tools we can apply to them, make better decisions in doing this. We go through a planning process to get an awareness, which is really what the opportunity is, baseline understanding of it with data and see, looking for creative solutions and D getting into prioritizing those actions and what we're going to actually be doing.

Robert ([12:06](#)):

So getting down to doing the action part of it. So it's in that framework that we actually then try to take on projects that we don't know the answer to. So one of the other projects that we actually have going on right now, too, I've got a venture capitalist startup with a new company who has announced a tech intellectual property piece, where he can actually build three-dimensional structures that are basically one, 100th of a hair in terms of size. And I had no idea I'd be working on a project like that, , five years

ago, thinking about it, but I'm thrilled to have that kind of a challenge scale to approach this person and trying to help them figure out where to do market entry for this and have a team of MBAs that could go along with them for that ride. So it involves everything, but we've done lots of building projects also with many municipalities and schools and trying to get renewables on different building tops. And there's really no end to the types of opportunities we want to try to tackle. It's up to our client and our partners to have them tell us what's most important. And when, when they really need that information,

Charlie ([13:02](#)):

It's an incredible MBA program. So we'll make sure we're linking over to the work you're doing. Let's tie it back to buildings for a minute. So you mentioned the WELL project and just the ROI there, the business case for that. We are in the middle of these pandemic and healthy buildings, not just green buildings. So do you see that being a big part of some of your future work is not just green buildings, but healthy buildings? Is that coming up more and more?

Robert ([13:27](#)):

Oh, absolutely. I was just talking to one of my alum who is working at Herman Miller. In the past and it was actually now kind of splitting your time between life cycle assessment with them and WELL building and doing that kind of work now and trying to better figure out spaces and places that their office furniture goes into because they realized that when you put that furniture into a space that's, off gassing for probably the first year, maybe two years, depending on what you're putting in there and that they're actually contributing to indoor air quality issues, but they never really thought about before until well, a reset came along to tell them, "Hey, maybe you guys should better take this into account in terms of your design, what you're putting into your products and how those products interact with those spaces and especially with the air". And if we're not turning over that volume of air quickly enough of those spaces and how your products really help people or are they hindering human health and productivity.

Charlie ([14:13](#)):



Yeah. That might be good for the environment, but they're still not good for people there. Robert, take us back. This question is a little humbling. What's on the highlight reel. If you look back, what are some of your proudest achievements?

Robert ([14:23](#)):

I think were partially, that epiphany way back when in not taking reactive approaches to environmental problems, but instead trying to find proactive approaches in that path leading me to be a university professor and trying to help others understand the opportunities of good decision-making in advance of something that could have been a problem in the past, if they didn't make a good decision, our people today in the business world and anywhere else really can look into this. We have access to about four to 700 environmental and social performance metrics for publicly traded firms in the United States. That amount of information is overwhelming to think about. So

Robert ([15:12](#)):

Then if you only look at costs. One of the other companies along the way was that we could better look at and financially assess, not just buildings, but any decision we make in terms of the environmental impacts avoided and social value created with that. So I can turn a return on ROI, a return on investment into a return on integration and integrated rate of return or a feature on net present value turned into an integrated future value. I'm laughing as my nine-year-old is running by and trying to get homework done. I think

Charlie ([15:42](#)):

The zoom world we live in.

Robert ([15:44](#)):

It's in that context that I wrote a book also on interior management. And one of the people who coined the phrase triple bottom line was John Elkington about 25 years ago. And he and I have been trying to work together on some things and chatted back and forth. And he actually said after 25 years, the phrase triple bottom line should be changed. And I was saying well to what? And he said an integrated bottom line, like what I put into the book.

So an integrated bottom line is that we can make better decision making when we have environmental, social and governance information across business units within a company, and can embed that in not only the products, the services and the decisions that we make, but even the whole supply chains in cities. And then lift that up to see how it aligns with the United Nations, sustainable development goals.

Robert ([16:24](#)):

I was at the UN with Bunkie Moon and others when they released the STGs in 2015, that was a nice achievement to be part of that environment. When it was kicked off, I have helped the country of Dominica and Island nation, trying to get to net zero and become a carbon neutral country in terms of their resiliency and recovering from a horrible, horrible hurricane that basically stripped the Island bare. I've worked with other large companies and others around the world to try to better figure out how we make good decisions and how integrated those decisions can be when we include environmental and social information.

Charlie ([16:59](#)):

Yeah, that's really cool. That's a great highlight reel Robert and the nine-year-old that's fitting.

Robert ([17:04](#)):

She should be the highlight really, but she's one of them. She'll be there eventually. She'll be one of the change agents that go out into the world to make better decisions, live in better, higher, higher energy, efficient homes and work in spaces and places in the future. That'll actually contribute to our health instead of taking away from it.

Charlie ([17:20](#)):

So you're teaching her and opening those doors. Let's talk a minute about that data, that ESG data that you say is a lot of it's out there, but to the layperson, isn't that we don't know it's there is that we don't know where to find it, or is it we don't know yet to care or understand what to look for. So tell us about that data. Do you think the consumer needs to be able to get easy access to that? What would you do if you had a magic wand to get more decision-makers even just to know what that data means.

Robert ([17:52](#)):

Yeah. Fantastic question. If it was multiple choice, I'd say all of the above answers, but one of the things that's enabled, some of this is product labeling or nutrition labeling for things that we buy in the stores to go over into Europe, you often see that nutrition labeling extended with carbon emissions or CO2 emissions with what you're buying. You can use apps on your phone, like Good Guide, and actually take a picture of a barcode or something like shampoo or whatever you might be finding at the store. And it'll tell you how that product rates versus other products in the same category and can give you environmental and social information about that product. So you can better understand if you're going to buy shampoo, which one would have the best impact in terms of, on you and using it and at the same time, less impacts on the environment and social good around that.

Robert ([18:35](#)):

So you can reward companies that are better at this that are ranked in sustainability rankings. If you were to look at some of the Unilevers of the world, maybe they stand out and usually are others that have sustainability certifications associated with their products, choose those types of products. But I think the amount of information is overwhelming. I can't imagine trying to make a decision about shampoo and having to look at 400 different performance metrics, right. But if you take that into what's behind all of it, it's a life cycle assessment, it's the same things behind LEED buildings. It's the same thing. That's behind the red list for living buildings. We have a number of living buildings, even within the Pittsburgh area. We've got a lot more Passive Houses coming into play here. Some WELL and then a lot of reset taking place.

Robert ([19:15](#)):

What I've tried to do with this also is to make it something that students can relate to. We even think about all of us for consumers. So every year now I also have a design competition for my MBA students. They actually get to look at a 169,000 square foot building. That's over 50 years old and it represents over 4 million buildings in the United States. I give them an unlimited budget and say, tell me where you're going to invest in to make this building high-performance and what the environmental and the social

return will be. So when we do that, all of a sudden, I want them to go in and think about their next job and not working in Dilbert land in a cubicle somewhere. But instead walking into that place like, Oh, I could change the lighting in here. The flooring can be different. They can look at the envelope. I could make the space high performance, and the investment will have a payback within 18 months or three years.

Charlie ([19:59](#)):

You've got an incredible program that I wish I was part of something like that. So I hope someone listening is thinking of pursuing an MBA, and will reach out to Robert and the team. Shoot me a message, if you get a student one day because of the podcast, I think let's talk about what's around the corner. Let's say you had a crystal ball. What should we be reading up on now? What do you think's coming up and not just sustainability, but even green buildings.

Robert ([20:23](#)):

Yeah. Sustainability and green buildings is the client. That intersection. I think it's how to make those systems interact with and learn from each other to become better. If building systems interact with sustainability systems, interact with circular economy systems, those types of things. So some of my research also is in transportation and vehicles and those types of things that are coming. So as we better connect vehicles that are moving things. We don't have to grow food and farms as much as we can grow it in cities, we can grow it inside buildings. Those buildings can be connected vehicles that move them around with people that are not even inside those vehicles. My own vehicle in the future can actually be leased out to people to use as this out, moving around in an autonomous way and moving them between buildings that could be their home or where they work.

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

We spend over 90% of our time inside, but they could be shoveling us around and creating revenue for me in doing that. When those systems connect in that way there's this tremendous data sharing opportunity where even in Pittsburgh, we've invested in a lot of infrastructure here. Actually it was simple things that seemed like light posts, where the lights are actually wifi connected. They actually have sound sensors in some of them air quality

sensors and others. We are unfortunately, are we one of the top 10 worst air polluted cities in the country right now. What we know is that when you go inside my home or other buildings, even the business school's quality is two to three times better inside. It's because we have data for that. The data in someone's lights and stuff that we have around the city also create a three-dimensional space for drones above us and autonomous cars on the roads.

Robert ([21:53](#)):

As those autonomous cars connect buildings that create food. One of the largest owners of parking lots in the world right now is a cloud company. That cloud company is actually buying up parking lots because it figures people aren't going to be as dense in cities as they have been in the past with all the cars, because we weren't going to need as many cars, autonomous vehicles will be driven for us more safely than we can drive them ourselves. You'll have to pay more in insurance to drive your own car in the future. Then you will otherwise, and those vehicles can be out moving around instead of just sitting in parking lots too. So what they're doing is they're creating spaces where food can either be pre-packaged for you and you get your groceries or you get pre-made meals, or you can actually pick up food that's been made. They don't want people to come in and sit down. They just want vehicles to cycle through the parking lot and to offload food, and then take that food between that building and other buildings and other people that needed it in a timely way. So I think, and hear about a lot of things that are the interconnected systems of the future that are going to have artificial intelligence behind it. That's going to have big data, internet of things, kind of colliding, and then bringing us services faster and more safely than they have in the past.

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

You're tied into it. I can tell you're a little bit about futurists there, all that is exciting. I think you have to embrace it. I mean, that's inevitably a lot of that, but it's exciting to hear that that's happening in Pittsburgh. I think I mentioned before we started today, the interview is, in Pittsburgh is an amazing city, a lot of green best practices happening. I didn't realize that about even just some of the public lighting and just what you can get out

and share that data. So it's fascinating. Let's talk a little more about you. What's your specialty or what are you best at?

Robert ([23:34](#)):

I think what I'm best at is providing experiences to business students that give them opportunity to think about the world differently. I want to have a global conversation about sustainability and then figure out what intersects with that. So when I provide experiences, I talk about those live consulting projects with students and student teams primarily, and then our project partners in turn to create an MBA that provides experiences that they'll remember 20 or 30 years from now, they're not going to remember a Scantron bubble test or something like this at the end of the semester, when someone has a cram for it, I'd rather have them work on a 14 or 15 week long engagement. All of us struggle along the way at the partner, the team, myself and others might be brought in as experts to help them to figure out how we apply best practices to come up with a solution to a real problem and how to take that problem forward is something that they can gain experience from, and then go into a job interview and talk about this. And say, "you know I worked on a team. I was a project manager in rotation. We tackled something that's never been done before, and here's the outcome of it." So our projects at no cost to our clients have ranged upwards of, I think, \$40 million of value to one. And we typically have about a hundred thousand dollars, a minimum value range that we try to release. I try to target in terms of that, because that's enough to, if we save that much money for a company out there, that's potentially a job for one of the students.

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

Absolutely. Experience is the word that stood out there, but you're right. We learn best from hearing a story or we learn even better from just the hands-on experience that you're creating. So do you have any really good habits, any routines rituals that help you stay on

Robert ([25:11](#)):

Habits? I think I was able to do a sabbatical in Sweden and take my family there and spend some time with just fantastic people and also people with a different look on life where their sole purpose isn't just to work. It seems like

in the States many times, we live to work or should it be, we are working to live. I think the Swedes have that in the right way and that they're outside as much as possible and they take advantage of weekends. We can take a train anywhere. It seems to have a car just for kids, even on the train. It's about family and it's about that time. So I'm trying, and ever since then, I've really tried to stick to it. I'm trying not to work beyond five o'clock every day, start at nine o'clock and try not to work on the weekends as much as possible. And when I do that, I think I feel a better balance in what I can contribute to the world when I'm not as stressed out as I wouldn't be otherwise. I know years before that it was working until 11 or 11:30 every night and working on weekends and may make me productive, but I don't think in the end, it's the best for my family and this world in general, if I'm just working myself.

Charlie ([26:17](#)):

Absolutely. I was fortunate to go to Sweden last year and teach a two day WELL workshop in Stockholm. I would sum it up with quality of life. Right. It's just quality of life, so that's good stuff. Let's talk about bucket lists, Robert, as you and I get to know each other a little more, I'm a fan of the bucket list. What are one or two things maybe on your bucket list?

Robert ([26:41](#)):

Bucket lists are interesting because there's so many buckets. I probably have way too many lined up think of being to over 40 countries to begin with. I think I'd love to hit triple digits in terms of that bucket list. So I work in play and family have to get the family into another country setting and do that same thing for a good chunk of time. It's getting harder as my daughters are getting older, but someday they're going to go away and I want them to have experiences again, that they're going to remember, like, "Hey, remember when we lived in Luna and Sweden and the stuff we did while we were there and how that's different than what we're doing now. So I think that the country is part of it. There's another one that I've got to in terms of what I mentioned earlier, just having a global conversation about sustainability and what that means to everyone, because it doesn't have to mean the same thing. I want people to find individual pieces that they can hold on to and realize that we can all contribute to solutions and keep avoiding those problems that were plaguing us in the past

Charlie ([27:38](#)):

A global conversation. I'm fortunate here at the podcast is I get to interview green building professionals from all over the world and you're right. It's just fascinating how different it can be. We want to find that common kind of narrative, that common mission. Let's talk about books. You mentioned a couple and you've been involved with at least one book, maybe others. So is there a book or two you'd recommend and we'll be sure to link to all of them in the podcast show.

Robert ([28:03](#)):

Oh yeah. Well, in terms of the building space, I've co-authored a book and almost released it just less than one year ago. Now, November last year, it's the Power of Existing Buildings by Island press. When we did that book, I teamed up with some colleagues of mine, an actual alumni of our business school and his business partner and Oros group. They're really trying to push the envelope in terms of indoor air quality and how that relates to building science. So we created the book, the power of existing buildings and how to save money, avoid impacts on the environment and improve human health and productivity. Part of doing that is what we found in a design competition that I do have students even is that our financial returns on high-performance buildings are really good to begin with when we include the environmental impacts avoided from that it's even better.

Robert ([28:50](#)):

I can bring maybe a five-year ROI for something in a single bottom line, in a double bottom line context thing, maybe down to three and a half years, as I look at improving human health and productivity, that alone is usually 10 times better than the financials. So then I can get something down to maybe four months for return on an integration or return on investment. That's kind of baked into the book in some different ways. So the power of existing buildings was a fantastic collaborative approach with my colleagues within that. We actually have something that we've coined in terms of our approach to this as the natural order of sustainability, where we look at passive approaches vs active approach is second and then renewables. So I'm coming to you today from a net positive home where I can generate my own electricity, 40% cheaper than my utility company.



Robert ([29:34](#)):

I can offload two megabyte or two megabytes, two megawatts a year for a car and drive that car for about \$176 for 10,000 miles. , And this is the stuff that we can be doing with the power of existing buildings. My home was built and designed before I ever got to it. So I had to do a lot of this stuff kind of retroactively to this, but that's one, I think fun part of the power of existing books, collaboration is working with them, challenging students and going through the process of trying to collect the information that we've come together with over a few years to create that book. The other book that also came out within a year of that was the Integrated Management book . How sustainability can create value for any business. So those two books are my most recent ones. I've also got books on sustainable supply chain management. I think those books are the things that took years to develop and write and put together, but they are a collaborative approach to putting forth best practices so that others can get up to speed faster, make better decisions, avoid problems, and hopefully have a more sustainable future in the built environment and supply chains or business in general,

Charlie ([30:38](#)):

You're practicing what you're preaching there. We'll link all of your books there. Robert, that's amazing as we come to a close two questions remaining one. Is there anything you wish you'd known earlier in your career?

Robert ([30:51](#)):

I think I was too much of an introvert. If I look back on some of the stuff I've done, Myers-Briggs tests for things like this and I was an INTP and the first part of that is an introvert. I don't think I was extroverted enough or outgoing enough to raise my hand and test questions. And then to also connect with people like the whole time I was an undergraduate, even I got better at it, I think as a graduate student, but just to connect with people that come in as the speakers, people that walked through office stores, I'm someone that may even be just doing a service call on a company or working in and just talk to them to figure out what's going on and what they're up to and make connections and expand networks. So I don't think I did a very good job of that in the beginning. I'm getting much, much better at it now, but it's so valuable. I mean, those, those people that you run into can become a key

resource for a life-changing thing at a later time so that everybody can be better at that.

Charlie ([31:42](#)):

Right. What I'm hearing is earlier, some self-awareness, you might not be saying, go become a type, a personality, just self-awareness. You need to get outside your comfort zone a little earlier in that career. Just find stuff you like,

Robert ([31:56](#)):

Ask questions about it as people that are doing that stuff that you like to do and say, "Hey, how can I do more of this myself?"

Charlie ([32:02](#)):

Lastly, let's say there's someone listening right now. They're getting inspired by everything you said, they're ready to sign up for your MBA for sure. Has any words of encouragement if someone's jumping in right now to this green building movement?

Robert ([32:15](#)):

Yeah, ironically I was talking to an applicant chart program yesterday and someone else last week, and I was asking the same kind of question, what should I be doing? And it was more along the lines of read on as much as this stuff, as you can, in terms of there's so much information out there and so much, really good information. If you are passionate about something, we had one person who is coming to the program that I was actually looking at fashion industry and becoming a designer and wanting to go to New York, working within an industry there's so much happening there with the sustainability that she wanted to come to an MBA program in sustainability, but didn't even realize what was happening already. So it was read up on what's happening in your industry. Those things that inspire you, let them carry you on into the next chapter of whatever that'll be.

Robert ([32:57](#)):

And the applicant I was talking to you yesterday was really intrigued. I guess they never heard about the indoor air quality stuff in terms of buildings and how important this can be. And all of a sudden she was thinking, Hey, this is

a totally different approach than what I was coming into thinking about the program for. But if I could change people's lives through something like air quality. Oh my gosh. She saw that as a real impact. Coming to you from Pittsburgh, where we have a real solid healthcare system here in terms of UPMC systems and others and insurance providers around that. Healthcare is so important in this country. All of a sudden, two dots were connected and there's a possible new trajectory for someone that's sustainability helped enable great encouragement, fascinating conversation, everyone.

Robert ([33:44](#)):

This has been Robert Sroufe with Duquesne University's top MBA sustainability program. Robert, thank you so much for your time, Charlie, thanks for putting on a podcast like this and making it available. So people like myself and others love having conversations like this. If anybody ever wants to follow up with us, know that top ranked program has been global, in terms of our rankings beating out companies, I should say other universities like Harvard, MIT, Cornell, NYU Georgetown, and the list goes on because we are a focused, nimble program that provides experiences to people that couldn't get other places. I think that's in some way related to your podcast too, in terms of people coming and listening to this because they get insights that they can't get in other places. So I love that you're doing this and so happy to be a guest in your program.

Charlie ([34:28](#)):

Oh, you're welcome. Thank you for your time. I just want to say thank you to our loyal listeners. We actually are celebrating over one year here on the green building matters podcast. Me and the entire team are stoked and we're so glad to continue to listen every Wednesday morning to a new interview with a green building professional here in this industry, or just some pro tips that we want to make sure that you are getting straight from us straight to you.

Charlie ([34:59](#)):

Thank you for listening to this episode of the green building matters projects@gbes.com. Our mission is to advance the green building movement through best in class education and encouragement. Remember, you can go to gbes.com/podcast for any notes and links that we mentioned

in today's episode. And you can actually see the other episodes that have already been recorded with our amazing, yes. Please tell your friends about this podcast, tell your colleagues, and if you really enjoyed it, leave a positive review on iTunes. Thank you so much. And we'll see you on next week's episode.