

Health & Wellbeing Consultant to the Government Fran Dean-Bishop

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Speaker 1: Welcome to Green Building Matters, the original and most popular podcast focused on the green building movement. Your host is Charlie Cichetti, one of the most credentialed experts in the green building industry and one of the few to be honored as a LEED Fellow. Each week, Charlie welcomes green building professionals from around the globe to share their war stories, advice and unique insight into how sustainability is shaping the built environment. Settle in, grab a fresh cup of coffee and get ready to find out why green building matters.

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Charlie: Everybody, welcome to the next episode of our Green Building Matters Podcast today. I've got Fran Dean-Bishop with us. She's in the Washington, DC area and she is a wellness guru, gets involved with Health Tack and so much more, even a keynote speaker. Fran, welcome to the podcast. I love to find someone that has this kind of green building, healthy building journey. Give us a peek into how you get to where you are today and even what's next. Where did you grow up and go to school?

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Fran: Sure! I am actually from the Washington, DC area. I'm one of the originals. There's not a lot of us. I'm a DC native. I actually grew up in the Western Virginia area with my family since birth. I was raised in and went to school, to part the Park View High School. You may be aware of it.

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Charlie: I know it's very useful you've grown up and you've made your career there. Tell us a little bit about the early part of the career. Maybe with some early training, school and the early part of your career. What were you doing?

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Fran: I am a former track and field, collegiate and high school athlete, so I loved track. I love everything sports, but particularly that of track and field. People always asked me: What were you? I was a sprinter, so not a runner, a sprinter. There's a difference. I liked to go fast and I did for quite a while on the track and because of that I was really fascinated with sports and fitness. I went to school for business and marketing and when I came out of school I went into sales. Even though I loved sales, that yearning for being an athlete was still there. I had a lot of friends at the time that were highly involved in acting with Ballys Fitness and they were really into this kind of boom that was happening around training, fitness and corporate. I fell in love. I was like "Wow, you guys do this and you get paid for it." I started to explore it a little bit more and started training. I went back and got some certifications for wellness and fitness and before I knew it, it took off. It was something I was doing in my spare time, part-time. It really took off, I started training individuals, started training amateur athletes, got into some semi-pro work, and started working with soccer players and football players. Before I knew it I had a nice little, stable income and decided, I can do this full-time. I love it, there's a lot of passion for it. Around that time corporate wellness was just starting. In the DC area big businesses are legal. Lots of lawyers on every corner. A lot of the big law firms were already investing for their attorneys and senior management, executive wellness programs and training. They were really one of the cutting-edge industries and manufacturing that we're really getting it right in the nineties. As a service, I started working with a lot of partners for their firms and training their executive teams. It blossomed literally overnight. We went from 97 to myself and a couple of other trainers, a full-blown by 2000 and having about 30 trainers under our belt and working around corporate wellness, prescribing programs, lifestyle coaching and all sorts of things. We were really in the helm of it before it became an everyday word in corporate America,

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Charlie: Unique background with sports and what it led you. I think you're 20 years ahead of this big wellness spike. Not is this a healthy building, but more companies and frankly, individuals understanding wellness is so important. You are so early in this. How did you first get into sustainability? In your case, more wellness and ties to real estate. Can you connect some of the other dots there, as you've kind of built-up your career? Where else did you navigate?

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Fran: Absolutely! One of the clients, the first clients that we had, besides lawyers, was working with facility managers for the Smithsonian. We were doing a lot of fitness and wellness programming. Obviously, in these museums they would carve out a little space for employees to be able to use it for fitness and wellness. We were noticing the same thing at some of the local state government areas that we worked in, particularly in Virginia, and immediately. What I saw was we're crowding out these areas, but the areas aren't necessarily healthy and safe. They're an attic or the back of an abasement. Immediately, what we saw was a renovation project going on and the materials that they were using and they were applying. We were able to really talk to facilities directors about what's the right flooring they are using? What's the air quality look like? I distinctly remember Carr, our clients back then and we were able to work with a lot of construction developers in the very beginning in early 2000. Mapping out those facilities and what you put in those facilities. People weren't thinking about that then. I don't think I've heard about the coin for sustainability, myself until about 2005-2006. Looking back, we were doing a lot around green or sustainability in terms of the product and the types of supplies that we were recommending to our clients to utilize in their facilities. I've always been very attracted to that cause. No matter how well you train your body as an athlete or even person, a person who likes to be in shape, no matter what you put on your body. If the environment that you're in is not healthy and safe, it's all or nothing. It's really money down the drain. I think we

embraced that as an organization decades ago. It's fantastic to see where the industry has led to, at this day and age, a little bit of energy here.

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Charlie: Let's keep going, any mentors, anyone you might have looked up to on the way, or maybe even someone opened a door for you?

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Fran: That's a great question. I have not had the opportunity to work very closely with people in the industry specific. One of my earliest notions of a mentor is facilities managers I've worked with in some of these organizations which were really handicapped in many ways by budget. When it wasn't a real household coin phrase I would say, 2007 and 2008. A lot of those individuals. Early on they got it. When I was able to work with folks who were responsible for the blueprint of the facility, those were my mentors because we figured it out together. They were willing to allow me and my company to create as we went and innovate as we went and went along. I think from a mental standpoint some of the builders that I've worked with personally are eco-friendly here in the DC area. They're a small builder because they worked primarily in the consumer space, but one of the things they do really well is source really healthy materials and green material. I know them as a company and work with them from time to time in different projects. It's more co collaboration and strategic partnership that has really helped frame how we approach the work that we do and really have been some of, but looked at in terms of trying to figure out. How do we figure this thing out for our clients and also for ourselves. To hear that from some of my interviews, kind of that. More per mentorship we're going to figure this out together like that.

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Charlie: If you look back, what are some of your proudest achievements?

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Fran: I'll talk about that, Charlie, there's three different frames to our business. We always say that we design strategic and healthy experiences that help organizations and their people thrive. We do that through process, people and places. When I think about the places where our staff work, whether their behavior, health or well being, experts or fitness experts, something like that. When I think about the places that they're in, we've been able to save lives. We save lives through our behavioral health work, whether it's suicide prevention. We save lives when it comes to the type of material that we're able to source and help our clients utilize and choose. We also saved lives through the process. We've received a really cool award a couple of years ago from the British Intelligence Agency here and in the Washington, DC area for actually saving a soldier's life. He was on the floor. He had collapsed from a heart attack and we were able to because of the materials we had right there were able to save his life. He went into rehab and came back and we won the award. When I look over our career, it's not just the work we've done but really the impact on people's lives. At the end of the day, that is why I started business in the first place.

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Charlie: What is keeping you busy today?

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Fran: We've been really fortunate as a small business. We've almost tripped our growth during COVID because we started in the 90. We started, as people like to say, pivot. We learned to pivot during the dotcom era. When things fell apart, we pivoted again. When the housing market fell apart and the economy fell apart and wellness contracts in 2010 weren't the first things corporate America gets, because again it wasn't really a coined phrase yet. The way we've been able to grow through the economy. We keep us busy with employers trying to find a way to move and migrate their employees back and employees feeling really healthy, comfortable, and excited about moving back. Let's face it, that's a bit of a struggle for a lot of companies because of the masses and nation and the turnover issues

around that. What keeps us up is what we're framing now is a well being model. Helping our customers figure out how we create a new footprint as we create a high workforce and have employees still better about their places of work and feel better about their work overall. The second thing is being innovative. We've got a couple of things in our pipeline we're excited about in terms of new tools and products we're going to be introducing. Those two things alone are left and keep me very busy and on my game.

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Charlie: What do you know about entrepreneurship? You've had your own business for over 20 years now. You've seen a lot of growth. Do you love most about entrepreneurship?

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Fran: What matters most in entrepreneurship is being able to be nimble and be able to create without any boundaries. I coach a lot of clients around, trying to bring innovation in, especially when they feel like they're lacking. Resources are lacking, personal are lacking, the knowledge-based or combination of those. One of the things I hear time and again, is that their hands are often tied with what they can do. I never feel like my hands are tied in entrepreneurship. It may be tied from cash flow perspective or capital, but you can always find those resources inevitably, especially if it makes sense. It makes good business. I think that's one of the things I love the most, without being noticed. Secondly, being able to meet dynamic people like yourself and get into some dynamic conversations. This past January, the pleasure of speaking to an international group that is responsible for millions of media planners all over the world. I was kind of taken back with that invitation as a known speaker. I don't typically think of invent planners as a client base. It was extraordinary to meet the number of people that came up afterwards and said: your talk really resonated with me because as we frame out events that we're looking at in 2022 and 2023 and think about how we bring thousands of people together. Some of the ideas

and the resources that you've brought to bear were really helpful. I think for me at the end of the day, that's what I love about my work.

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Charlie: Thank you for sharing that. Can you tell us a little more about what's like an ideal client, or anything you could share? I know you're doing a lot of different types of work, staff extensions and so much more. What's kind of like an ideal client?

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Fran: The first thing comes to mind is if you are managing people and whether you're responsible for managing them in a place or a process. Helping people out and how productive those people are and how they perform is of preeminent importance to you. Whatever keeps you up at night about how you manage your people is usually a client of ours. Usually someone who's managing lots of people, you're responsible for the health and well being of a couple of 100 people, a couple of 1000 people in the facility itself or on a team. How you're optimizing their health, how you're really looking at productivity and performance, on what you can think about our ideal client. Secondly, as I mentioned, if people come back what is the footprint? How are you going to keep them safe? What's the environment you're going to bring them in? I did that more for my own education, in addition to being able to help our clients. Every opening these days, being tasked with how are they going to manage the people and keep sure people are feeling safe and helping. Those are ideal clients, those clients are really leading the way with trying to think differently about how they do that. It's not the same old thing. People are resigning, leaving and changing their workplaces for a reason. Companies that really get that are the clients that we want to work with.

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Charlie: Sometimes you speak on-stage, what are some topics you really love to talk about?

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Fran: I love to talk about productivity and performance in particular when it comes to managing people in ten. Talking about leadership is a coined phrase that is thrown around a lot, but really how you show up as a leader and more importantly, how you show up as a leader, because there's plenty of leadership and coaching out there. It's even more important nowadays how you help your people be better. It's interesting to ask that question, because one of the things I thought was really fascinating is how many leaders were tasked with being overnight coaches or mental health experts, or wellbeing experts when COVID hit. I saw so many posts on LinkedIn or blogs that talked about how you help your people. This is what our people need. I kept thinking to myself, who is coaching the leader on how to do that? How do you spot when a person doesn't have resilience? How do you spot when a person is burnt-out and then how do you ensure that you're not stepping on toes when it comes to Hipaa or privacy in terms of how you talk to speak to those employers and get them excited? Manage them. A lot is being asked of our leaders today. They don't necessarily have the skill set, for they may have the acumen, but they don't have the skill set, the knowledge-based the coaching. Those are the things I love to talk about. I also love to talk about space. I think that's super exciting right now. How do we not only innovate our spaces, but how do we make them really provide energy for people to want to be in. What the last and best experience you had immediately you think about where you were, what it felt like, what it looked like, what it smelled like and who was there. I'm super excited about talking about how you really create that lens that invites people in and makes them excited.

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Charlie: I love that visual there. My next question is what do you think is around the corner coming out? Maybe in this wellness movement in your world or maybe health and space? What's next?

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Fran: Great question? What I'm seeing is now that we do have this resurgence of and requests for the hybrid work environment. People, employees are demanding a different look when it comes to their work environment. Taking everything we've seen in the WELL built community and sustainability community and really creating a beautiful segway for work-life at home as well as at work. Home life, as we've seen in the last two years, is truly an extension of work-life, how do we do that in a way that is responsive and inclusive and makes people really feel taken care of. It provides that energy. I think that's going to be huge. The consumer is going to be looking for that. I think employers are looking for that. It's interesting. I was on another call yesterday and asked a similar question about what employers are looking for in this new environment and I think that's going to direct to a large extent what we do. One of the things they are, they are saying, I'm willing to leave an urban high rise footprint community to go into the middle of the Midwest as long as I have air and space, so everybody can't move into the middle of the United States. How do we create that for people more and more at home so they feel energy, energize and taken care of. I think that's going to inform how this industry moves in a different direction as we go forward.

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Charlie: Let's get a little more about Fran, what's a good habit, routine ritual? What keeps you on track?

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Fran: I did give some thought to this question, I lost my dad in 2017 to cancer. He was one of my greatest mentors, as well as a big teacher in terms of business. One of the things he was passionate about because he was a restaurateur, was cooking. I was never into cooking at all while he was alive. Sadly it was never a passion of mine. You can ask my husband: I'm really good at ordering, but I spent a lot of time in the kitchen and since he's no longer with us, that's one thing that has really informed me a lot. Again into that sustainability piece. Looking at plant-based types of sustainable foods

and things like that, I love to do and explore new recipes, and different plant-based types of diet. Another thing I love to do is read. I love to consume information and see what's new and what different other innovators are into. How can they inform us of what we're doing? Those two things and travel my husband and I are avid. Travelers love to explore. On my bucket list right now is south-east Asia and exploring that part of the world. Those are the things I like to do. When I have a moment to myself.

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Charlie: Any other adventure you travel. Do you want to write a book? What else? Maybe another peek into that bucket list besides going the Southeast?

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Fran: I actually have two books on the horizon. When I think about sustainability and health and where we've been and where we're going. Much of my work has been for large enterprises and it's been really interesting because a lot of those leaders I've worked with and enterprises have come to me recently. It's really interesting how things are going on, Charlie, but they've come and asked me specifically if I can work with them. And that's not what I do, but it has allowed me to carve out some time for thinking about how to inform the leaders better? If I can do that through books, it would be wonderful. I do have a book on the horizon in terms of the well enterprise, in terms of buildings themselves, but also individuals, and how we help create a better, WELL, atmosphere at home. Those are two things on my bucket.

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Charlie: Is there a book you recommend?

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Fran: Yes, I love the Go. Give! The author is escaping me, but I will send it to you. It's fantastic. I not only read it during my recent vacation in December with my husband, but I sent it to all of our employees to read and

to all of our strategic partners. It's a fantastic read because it helps you reshape and rethink the way you not only do business but how you're supporting others and helping other people as you do it. Often we think it's about creating a win-win, sometimes it's not about that. Sometimes you really have to let the other person win and by letting them help them get to what they need, you serve yourself. It's a quick read. It's a great storyline, the go giver again. I'll send you the authors. You can append it to your readers as well, but it's a fantastic book and again I recommend it for teams as well as leaders

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Charlie: We'll put a link in the show notes. Got that book. I know one of the authors is, I think, Bob Berg, a great recommendation. Two things as we start to wrap-up here from this fun conversation. Any advice you wish you'd known early in your career?

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Fran: I think one of the things I'm often inspired by is a new crop of genes that are coming up in our space and in other spaces that have really disrupted their industries completely. You think about Bumble, Uber, AirBnB. I often read those studies of these other entrepreneurs coming up because no limits, they just go forth. When I was coming up in the nineties, you had to have your business plan, you had to have the right capitalization, a lot of the vehicles to grow were not available. Money was nowhere near as available through VC Angel, crowdfunding, whatever you name it. I'm inspired by these 20 somethings and 30 somethings that are unlimited. If I had it to do over again, knowing that and go for it and fail fast and fail often, It would completely change the trajectory of Aerobodies.

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Charlie: I really enjoyed that. My last question, let's say someone is listening to this podcast, they're loving your story and they're thinking of

jumping into this wellness movement. Maybe even WELL, on this real estate movement. Any words of encouragement for them?

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Fran: Read, read, collaborate often and collaborate more and go for it. We hire all kinds of people in the wildest places you can imagine for all different types of projects. I'm often asked by young folks that are joining or even people who are new to the field of wellness. What are the possibilities? What is the growth of trajectory? I said: it's a billion dollar industry for a reason, probably close to a trillion for a reason. There's so many different ways you can go. There's a lot to see. There's a lot to do. There's a reason why there's thousands of products for all kinds of things in your household or to take care of yourself. Go for it, absorb, be a sponge and be willing to learn. There's a lot to learn, but there's also a lot to do and there's a lot to be able to create.

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Charlie: I really enjoyed our talking together. Everyone listening, make sure you connect with Fran on LinkedIn. She's got some really cool case studies and some pro-tips about boosting and engagement on her LinkedIn profile. I'll put that in the podcast show notes. Fran, thank you for your time today. This has been really really great.

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Fran: Thank you, Charlie. I love what you are doing. I love the podcast and to all your listeners

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Charlie: I want to say thank you to our loyal listeners. We are celebrating over one year here on the Green Building Matters podcast. Me and the entire team were stoked and so glad you continue to listen every Wednesday morning to a new interview with a Green building professional

here in this industry. We want to make sure you are getting some protips, straight from us straight to you.

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Speaker 1: Thank you for listening to this episode of the Green Building Matters Podcast at gbes.com. Our mission is to advance the Green Building movement through vesting class education and encouragement.

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