

From North Macedonia to Silicon Valley - Nikola Kravik

Transcript

Introduction ([00:01](#)):

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 a green building professional from around the globe to share their war stories, career advice, and unique insight into how sustainability is shaping the built environment. So, settle in, grab a fresh cup of coffee, and get ready to find out why green building matters.

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

Hey everybody. Welcome to the next episode of the Green Building Matters podcast. Once a week I get to interview a green building professional somewhere in the world, and sometimes I get to interview a rockstar within my group of companies. And that's what I've got today. I've got Nikola with us. He's our director of business development for the West Coast with SIG. He's got an amazing green building career. He is built up and has a really unique origin story. Nikola, I can't wait for our listeners to hear more about you. How are you doing today?

Nikola ([01:02](#)): Thank you, Charlie, doing well here in rainy Oregon.

Charlie ([01:07](#)):

I know you're out there at a conference and sharing some of this knowledge you have, so that's a big part of what we do is teach, but we get to work on amazing projects and really encourage others. We'll get to that in just a minute, but take us back, Nikola, where did you grow up and where did you go to school?

Nikola ([01:24](#)):

For some folks, probably older generations, they probably recognize Yugoslavia. That's where I was born. There was a country called Yugoslavia back prior to 1991. I was born in 1978. I don't wanna say I enjoyed some of

the things that were happening there in the nineties. I'll be brief about some of the things, but Macedonia came outta that split. So I technically grew up in sculpt Macedonia, that's called Northern Macedonia. So for some of the folks that are listening to this podcast, that's a tiny little country right above Greece and across Italy. I know Charlie, you're Italian, so we might have some connections

Charlie ([02:04](#)):

I can't wait. For us to travel together through Europe, I've been able to do that with our colleague Nick, and can't wait for you to show me around, man. You grew up there, obviously, I couldn't imagine what you went through and many that grew up in that region with all the conflict and what happened next? Let's talk about college, university study and eventually, how'd you know what you wanted to study?

Nikola ([02:31](#)):

Certainly my dad was an engineer. He was a mechanical engineer working on fast moving trains, some of the business models they had weren't the most desired model where Italians will buy, put a sticker, send 'em to India. At an early age we start talking about touching and feeling things rather than actually something major. I think the breakthrough was back in 1998 when I was studying mechanical engineering trying to get my college degree to go work in Germany, from all over the world, because I was showing interest in cars in college.

Charlie ([03:10](#)):

That was in Scorpia, and so you had that influence on engineering, but even transportation, motor vehicles, trains. As I understand it, you did some studying. I know on your bio it even says you were on the basketball team there too. Tell us about that. Were you a college athlete? Was that off to the side? What was going on in your college days there?

Nikola ([03:30](#)):

That was actually my primary dream, before I became an engineer I used to work for the Lakers, Chicago or in the Nets. I would stay during the

morning, watch the game there, six o'clock on the west coast and then go to school.

Charlie ([03:49](#)):

Oh man, I love that. We'll get back to some good hobbies and see if you're still out there and pretty good at the foul shot in a little bit. Tell us that you're studying and then maybe even double back on some more engineering, but how did you get to California and when did that happen?

Nikola ([04:07](#)):

That happened in 2000, there was a lot of hiccup in some of the government negotiations about VW opening a factory in our country. And I had to come up with plan B. And Plan B was to take a summer and travel the United States. That was the easy part, right? The notion of, okay, there's an idea, where's the cost, what's the logistics? How about college, how about some of the drafting that I went to the Army, so there were a lot of things going on, but I managed to come to the United States on June 13th, 2000 up in New York.

Charlie ([04:44](#)): Wow. And the rest is history, man. What a great 22, 20 years now. I've gotta ask, were you excited? This was your plan B, here's America. What was it like?

Nikola ([04:59](#)):

It was very scary to show up in a city of New York where there were like 20 million people. Where I grew up, it was 800,000, so hundred thousand versus 20 million. Subways, social security offices to visit, some interesting figures outside the streets. It was all kind of like a movie, almost, almost like a movie. Almost.

Charlie ([05:25](#)):

I love it, man. Alright, so you get here and then somehow you get on this path again for mechanical engineering and building. I know some time passed there, but what guided you towards buildings in mechanical engineering?

Nikola ([05:40](#)):

I lived through some of the crises in California in 2000, 2001. We had blackouts when I was in the mountains enjoying the rafting season in Chuckee, California, but there was no power, there was no lift movie. There was a lot of, kind of looking towards utility and infrastructure back in the two thousands, and I actually tried to enroll in Reno and I got accepted at the Reno College in Nevada, but I decided to move to the Bay because it is a little more metropolitan area. There were more opportunities, San Jose, San Francisco, Berkeley. So that drove me to move to the barrier. And then basically at 10 San Francisco State where I kind of refreshed the idea of mechanical engineering, thermo fluids, because I was at a power plant. There were a bunch of other things happening. So that drove the relationship between the motor vehicle design and then turmoil fluids. So that was kind of the main thing.

Charlie ([06:41](#)):

I didn't know all these pivots. We've known each other for a while, but just we're going in the transportation direction and over here with the fluids and even some production and infrastructure. Then you get back to again, buildings, and I know you're quite the engineer, you get into sustainability and energy. This is the Green Building Matters podcast Nikola, did sustainability start showing up in your career?

Nikola ([07:08](#)):

Certainly it was back in college 2006, I had a great professor, We started using the train trace software modeling tool. My first model was a College. Six classrooms, a hallway, and bathroom. That was the first exposure to the world where you can, we can put inputs, you can get some output, and you can figure out a way where we go from there and why we go there and how are we gonna go there. So that was the first key thing that happened to me, which I didn't touch on for about six, seven years with the last software Touch was certainly the current design software, which is completely different at some of the things that we were doing at school level.

Charlie ([07:50](#)):

It's always interesting when you remember that moment and you were doing some modeling to ask about mentors. Actually, the last Green Build, we were together in San Francisco. One of your mentors was there running around. If you look back, maybe would you call me a mentor? Someone you either looked up to, you followed their material, or maybe someone you knew and maybe they opened a door for you.

Nikola ([08:12](#)):

Definitely the gentleman you mentioned was my first CEO, my first job out of college at CV Engineers in San Francisco. We haven't seen each other for many years. And that was a pleasant thing and a thing to remember because he was actually the one that hired me out of college. So those were the first mentors for my engineering career and kind of very powerful figures. On the other hand, I would say, I can not mention my first two business mentors and somebody who actually taught me a lot about how things work in the United States. That was my first boss, Nick Fuller, rafting CEO from Choate Kaho. Literally those three figures have made the first five, six years of my life a little more interesting, challenging. And that's why I'm the person who I'm there because of them.

Charlie ([09:08](#)):

I'm glad you gave them a shout out because I know mentors encourage. They see potential in you and they just want to encourage you, like, this is possible. Have you thought of this? I know you mentor others. Now let's piece together this career a little bit more. I know you've worked at some really respected engineering firms, sustainability companies. We're grateful to have you on our team. Piece together that arguably next 10 years in the sustainability, energy efficiency, decarbonization movement.

Nikola ([09:37](#)):

Definitely. I attended some of the colleges, music colleges, back in the 2000, 2004, graduated from San Francisco State. It opened a door or many doors for myself. It didn't come easy because some of the accomplishments that I did, took like years in the making. Some of them are basically the most famous net zero buildings in San Francisco. I work for famous

mentors who actually like the Exploratorium Care 15. The idea of building the Parker Foundation, this is the early pioneer of actually the green building war in San Francisco. Not just from the energy style, but actually from spreading the word. We played open box right at that time, not too many folks, that was the time of the LEED version to, so we tried to not just show what can be done, but also how can be done at scale and how can we educate everybody else to do the same thing, because we weren't gonna make it just with one company or two or three companies saying some of the things that nobody else was doing in town.

Charlie ([10:41](#)): You have worked on a lot of incredible projects. I like to give a guest like you a chance to, it's not always the biggest project that we remember, but what are a couple other memorable projects you've really enjoyed working on?

Nikola ([10:55](#)):

Definitely, I went to multiple industries like healthcare, higher education, the laboratory, the data center. Some of the most memorable ones are the new Stanford Hospital and then the Lu Children's Hospital. On one hand, you get the benefit of working on a state of the art project. On the other hand, you're trying to help young children feel better when they need to feel the best in their lives, when the toughest moments are for parents or families. So they are very proud. There were some difficult goals with times where the economy was coming down two 10. So it wasn't easy to actually spend a ton of money in terms of trying to produce something that some of the benefits were hidden. There was no dollar assigned to some of the potential benefit children. And some of the things we did after Katrina in 2009 and 10, or some of the second Paris Food Bank in Louisiana, some of the things we did for some of the displaced folks in terms of housing stuff.

Nikola ([11:54](#)):

So there was this slew of things that happened to my career in the early age, like the first three to five years of my college period was basically influenced by a lot of industries, people. It kind of changes whatever was happening around the world, in terms of like the new, the concrete crisis of 2007. We

were building stadiums where we couldn't bring the concrete, right? There was a shortage because of the World Cup, some of the bank's failure of me switching from the residential market to a kind of laboratory and commercial market. In monitoring my career, I kind of stopped rethinking and kind of readjust because the sustainable world at that time wasn't presented as a sustainable mindset. It was more like leadership and energy with rental design. We actually have a mandatory, mandatory deadline to do that. It was our first job. So that was the interesting part. Some of the stuff was a desire to do better with energy and sustainable, I would say project. On the other hand, we have lots of challenges at the early stage, 2007, 2010.

Charlie ([12:58](#)):

You know, when I look at you I I it's almost like you've been doing this for 30 years, the stories you just told, the projects you've had exposure to, but you've been doing arguably 16. It's almost like you've had a few different chapters going from this direction to these successes on the way, just amazing projects by the way. And I know we'll talk business development next, but one more look back. Any other just proud achievements in life so far and business so far?

Nikola ([13:26](#)):

I have an interesting question. My life, being a guy who came over here with \$400 in my pocket and only 4,000 for the airfare tickets and the money that my parents borrow over here, he gives me a little perspective on life and what have I achieved? Where have I come, why do I live in this world, what about my children, my family? What's gonna be in the future? I'm excited about some of the latest movements in whatever I've done in the last 10 years. Why? Because I'm now trying to educate my children about what's valuable to myself and what I believe they should be learning and striving for. Some of the most important things that I've achieved is actually trying to listen to others and learn from others. Majority of the time we'll learn to compete, go a hundred miles an hour. But, the one thing that I wanna stress is actually trying to make sure we slow down a little bit and we

are focusing and observing. So that was the key thing that I've observed in the last six years. Where's the economy? Where's the world gonna go? This covid derailed the law, but it doesn't mean that we're not gonna regroup and keep on targeting whatever we wanna go.

Charlie ([14:37](#)):

Oh man, a couple things there. One, I know you're very proud of your children, so you're a pretty high energy guy. I'm a pretty high energy guy. How do people like us need to slow down and listen? Is it about asking good questions? What pro tip do you have for our listeners? How do you become a good listener?

Nikola ([14:53](#)):

My pro tip for a good listener will be basically, try not to say something. If you can try to help folks and understand without telling what you're doing and it's been very challenging. Sometimes doing good things can make you look bad. And most of us, try to help folks with some of the things that we are all going through life. We are trying to do better. So believe in yourself. I've always tried to believe in myself and then take advice from others. I've always been up for feedback and the majority of the folks that work with me professionally or personally know that we all make mistakes. We're not perfect, but we are basically professional folks who love to actually learn as much as you can.

Charlie ([15:39](#)):

Thanks man. I love that. We can have good intentions. Sometimes I put my foot in my mouth even though I have good intentions. It comes down to communications. Whether it's a client, spouse, or a colleague doesn't matter, a colleague. Let's talk about today Nikola, what's keeping you busy today and your role at SIG?

Nikola ([15:57](#)):

My role at SIG is basically connecting the dots on many forms in the barrier nationally. When I say nationally, some of our company offices are spread out to other countries. My role is actually to bridge the sales and business development and marketing side of things and kind of make sure our

existing clients and our potential new clients get the services in a timely manner and give the exact thing that we promised. What that means, it's focusing every day on client service, but also taking care of the business within our company, trying to grow a company, to a level that we have thought it takes experience and that's why I'm trying to bring my experience. And I also learned from folks like you and Nick and everybody else in our company. doing multiple roles has been fun for myself, everybody. One role is actually business development. I cherish it as the first official business development role has been kind of my natural tendency to do this in my previous roles. But this is actually my main role is actually to spread the word about sustainability. Good work that you guys have been doing.

Charlie ([17:09](#)):

You're doing a fantastic job. Let's give some tips to those listening that maybe, maybe they're transitioning their career to a BD, BizDev role. I agree on this, right, NiKola, that at least in our industry, we feel it helps to be a relational sales and technical salesperson in one. Do you know how you could help this building save energy? Not only is this someone that really likes you and people buy from people they like And they trust. But if you actually seem like you might not work on the project, but you kind of know how to fix that situation. I think that's one reason you're having a lot of success here. If you understand the programs, you understand decarbonization and LEED, but you also can form a really good relationship since people buy from people they like and trust. So could you speak to that a little bit? What that looks like.

Nikola ([18:04](#)):

Definitely, I'll go back about 25 years, maybe 30 when you grew up in a gym where 15 or 20 other guys, there's a lot of things that kind of happens that you never have felt before, four or 25, 30 years later. It's very similar. But besides in a gym with 20 guys where you kind of synergize or think what's gonna happen with the next game, actually, Kevin, what's the next chapter of your life? Advice for folks, how have I been successful, or at least when a

surface have tried to be successful with everything else, that's going on around, our private and personal life is basically trying to understand what are your goals, what are the things I need to give up in terms of procrastination. One of my biggest challenges is procrastinating.

Nikola ([18:53](#)):

One of the things that when you, when you try to do multiple things, you forget about what's the most important thing. My advice for those folks who are getting into this field would be, get your feet wet in terms of exposure. Volunteer for the GI Society. I volunteer for Asher, volunteer for the Architectural Society. I volunteer for the architectural society. Be engaged. Don't just listen to whatever people are talking, try to figure out things on your own. My first boss who was in Herrera, he always said, my door is open to you anytime. Was the door open to you? No, the door wasn't open to me, but I knocked on the door, right? We have to knock on the doors and to this day he's been my greatest mentor.

Nikola ([19:38](#)):

I have to say that he's the first one that told me about energy modeling and it's in the top mix, basically some of the 90.1, I had some of the LEED 90.1 a long time ago. We can go on and on about how I can help other industry professionals to get into the sustainability world. But my role now will be kind of to spread the word about my experiences and how I can help others? Like not perhaps saying much to them, but maybe giving them little hints and they take it to the next level. Because my mentors never actually gave me all the answers. They told me to basically figure out myself. So try to figure things out. Sometimes it's easier than you think. Sometimes it's easier than you think.

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

A lot of wisdom here. Nikola, you're feeling good today? I'm learning from you. This is fantastic. That's anyone listening that might have a quote, sales responsibility or business development. It's a relationship and, make sure you're just the green person in someone's network and hopefully they're gonna call upon you. Let's talk about the future. I love to ask this question

to a green building professional, what's next or what's coming at us that you're kind of excited about in this movement?

Nikola ([20:52](#)):

We can start with some of the recent GTA. We've seen TV, there's been a five year big talk about the IoT of artificial intelligence. What building stock gonna do with some of the old buildings in San Francisco and New York and everything. So there's a lot of things going on. I would say for the future, for the next five or 10 years, try to get away from the noise of some of the things that the road bumps and every one of our lives are happening. Try to be present at the moment and for the future, we have to get closer to our communities meeting, the city of San Francisco now, it can be one example, what everybody's working on the air, the local governments, the engineers, the architects, we all try to revitalize the downtown, right?

Nikola ([21:45](#)):

So that's one aspect of what I see in the near future. One long term future. I think state and local governments will have to kinda work with barrier management, which will announce that, no more selling of the gas appliances 2027, 2029, 2031. Some of these rules and regulations can be a challenge, but for us, they've been doing this for the last five, six years. It can be an opportunity to actually teach some of the other workforce because there's plenty of work out there, but there's no plenty of educated folks who actually perhaps have the knowledge to do the work. We are here to actually help folks join our movement, and our sustainability movement is just gaining ground. So. Some of the latest checkups with some of the developments with the economical market or political market. It's our existence, right? People can talk about what's gonna look like in 2050, the cities of appointment 15 and 2100. But if we don't take care of some of the emergencies, visible things that are happening with climate change and some of the initiatives from the government or the local governments, then we're gonna be behind. I encourage everybody to be alert and be aware of what's going on around the world.

Charlie ([23:05](#)):

Wow. What I heard is a couple really good things . In your communities, maybe you live in a big city, maybe you live in a small community, how can you help accelerate it? It's gonna be public private partnerships. How do you get involved? How do you speed it up, right? Because that's important. But, on the AI side of things and data, we have a lot of amazing consultants and engineers that work right with us and e s g team members. You know, I don't want them to have to do the busy work, so to speak. I'd rather that be automated. I'd rather them be strategists and really lean into their expertise in problem solving. So even though we may charge for the overall hours it takes for say, elite project, well, it's okay to cut some of that so we can spend that time on, on some more advanced things.

Charlie ([23:50](#)):

I'm accepting of it. It's coming out as fast. I'm glad you mentioned AI right now before we move on, I mean, you've worked on a lot of different systems, renewables, batteries, fuel cells. I don't know what there's, and you're in California, right? I'm in Georgia. California's definitely a leader when it comes to embracing new eco technology in our buildings. But what's kinda happening out there? What have you seen maybe in the last five years that just seems to be working with our decarbonization maybe in California?

Nikola ([24:24](#)):

The same uptake in residential developments in terms of battery storage and then solar PV integration. It was challenging until like a few years back when the cost of some of these services or hardware was not there, nor the software was there to, I would say, manipulate any of the process nor the system we were trying to desire. I think the big awakening for everybody else in the Bay Area was the gas implosion in San Bruno back in 2007, I believe it was. I think the mindset has been shifting a little bit. And it was very bad to be all electric in 2010, right? Everybody was building condensing boilers at that time. Well forward 10 or 15 years later. Were the other way around. Why? Because we're trying to harvest.

Nikola ([25:19](#)):

We're also trying to use less. We're trying to reuse, we're trying to fix existing buildings. So it wasn't like the notion of 2010, 15, we were building new projects and the notion has shifted to 35 wood. How, how high can we go on the 30 story wood building? Those are the little things that I would say the future with AI can help us progress faster, can help us innovate better and can help us bridge the gap of the knowledge. I could get with you in Atlanta, we can work with Dallas in Colombia. We have a lot of ways we have the tools. I just wanna see more work, I want to engage more folks to actually, and show them how not everybody will follow us, not everybody will follow us in 2010.

Charlie ([26:05](#)):

That's a powerful word. Will we not use that enough? We gotta tap into it, man. Well, let's get to know you a little more here in our kind of rapid fire part of our interview, Nikola, I'm really enjoying this. What would you say is your specialty or gift?

Nikola ([26:20](#)):

My specialty or gift in life is trying to connect with folks in a way that perhaps they haven't connected before. And that can mean if you haven't known me, you can perhaps ask me why do I still have an accent for 20 years being over here? I can't lose that. I've been practicing, I speak many languages, but, I tend to actually compost, not just through words, but, my gift has been to try to relate to folks and understand what's at stake. If I don't present myself, we're the Nike headquarters. We are not allowed to actually wear equipment now ourselves. At the end of the day, I think we're living in a situation at the moment, but we also try to see, well, what's in the future and why should this be this way?

Nikola ([27:08](#)):

How can I do better in some of the things that we are doing? Some of the things that we're working strongly on, I would say, hey, on myself for the future will be, will be trying to, trying to actually do better on any level possible in our company. One thing that we can perhaps, as myself and you head of organization, is how do we build a company? The people are the

most valuable people with Sustainable Line and you know, for this reason, right? We have to state the reasons why we, with folks actually like to work with us and, and showing our, our good work so far. I would say the more we show what we've done and what we're doing now, it will help determine where we're gonna go next. Because for us, sky's the limit, which is the biggest painting that I had in the whole world. My first boss, Igor, so we started with Igor and we're closing with Igor. He loved that picture. So Igor loved that picture that

Charlie ([28:04](#)):

This sky's the limit and you have a great attitude towards it. You're right. It's all about people. We can't get this done without amazing people that do really good work together and, and really look out for each other. That's great. Languages, I always admire those and speak multiple languages. We've had a little friendly debate internally. How many really speak what's your count? What would you say? How many languages?

Nikola ([28:29](#)):

And some folks might get languages, but I'll put it this way, I speak all the languages with the Slavi origin or at least speak 60 or 70% of them. For those that are listening, Slavi language can be Slovak or Czech or Bulgarian or Macedonian or Serbian or Croatian or Bosnia or Russian or Ukrainian. I speak a little bit of Spanish and a little more German. English doesn't count so people can count. I love how many languages I speak. I love learning more and more.

Charlie ([29:08](#)):

That was a good politically correct answer. A few more things here. Nikola, I'm a fan of the bucket list. What are a couple things on your bucket list?

Nikola ([29:21](#)):

It's been already, I would say 13 years on my bucket list. And you know, when people ask me about professional engineering, I want to get that exam right. I wanna do it for myself and for my father, for my family bucket list. Give be something small can be something big, the other day. That's one of my personal goals for myself. A broader goal will be actually trying to

spread the knowledge that I've gained in the last 15 years. Help 50 or more students, hire some of them to actually get into the community more. And not just professional with an engineering degree, but also I would say coach your daughter's soccer team, coach your son's basketball team. Try to see what a lot of people are living. We all live in a place where, I would say the barrier has become a place where people have moved out.

Nikola ([30:14](#)):

People have moved out, but you know, it's coming back. I would encourage people to invest in your local communities. And those are my bucket list is actually to really, really strongly get my community engagement that I've actually have lacked for the last three or four years. Now, we off or then, yes, I've helped, some of the, my daughter's soccer team and basketball. But I wanna do more. I engaged with students in San Francisco last month, so I wanna do more of basically educating and meeting folks, the same line of folks.

Charlie ([30:48](#)):

I love that. Some of it personal and some legacy there. Tied back to family engineering, some of it just, and community, some people say traveling adventure. You've traveled the world. What's at least one destination that's on the map you want to get to?

Nikola ([31:04](#)):

I wanna see if I can make it to Brazil. My first roommate in 2000 that I shared a room with and we became friends. He's a very successful businessman now in Brazil, Eric Santo, so we literally haven't seen each other in six years. So that's my, someone hasn't an excuse to go to Brazil and Charlie, spread the world about SIG. But on the other hand, we're gonna see some of our minds because I'm mentioning this as one of the final destinations when I wanna go. Brazil is on a crossroad. It wasn't a crossroads thing years ago, but there's a lot of folks like Eric and some of the other folks actually thinking, where's Brazil going in the next 10 years? So I also wanna learn from him, a bunch of other folks around the world, the Canadian Europeans, and on the Canadian side, we're actually pushing

the limits of some of the initiatives that we actually absorbed in the United States, but they're not quite there yet.

Charlie ([32:03](#)): There's so many things in life you don't know unless you ask or you, unless you mention, and I can't wait till we hang up, but I tell you about some work we've got coming in Brazil, so make sure you're practicing up on the samba.

Nikola ([32:15](#)): I practiced on Cape 2000 and Sugar, so this, I know that I don't have too many.

Charlie ([32:25](#)):

My gosh. I love it, man. Just two more questions here. What a fun time at the interview today. As you look back, I know actually one I like to ask, excuse me, is books or a podcast or a documentary, just, do you have a pro tip for our listeners, something that you wanna reference? It doesn't even have to be about buildings, but do you have a book or a podcast or something you'd recommend?

Nikola ([32:48](#)):

Definitely I do. Lately I've been trying to get Michelle and stop reading about too many engineer sustainability things, really things. So I switched to the page a little bit to life stories, right? So a few months ago I read the David Goggins book, Can Hurt me. There was a lot of powerful stuff there that helped me, grounded me about 30 years ago when I was a young guy who actually struggled a little bit with some of the things around me. So that was a great book. You David Gorgan, that was his first book. Another one that I recently read was Traction by Gina Wickman. It was recommended by Adam Shapiro. That was a great book about entrepreneurs and folks who actually wanna build, grow. You put the people in the right seats, I'll recommend that one for folks actually building something within their companies. And lastly, my son, 16 and he's grandma, got his car three days ago, he got his license. I would say if you're 20, nobody wants to publish, but now it's the best book. I would say you'll find yourself, I would say, especially if you have children who are teaching something without even saying right? And trying to learn by yourself. So

that was my so the three, if you can read something, read those three and it will give you for different post different areas.

Charlie ([34:10](#)):

What a great variety. Holy cow, man. Those are three fantastic books. I'm gonna put a link to the books and the podcast show notes all of our listeners check these out. That's Cola's endorsement and my endorsement to all three solid books. Nikola, as you look back on your career, is there anything you wish you've known earlier in your career?

Nikola ([34:30](#)):

I would've liked to know earlier in my career to get my I would say they taught us a lot about, how to work with others, how to compete when I was young, how to be self-reliant, but I never taught us how to deal with real life problems, where in reality, you're left alone. There's no parents, there's no educator. So those are the things that I've been reflecting on. How else can I make myself better without actually either overstepping others or trying to do well for myself? As the positive energy that I've been trying to build has been little. That's why I've been trying to work on myself. Let's put it that way. One of the things that I would have liked to know differently is actually because growing in the wars and growing a competitive environment, it's all fight or flight.

Nikola ([35:21](#)):

And those are the things that when you learn, when you're 13 years old and there's CNN and Christine TV and your mom closes your eyes and you wink and you kind of open your eyes to see, those are not real movies. Starting from a young engineer's career and fixing my dad's car all the way to right now where I'm business development in the West coast, those are the life lessons I will never forget. Now, those are the things that as a young, you build up to be a man at 13 years old and it is not easy.

Charlie ([35:53](#)):

Man, full circle man, look at you now, last question. So let's say someone's listening to this podcast, they're getting really inspired by your story. Maybe they're changing careers and they're jumping into this green building

movement. Or maybe they're a young professional here, who knows, maybe they've moved here from another country and they want a chance in the green building movement. If they're jumping in right now, Nicola, what words of encouragement do you have for them?

Nikola ([36:17](#)):

My first word of encouragement will be don't think too much about what's your next step. Take your time to think where you want to go. If you ask young folks, they have a really strong mind or they're still taping, try not to think too much. Try to make your mind start with something that doesn't work, then you can switch. Because if you don't try things, you'll never know what you have missed. Then I've tried different things in my career. Basketball, engineering, switching careers, switching countries, a lot of things that happen. But try to not get stuck in your own narrow field. Expand your horizons, learn from others. Learn about different religions, learn about, look at how things that your competitors are doing are good at the of the day. We all live on the same planet.

Nikola ([37:05](#)):

If you don't take care of it and ain't gonna be angry, be 2020.2,200, the life that I have experienced for the last, 30 years or or 25 United States have been in a breathtaking because I've experienced travel, I've experienced the good and the bad, but there's been more good and bad that's kind of the main point I wanna say. You'll heal the bumps, but you're gonna be over the bumps on a <inaudible>, especially with an electric car. I don't wanna pitch a company, but I love my little zza. I just missed the old wall drive.

Charlie ([37:43](#)):

Oh man, coming soon. Everybody's getting better now and that's a good thing. And you know, I heard a lot of gratitude there as we came to a close. Man, thank you for inspiring our podcast audience. To everybody listening, make sure you connect with Nikola on LinkedIn. Follow up with him. If you have any questions, don't be a stranger. And Nikola thanks for being on the podcast today.

Nikola ([38:04](#)):

Thank You Charlie, for having me. I'm glad that everybody else can, perhaps, learn something from. I'm gonna learn from them in the future when I meet them.

Speaker 4 ([38:12](#)):

I just wanna 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 were stoked and just so glad you 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.

Speaker 5 ([38:37](#)):

Thank you for listening to this episode of the Green Building Matters podcast@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 guests. 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.