Transcript of ‘Building a Sustainable Business’

Season 3, Episode 28, Transforming Tomorrow

[Theme music]

Paul: Hello and welcome to Transforming Tomorrow from the Pentland Centre for Sustainability in Business. I'm Paul Turner.

Jan: And I'm Professor Jan Bebbington.

[Theme music]

They say knowledge is power, and never more so than in sustainability. Learning about our emissions and energy use can help us run our businesses, our lives, and our households in more sustainable ways.

[Theme music]

Paul: What's your favourite thing about analytics, Jan?

Jan: Um, uh, it helps you do things.

Paul: Like what?

Jan: Uh, all sorts of things. Better, faster. Well, that, no, that's coffee I'm talking about, isn't it? I must get it right. [laughs]

Paul: I wouldn't know. Would you like to take a guess at how many cups of coffee I'd ever had in my life?

Jan: Are you not a coffee drinker?

Paul: Take a guess. How many I've ever had in my life.

Jan: Zero.

Paul: Correct.

Jan: Wow.

Paul: Yeah.

Jan: Never got the taste for it.

Paul: Never wanted to…

Jan: …ah…

Paul: …don't see the point…

Jan: …what about analytics?

Paul: What about analytics? I feel the same way about analytics as I do about coffee. [Jan laughs] What's the point?

Jan: [laughing] Well, I think we are gonna have to persuade you of that…

Paul: …I, I think our guest's just hung up and said, right, well, if that's the attitude…

Jan: …I'm off, I'm off…

Paul: [laughing] …yes.

Jan: Ah, well we've got some distance to bring you, bring you today then.

Paul: Yes. Yeah. Analytics can be important, I guess.

Jan: Well, if you don't know what's going on and you don't know how you might do something better, then how are you gonna figure out how to be more sustainable in business? That's the thing.

Paul: Mm-hmm. Who does the analytics for this podcast?

Jan: Uh, you do.

Paul: I do. [Jan laughs] So I do actually use analytics, uh, at some point in my life. If someone wants to know how many listeners we have, what the listenership is over a quarter, et cetera, where we're getting listeners from, anything like that, I'm the one who compiles them.

It's one of many spreadsheets I actually have when it comes to data…

Jan: …very good, very good.

Paul: I can do data and it's quite straightforward, But, yeah, it's, it's where and when it's useful, because I think there can be an over reliance on data and analytics, can become obsessed with it.

Jan: I'm sure there is a Goldilocks zone, as there is with everything.

Paul: You and your Goldilocks zones again. [Jan laughs] We had a Goldilocks zone with regulation and now we've got a Goldilocks zone with analytics. You're just obsessed with Goldilocks, aren't you…?

Jan: …what can I say…?

Paul: …that's the, that's the issue that we have here…

Jan: … I quite like porridge. [laughs]

Paul: [laughing] You quite like porridge? You spend every episode just thinking, if only I could have some porridge now, and that brings Goldilocks into your head, and then you just spew out more Goldilocks zones…

Jan: …but of course, when you say porridge, what country do you think of?

Paul: Switzerland.

Jan: No, Scotland. [laughs] So we've got a Scottish connection here as well. So we've got lots of things going on that just connect over everything. Quite data analytical, I think.

Paul: Yes, because there are analytics when it comes to sustainability, there's data when it comes to sustainability, there's data when it comes to emissions. There's ways of analysing your emissions and your activities and understanding how they can be improved.

Jan: Excellent. So how are we gonna find out about that?

Paul: Well, I think we should bring on the Founder and CEO of a company called Citera in Montreal, Canada. A company that are digital energy and emissions consultants aiming to make sustainability accessible, actionable, and impactful for businesses.

I think we should say hello to Dan Lavinskas. Hello, Dan.

Dan: Hello. Nice to be here.

Paul: And first of all, I want to know what's the connection with Scotland? Because I'm assuming you are not a porridge maker as well as a consultant around emissions. [everyone laughs]

Dan: Yeah, so, so I, uh, I attended the University of St Andrews, uh, it feels like yesterday, it really does. But it was almost 12 years ago now, or 13, you know, 12 years ago. And um, so I, I left my job in Montreal, and I got on a plane and I ended up sitting next to Jan Bebbington…

Paul: …oh dear…

Dan: …uh, 24 hours later at the, uh, social and environmental accounting, conference that was happening at the University of St Andrews, right before I started my Master's there.

Paul: It's one heck of a way to be introduced to Scotland. [Jan laughs] You arrive in the country, you fly in from Canada, what hoping, you know, for a nice easy induction, then you end up sat next to you.

Jan: Well, if you're going to come to Scotland, if you're going to come to St Andrews, at that time, the Centre for Social Environmental Accounting Research, it was there, still is there, was a really good place to start your studies, really.

Paul: If I was going to Scotland and going to St Andrew's, I'd assume I'd be going to play on the Old Course for a game of golf [Jan laughs] or something like that. But no, no, no.

Obviously, most people who were going to St Andrew's 12 years ago were going there for this kind of accounting conference.

Jan: You can, you can do *all* of these things. It's not mutually exclusive.

Paul: Can you do accounting whilst on a golf course?

Jan: Yes, you can.

Paul: Have you done that?

Jan: Yeah, well, you count the holes. Hole number one, number two…

Paul: [laughing] …no, *a*ccounting, not 'I'm going out a-counting'. [Jan laughs] That, that isn't very old English. I, you know, accounting, not counting.

Jan: Not counting.

Paul: Yeah, no.

Jan: You could, you could do.

But, um, perhaps, can we start off, Dan, to hear about what you've, um, 'cause you've, you've got a, you know, a background with some accounting in it as well, but also…

Dan: …yeah…

Jan: …and you've explained your connection to the UK, but what have you done since graduating? 'Cause many of our students, um, who are listening to this are in that process of about to spread their wings and head off to other places.

Dan: Sure, yeah. I, I spent, uh, pretty much my entire career in sustainability and different, I'd say different divisions, different departments, different aspects of it. Um, post University of St Andrews and graduation, I moved down to London, uh, and I, I focused a lot of my, my time on, uh, on the transportation industry.

So trying to apply sustainability to, um, urban transport and, you know, think trains, buses. Um, I was also very interested in the last mile, um, and how we can get people to and from, um, train stations and, and, you know, places where you can get lots of people moving from point A to point B, and out of cars, um, essentially. So, so, uh, I spent a lot of time with this, um, working on large infrastructure projects across Europe, uh, trying to get a circular economy and better, uh, more sustainable materials put in large train, uh, procurements. Um, so, so in bid, bid process for that, uh, for those projects, trying to get, uh, trying to get some, some more sustainability in there.

Um, after that, I moved back to Montreal, um, and joined a, uh, a power sports company, which, which would be the antithesis of what a sustainability person would do. Um, but I was, I was, uh, offered a position to come and build the, uh, electrification and urban mobility strategy for the company.

Um, so I spent, uh, many years, uh, doing that with a bunch of very, very intelligent people. and we tackled everything from that last mile delivery, last mile transportation to, uh, to stations. Um, how do we build, uh, you know, virtual power plants in cities? Um, we touched a lot of different, uh, topics. Um, super, super interesting stuff.

Um, and then following that, I, I actually led the analytics and AI group, uh, for the company, which is where I, I, you know, kind of merged my passions for, um, you know, for analytics and data, um, to, you know, this sustainability aspect and, and, you know, subsequently left and, and joined, uh, or started up Citera.

Um, so it's been three years that, uh, that we've been building, uh, Citera, which helps with, you know, if I had to explain it high level, we help with Scope 1, 2, and 3 emissions calculations and, and data collection for that.

Jan: And why did you fall upon the name Citera? What does that, does that, what does that mean?

Dan: Yeah, so, we, we had a, um, a lengthy naming exercise. Um, but important to me was something that meant something. I didn't want a, a random word or something that, that people wouldn't be able to relate with, and I wanted a story behind it. Um, so we decided on combining two words, um, 'citadel' and 'terra'. So, so Citera is, is those two words, uh, shortened. Um, and, and essentially the way we saw it was a citadel sits at the top of the hill, it overlooks, it protects. And terra is, you know, the Latin word for, uh, for Earth.

So, we see ourselves as protectors of the Earth, essentially. [short laughs] So we'd like to explain this.

Paul: I'm really glad you clarified the particular spelling and definition of terra there, because for a moment it sounded a bit [Jan laughs] citadel and we're gonna terrorise the people… [Jan and Dan laugh]

We're gonna terrorise them into wanting to do sustainable action, but no, no, no, it makes a lot more sense now.

Jan: It does indeed.

Paul: And I was also worried slightly, during the start of Dan's tale of where he's gone from graduating, that we'd brought on another guest who was just gonna talk to us about buses.

Jan: Ah, yeah, 'cause we…

Paul: …'cause last week we, we had Ben on who was talking to us about buses and infrastructure and…

Dan: …yeah…

Paul: …how buses can be part of sustainable, sustainability and getting people out of cars, onto buses, onto public transport, going that last mile, et cetera…

Dan: …yeah…

Paul: …so that really ties in with what we had from last week.

Jan: And was sustainability always in your heart, as something that you wanted to work on when you, when you graduated?

Dan: Um, I, the, the short answer is yes. The, the story behind it is actually, um, my last semester studying accounting, I took a class called Environmental Accounting. Um, I was always very connected to, the earth and, and, you know, like farming and, uh, like my, uh, I had a very good friend who owned a, um, an organic, uh, farm out, out just outside of Montreal, and I used to spend a lot of time there.

Um, and so I always felt this connection and so I took this class, Environmental Accounting, not understanding what it meant or what it was. Uh, and I actually read an article by Rob Gray, so on shadow accounts and, um, I immediately afterwards, like, went home and I started researching and understanding, okay, who's this person and what is this?

And I was, I was enthralled, like I was, I was obsessed with this topic and, and decided that in that moment I needed to learn more. Um, I looked up, I didn't even know where the university was when I applied, in fact. [Jan laughs] Um, I just knew that Rob was a professor there and, and there's the Centre for Social Environmental Accounting. And, uh, I applied. Uh, and that was the start of my sustainability journey.

Before that, I had no idea what sustainability was or what, um, what it entailed. Um, but, but that kicked off, you know, my entire career.

Jan: That's amazing, isn't it? Education. Great stuff.

Paul: It is, yeah. Discovering where St Andrews is, and then taking that [Jan and Dan laugh] from beyond.

Yeah. I, I dare say that unless you are a golf fan, outside of these shores, St Andrews is not somewhere that you necessarily have any idea where it is. If you are a golf fan, you know, where St Andrews is, probably to within about a 50-metre radius where the, the Old Course and the first tee in the 18th hole, et cetera, and the Road hole and the like. So, lots of things, yeah.

So, not only then in your career, but I believe that sustainability maybe touches in lots of aspects of your life. And I'm told that you've got, um, a bit of a passion for coffee, is what I've been told, uh, by Jan…

Dan: …yes…

Paul: …in fact, she said that we could have a whole podcast about coffee rather than about what your actual, uh, business does. I mean, do, do you have

sustainability aspects that you are thinking about when you have a cup of coffee?

Dan: It is a great question and, and as if you get James Hoffman on the podcast with us, I would a hundred percent be a part of that and talk coffee for the entire time. He's, he's a, he's a must watch. Um, but um, yeah, in terms of, of what I think about in sustainability when sipping coffee, there's a, there's a lot of topics.

I think the one that. I, I do most often, 'cause I do a lot of, a lot of thinking, um, independent thinking and, and it is how simple the solution is to sustainability, but how complex the implementation is. It's very simple: consume less. That, that is the secret sauce. We have all of the tools, we have, all of the knowledge, we have, we have everything we need to, to stop climate change.

Um, the only thing that gets in our way is societal norms, growth. Um, this aspect of, we've learned behaviours. We don't know how to consume less, like. And that's what consumes me on a daily basis is how do we make it so easy and so ingrained into what we do that it, it becomes almost a value to each and every individual on the planet.

A value to protect the planet, to, to, um, to be kind to our planet, the way we're kind to others. Um, because essentially a tree outside is just as important as the person standing next to you. But we see it as being separate, um, for some reason. And, and I think that's the biggest thing that comes to mind when, you know, every day is like, how do we make people care about this?

And it's, um, complex, but ultimately very, very simple as a solution, is consume less. It doesn't necessarily mean to, need to mean less growth. It could mean less, you know, more savings. Um, you could, you know, you consume less energy, you save more money. You know, you, have, uh, you recycle your materials at the end of its lifecycle, cheaper inputs, right? We need to make sustainability make business sense, is, is ultimately what I, [laughs] what I come back to.

Jan: Yeah. And, particularly for our, um, you know, our student listeners. I mean, what's it like to found a company? And does, is that something you were always going to, you know, keen to do and you're gaining experience to be able to do that?

And what kind of, maybe a, um, if you were to offer your younger self some advice about founding a company, what would that be?

Dan: Yeah, I, I think the, building a business is the toughest thing I've ever done. It's, it's the, the most difficult, but the most rewarding, um, is, is how I would describe it.

Um, you learn absolutely everything at a unbelievable pace. You, you have to learn how to be the marketer, the salesperson, uh, the accountant, you know, the, the product person.

Um, you, you have to stretch everything to its absolute max. And, and the most important thing is you have to be willing to fail. Multiple times. [laughs] Because you will not be good at everything. And you need to be okay with the fact that you won't be okay, good at everything. Um, and you need to get back up and you need to start again.

And I think a lot of what people don't understand is, is that when they get into entrepreneurship, it's like this blindness that you go into it with. Like I, I was like, I was unstoppable when I first started. Now I'm, I'm an, you know, [laughs] I have all my battle scars. Everything is, is, uh, you know, I, I'm a lot more knowledgeable than I was.

But I think the, the fearlessness is something that you need to have as an entrepreneur. You need to be willing to fail multiple times, and you can't be afraid to pick up the phone and call someone and be like, 'hey, I want to sell you my product'. That's the biggest thing with being an entrepreneur, and that's the thing that I struggle with the most.

I don't wanna, if I could make our product free for everyone to use and it makes an impact on the planet, I would do that. Ultimately our, our world runs on money, I need to pay my bills. I [laughs] so, um, so that's the biggest thing is, is don't be afraid. Um, and, and, you know, don't be afraid to pick up the phone and call someone and ask for something, right?

Paul: So you did found a company and that is Citera…

Dan: …yes…

Paul: Can you tell us then, what Citera is, what you do, what services you're providing?

Dan: Yeah, so the way that we like to, um, simply explain it is we're, we're digital energy and emissions consultants. So that, you know, that's a very broad term. What does that actually mean? But it, it means we're data experts. We're experts at getting information into a format where you can analyse energy and emissions in separate terms.

So you, it doesn't need to be, um, only about ESG reporting, which is something that we've, we've kind of deviated from over, over the past couple years. Um, we started in that field and then we kind of moved away from it. Um, our goal is to become an operational tool that day-to-day people can use to gather insights on, um, on energy consumption, on how, you know, where their, their emissions are coming from, how to make improvements.

Is, is there savings that we could have? Sometimes, uh, and I, I think it's, it's funny that people still don't know this, but your, your utility company will overcharge you for things. Um, they make mistakes and some of the times, like we can identify that and help you save money just like that, right? It's, it's as simple as identifying when you're being, you've been overcharged and, and getting the money back.

So there's lots of different things within that, but it's getting people excited about the base of it. The data foundation, which is mostly utility bills at this point, but we also have building monitoring systems, we have sensor data, we have all kinds of other things that we address, but the majority of it is I have a utility bill, and you convert that into, uh, usable data to derive insights.

Jan: And is the demand for that kind of service, uh, in increasing over time or changing because, um, and we, we might come on and do a quick definition on Scope 1, Scope 2, Scope 3. But people are being asked to think more than just Scope 1 and 2 these days…

Dan: …yeah…

Jan: …they're also thinking about Scope 3. So maybe, 'cause you're the expert, we'll let you define those three scopes for our listeners, and then talk about how the, um, the, the demand for data has differed over those three scopes over time.

Dan: Yeah, so, so Scope 1 and 2 is, is where most people start. It's, it's energy produced by yourself and energy, um, you know, procured from external. Um, so utility bills or onsite generation. So, you have solar panels on your roof or,

uh, you know, some kind of, uh, diesel generator, uh, connected to some data centre, uh, [laughs] it's, it's considered, uh, Scope 1 and 2. Um, Scope 3 is, especially in buildings, is extremely complex and, and I think a lot of people misunderstood that aspect of things. We're seeing a lot of, um, regulations come into play in, in California and Canada and Europe requiring Scope 3, but I think a lot of businesses are, are a bit scared with how that is implemented.

Scope 1 and 2 is relatively simple, but the Scope 3 side of things is, you have to talk with tenants, you have to talk with suppliers, you have to talk with, you have to be able to, to separate out where, um, who's responsible for those and then ask and, and retain information. So it's incredibly complex and I think a lot of people are very scared about what comes next.

And so we've seen a lot of, um, worriedness in the market on, in terms of like, how do we, how do we do this? Because people are very concerned about compliance. Like companies in general are, are, I don't wanna be fined, I don't wanna be given any, any kind of like slap on the wrist for not complying with something.

Um, so they take it very seriously. Um, but, but I think it, it's confusing for people in terms of how do you, how do you collect this information and how do you make it, um, easy for them to do so? Um, so generally what we're seeing in the market, but it's, it's evolving every day. Um, you know, and each company is very different. So it, it really depends, but it's, it's a complex topic that's for sure.

Speaker: And do you focus on any specific industries or any specific you know, type of companies when you're offering your services?

Dan: We, we do. Um, our technology is, is agnostic to, uh, industry and, and, you know, types of companies. Um, data is data, at the end of the day, you can, you can adjust most things. Um, but we do focus on the building industry. Um, it could be commercial, it could be multi-family residential, uh, or industrial. Essentially large property managers, commercial real estate owners, um, and, and the energy and sustainability consultants that they use to, um, to create their, you know, ESG reporting, and, and ultimately save money on a month-to-month basis. So, um, so yeah, we're, we're very focused on that for now, um, where we see a significant opportunity, uh, in the market because of its complexity.

Jan: So what you've described there is, you know, what happens when I turn on the lights or, you know, turn the heating on or, or whatever in a building. Is there something about data analytics that help us understand the carbon tied up in building in particular ways, or refurbishing as opposed to knocking down and starting again? Is that also part of that carbon story for the built environment?

Dan: Yeah, I think there's a, you know, when you look at, the life cycle of a building, 10% of the, of the total emissions comes at the, you know, beginning of life construction and, and, uh, of that building, and the embodied carbon that comes with it. 80% is during its use, and then you have end of life, which is, you know, the, the remnants.

The majority of, of emissions and, and consumption is gonna happen during its, its use. Um, and how you construct a building and the decisions you make are incredibly important to, um, to the impact that you're having or the footprint that you have, uh, during that, that use. Um, we've seen, you know, and, and a stat that we like to use is, is 30 to 40% of energy consumption in any given building is wasted. Every year.

So, if you take that as a base and you're, say, spending a million dollars a year on utility bills, um, you can save three-four hundred thousand dollars by implementing efficiencies, um, you know, changing your windows, retrofitting and upgrading your HVAC system. Just putting, uh, timers on your lights. Um, those are, those are small changes that you can make, uh, and can be, you know, built in directly into the building through building automation systems, um, to save you a ton of money, uh, on an annual basis, making the business case extremely easy.

Jan: And I remember years ago I was doing some work at, uh, with colleagues at the University of Dundee in the engineering department, uh, looking at building. And so when you make a decision to have carpet or not to have carpet, you've also just hardwired in a whole ton of vacuuming and that, that you've got a big energy, sort of, balance and, and seemingly…

Dan: …yeah…

Jan: …you know, questions that are seemingly like, well, what do I want, what do I wanna feel under my feet? Without really thinking through where that, what happens next?

Paul: And it ties in with a lot of stuff we discussed in uh, an episode the first time we had Adrian Friday on, with how offices and the technologies that are built into them and the effects post-Covid of say, automatic lights coming on, but if only one person was in the office, the same number of lights and the same number of systems were coming on as if there were 50 people in the office.

Just 'cause they're based upon movement in one area, therefore everything turns on and various things are happening and yeah, it's all the decisions that are made then. That was, those decisions were made not realising there was gonna be a pandemic however many years down the line, that would limit bit the number of people coming in and the effects that can have.

There's gotta be a lot of unforeseen things that come up and that affect it all as well…

Jan: …yeah.

Paul: So there's maybe been, especially on your side of the Atlantic, Dan, changes in the emphasis on sustainability over the last year, 18 months. I can't imagine why, I can't imagine any particular individual who might have been [Dan laughs] at least partially, uh, responsible for that. And I know you are in, uh, on the other side of a, a national border from said individual. But has that affected your operations and the way that you do things and maybe the way that your clients do things?

Dan: Yeah, I, I mean, I was just in New York last week, to present to a room of bankers. Uh, so we were part of the Morgan Stanley Sustainable and Inclusive Venture Lab. Uh, and so we, we had to present, and I, I used that joke. I said, you know, shifting political landscapes and, you know, we don't, we don't know who it is, but, um, but, but they are shifting, um, the message and the, the, you know, let's say the, the implication and, and, and, and the reality of it is, like, these things are inevitable.

Like it's, it's not like people are, are stopping the train because of one individual. What we're doing as a, as an industry is we're, we're reframing it, so ESG and sustainability and, and this, these terms are, are taboo, right?

It's things that people don't really want to hear anymore, but when you talk energy efficiency and you talk, 'hey, this could be used as a great marketing

tool for you to attract new customers and new tenants' and whatever it may, you know, whatever their business may be, um, that gets them excited.

So, you know, ESG and sustainability are, are becoming taboo subjects, but reframing it to energy efficiency and being able to save you money on your production process. Being able to, you know, market that to your customers and your tenants to get the best customers, to be able to get the best investors. Investors are, are, are demanding it in the building industry, you have to have plans. A lot of our business comes from that.

Asset managers are saying, I need to know on a quarterly basis how much your, your buildings are emitting, how much you're saving, and, and what's your retrofit plan, and what's your, your net neutral plan?

So it's, it's becoming an inevitability. Um, and you know, the energy transition is a 3 trillion dollar market at this point. Um, and the majority of that is spent in end use. So, so we talked about this earlier, but the, the usage of energy in all different types of, of industrial, commercial, residential, uh, buildings, and on wind, solar, right?

Dan: So those are the two largest components. Included in that 3 trillion is oil and gas. But over 75% of it is dominated by energy efficiency and renewable energy sources. To say that that is gonna shift next year, is it, it's impossible. The train is already moving. It's already going. We just need to reframe the way that we're, we're seeing it, and that's where I'm seeing a lot of the people in the market.

What, what they're doing is we're all changing our websites, we're changing the marketing words. Um, but the, the goal and the mission stays the same.

Jan: And that's pretty reassuring because you're right, these are perennial things, and particularly when you spoke earlier about smart analytics, being able to, you know, save energy costs, then that's, that's not something that needs to be walked away from, you know? [laughs]

I would've thought to be leaning into that really heavily. Uh, but, you know, particularly in, in, you know, tough economic times for many businesses and households as well

Paul: Are there particular types of businesses who are still advancing their sustainability ambitions then, Dan? Or is it, you're still seeing it across the board, even if, like you say, maybe people are using different words here and

there. People are not necessarily doing it in exactly the same way, but they are still doing it.

Dan: I, I think even, even if the terminology is changing, even if marketing-wise things are changing, um, companies are, are still needing to comply with local regulations. We're, we're global, you know, they're global brands. So, you know, we were talking with a shoe manufacturer. Uh, I, I won't name who it was, but, they haven't made any changes.

They said, well, we have California that's in introducing this new law that that requires Scope 1, 2, and 3 in emissions to be, um, to be disclosed on an annual basis as part of a requirement to sell the product in that state. The EU is not backing down in terms of what it's, what it's requiring. It's the same in Canada.

So it's, it's an inevitability. They have to comply. And I see it as, very similar to what happened with tailpipe emissions back in the seventies. Um, having spent a lot of time in transport, I know that, that reality very well and, and, you know, CARB and, and this, this transformation in the individual states that dominate the, the economies. Um, so, so California and New York are, are, you know, 60% of the economies in, in the US.

They will dictate what companies have to do regardless of, of federal policy. Um, so that's what we're seeing, is that people still wanna sell in these states, they're taking a very silent stance, but ultimately is, it's business as usual. They have to continue doing it.

Jan: And I suppose, um, we've, we've spoken many times about, you know, governance and, and laws in the past as well. And particularly in a federal system, cities and states are hugely, um, important and…

Dan: …yeah…

Jan: …can, can drive all sorts of action.

Paul: Yes, we saw not so ago, California doing a deal with the UK…

Jan: …yes, yeah…

Paul: …on green energy…

Jan: …that is fascinating, yeah…

Paul: …that, that's a state doing a deal with a country. Albeit the president of the country that the state was within, wasn't particularly impressed that that was happening…

Jan: [mumbling] …probably a good thing… [laughs]

Paul: [laughs] …yes, yeah. Well, I'll, I'll leave that for people to decide, but yes, yeah, that the fact that you've got some particular states who are pushing the agenda forward and they're able to operate with a level of autonomy is, yeah, really positive.

Jan: And I think it's also, um, like the state of Texas has got huge amount of renewable energy going into, into that state, so I don't think it neatly fits into two different political ideologies either. I think it's a much messier, um, sort of situation.

Speaking of messiness, the future's always messy. [laughs] So what's next, Dan, for your company and for, um, your customers and, and clients?

Dan: Yeah, I, I mean, great question. And, and you know, for us, we're, we're always innovating. Uh, I think it's, you know, kind of become apparent through my, my trajectory. I like to innovate, uh, and I'm a very product individual.

Um, so we want to be at the forefront. We, like our product is now, um, we're making it cheaper, more accessible, easier to onboard, uh, easier to use than any other platform on the market. And so we wanna stay ahead of the game and we want to give customers a, almost like a custom feel, to, to sustainability analytics and, and, you know, the, the applications and software that, that dominates the market today.

And ultimately is, we're not, you know, we're all driven by, by profits and revenue, but like ultimately is we're, I, I think my, my ultimate goal is to make this world a better place rather than to make billions of dollars, which is not true of some of the other competitors we have. [laughs]

Jan: Mm-hmm, yeah.

Dan: So, uh, I would, I would say that, you know, by choosing Citera, you're, you're choosing innovation and you're choosing, you know, someone, a company that's genuinely looking to help you on your journey and, and bring a product that, that does that rather than, you know, get your money.

[Everyone laughs]

I don't know if that's a that's a great way to put it…

Jan: …but just enough, enough money. Enough but not too much…

I like that. Oh, Goldilocks. We're back.

Dan: Goldilocks…

Pauk: [sighs] [joking] …you and Goldilocks, can leave her alone…?

Well, Dan, thank you so much for joining us. It's been really good to talk to you about how a business such as yours operates, the benefits it can bring and what the future looks like in that score.

Dan: Thank so much for having me. This was a blast.

[Theme music]

Paul: Has Dan succeeded, actually, I don't think he needed to succeed in the first place, in getting you excited about data, which he said is a very important thing?

Jan: Well, I, it's kind of like esoteric in a way, isn't it? But it's also immensely practical. So particularly if you're a, you know, a busy business or if you don't have the skills or the in-house skills, um, to actually do these kind of analyses, to outsource 'em to someone who does it for lots of different building firms, or whatever industry you're in, is a really smart way of really getting, following the furtherest trends, getting the best data, getting the best learning.

So it's um, so yeah, it's kind of abstract in a way, but hugely concrete in another.

Paul: But uh, I think the fact he says getting people excited is the key thing, because it's all very well and good having, getting these reports for companies, but the companies actually have to be bothered about them and pay attention to them.

It's so easy to commission reports and then just, uh, get shoved on the shelf or a virtual shelf, um, and never read or actioned upon. So getting these companies that are keen to be involved in the sustainability data, emissions data, Scope 1, 2, 3, to understand what they're doing and to then action that and see what they can do moving forward, et cetera. That's really important.

Jan: And there were two things that I thought we'd heard before, but which were really nice to hear again. One is, uh, initial building design or design of

any system, hard wires in carbon. And so you actually have to think very carefully about the design phase.

The other thing is that the asset managers are interesting, interested. So when we say asset managers, we mean, um, you know, people that, um, own companies who want to know, you know, how much are they worth? Are they worth investing in? What kind of possibilities are there for these companies to, to make good products and make, make decent profits.

So this is the engine of capitalism, are the people that make those choices. So if they remain interested, no matter what you call it, you're, you're okay.

Paul: And the part that struck with me that echoed a previous episode was you're talking about the train and the train, not everyone's jumping off. It was the exact same words essentially that were used by Julia and Knut when we had them on from IMD, and they were talking about the train has left the station. You know, you're either on it or you're not, and that's it.

It's, it's already gone. The sustainability thing is happening, it's moving on. Therefore no matter what the politics and the issues that might be going on around it, that's still carrying on. It's what we've heard from a few places, and it's good to see from that practical, on the ground sense that yes, this is still happening. He's working with companies that are still pursuing that agenda.

Jan: And this is where I think we do have to be careful not to be thrown off by, you know, headlines and froth and you know, sort of, you know, [makes distraught noise] 'it's all gonna stop'…

Paul: …coffee froth…?

Jan: [laughs] …not coffee froth, frothy coffee. Yeah, so not to be thrown off by that. Because I think, um, maybe in some ways partly 'cause this, this. You know, last calendar year has been, you know, sort of quite tough to think about.

It's very easy to get, you know, sucked across to thinking, oh, well it's all gonna die and this isn't gonna work, and we're gonna be this and that. Rather than like, let's get on with it.

And so that was really nice to hear, especially from someone who's operating in a North American context.

Paul: Indeed…

Jan: …yeah…

Paul: …indeed. And I think it flows nicely into what we're gonna be looking at next week.

Jan: Oh, what have we got on for next week?

Paul: Well, we're gonna be talking to someone about corporate activism and corporations championing social purpose.

And so that's, even if those companies that we talked about today by Dan aren't necessarily always shouting about it, they're still doing it. These are companies who are happy to come out and be vocal and say this is their cause.

So we've got, um, Lewis Nicholas from here at Lancaster University who's gonna be talking to us about that, which will be very interesting.

Jan: I think it's a nice flow through.

Paul: Until then, thank you very much for listening.

It's goodbye from me, Paul Turner.

Jan: And goodbye from me, Jan Bebbington.

[Theme music]