



Podcast Transcript | *The Fix*

Season 1, Episode 1

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Katherine: Welcome to *The Fix*, the podcast made for the trades, where we sit down with inspiring individuals across the trades to discuss their unique take on the industry, including career paths, job site stories, overcoming challenges, and everything in between. I'm your host, Katherine, a marketer here at Oatey, with my co-host and friend, Doug, one of Oatey's resident experts in all things trades. *The Fix* is more than a podcast. It's a community, a community built to support tradespeople and inspire the next generation of essential pros. Let's start the conversation. Welcome to the first-ever *The Fix*. This is so cool that we're finally here, Doug. Can you believe it?

Doug: Katherine, I'm telling you, somebody who was born with a face for radio, I just drink a two-liter of Mountain Dew with a chaser Red Bull, and I'm jacked for this session.

Katherine: [laughs] Yes, this is awesome. Well, first, we want to thank our listeners for tuning in for this first-ever episode. Getting here, we've been talking a lot about what it's going to be to have this conversation around the trades, and really, joining this community, we're going to have great meaningful conversations around the road ahead, what trades look like, what the trades are today, how we can help support, and new ideas of how we kind of grow this ever in this industry.

I want to talk-- a couple of things, why we're here. As a manufacturer, we feel it's super important to be a part of the conversation. Doug, during any of your times, did you ever feel like the manufacturers that you work with out in the field really had a support system for you?

Doug: I'll be honest with you. When you're out in the field, sometimes you feel your only connection to the manufacturer is through the wholesaler because you're there every day, you're there to counter, you create relationships with the counter guys, and then what happens is you rely on them to be your voice to the manufacturer, and sometimes you feel that manufacturer's completely disconnected and you're just a sale to them. Well, here at Oatey, one of the things that hopefully we can deliver a message on is the simple fact that we are very connected with our customers. We have a lot of VOC which is Voice of the Customer.

Katherine: Yes, that's great, and we rely as a manufacturer on the counter guy, and it's important that we have those conversations all the way through our end-user, counter sales rep, external team. It's great here to be able to join this conversation and talk a little bit more about the trades. Let's talk a little bit-- I want to go through and talk some background, Doug. You are a master plumber-

Doug: Yes, I am.

Katherine: -as well as a Technical Applications Manager here at Oatey.

Doug: Yes, I am.

Katherine: Can you talk to us a little bit about how long you've been in the field and how you got here?

Doug: Well, way back in the early '80s-- Everybody now knows I'm a boomer.

Katherine: [laughs] You don't look it at all.

Doug: I grew up with very humble beginnings in my life, and we did not have a lot. I mean, my dad used to joke sometimes, that he was going to make us a wish sandwich, that was two pieces of bread, and we wished we had something in between. Through those humble beginnings, we had those challenges, but we always-- my sister and I always had the ambition to prove ourselves and do good things.

My career basically started one day when-- we lived in an apartment complex, where all the heat was supplied by one unit. I went to the basement and I heard somebody banging, and there was a gentleman down there changing the HVAC system. I was standing there watching him and he needed a hand on a few things. He said, "Hey, kid, why don't you come on over here and give me a hand? I'll give you a couple of bucks for your time."

Katherine: So cool.

Doug: Yes, I tell you, he changed my life because I went over, worked really hard, and he gave me a \$20 bill.

Katherine: Oh my gosh.

Doug: For us, that was a big deal.

Katherine: Yes, your wish sandwich just actually became a reality.

Doug: Absolutely. We had meat in between that bread. He liked me, he saw something in me, work ethic, and he said, "Hey, I do a lot of these. How would you like to come and do a lot of the demo for me and make it ready for me to do my new installs?" I did and it made me feel really good for a couple of reasons. One was I was contributing to the family, and then number two was I was actually doing something physical, and at the end, I could see some results.

It got me started and thinking, "Hey, if I can do tear-outs, I might be able to actually put something in someday." I started exploring around and looking for some local plumbers who would be willing to hire me on as a helper, and I found the gentleman who brought me on, and I served what would be considered the apprenticeship through him, which allowed me to acquire enough time to go down and take Master Plumbers test.

Katherine: Yes, really close. All that done through Ohio, were you living in Ohio the whole time?

Doug: Yes. I was living in Ohio at the time. I was circulating between Cleveland and Lakewood, Ohio at that time. I passed my test.

Katherine: Awesome.

Doug: One of the most exciting days of my life.

Katherine: [chuckles] I bet.

Doug: Once I had that Master Plumbers license, I was still working part-time for a plumbing contractor. I was doing service work mainly, and I felt that, "Hey, I can start a business on my own." I came up with a really creative idea to secure four unsecured loans.

Katherine: [laughs]. Get creative, right?

Doug: Absolutely. I went out, I bought myself a van and I stocked up with some tools. For a while, that was all I had. I actually slept in my van and on job sites for about six months.

Katherine: Wow, that's amazing.

Doug: I started to build a bit of a reputation for a good service guy. Service technicians are often overlooked in the field, but I tell you what, they solve a lot of problems. They take existing stuff that's been maybe installed improperly, they alter it in some way, and they'll go ahead and they'll rebuild that, make it new. I took a lot of pride in that. I would take old parts with me off of job sites. I'd take them back home, and I'd get even more creative on them and figure out new and faster ways to improve my time.

Katherine: Very cool.

Doug: I used to also set goals for myself. Every day before I left home, I had a goal to make X amount of dollars. Now, if I made that X amount of dollars by noon, that meant I still had some time in the day to make more dollars.

Katherine: Sure, yes.

Doug: But if it took me till nine o'clock that night to make that dollar, then I would stay out till nine o'clock.

Katherine: You're staying, yes.

Doug: Then I kept reinvesting in myself, which fortunately helped me grow. I was a big part of the insurance world for a while. A lot of the adjusters used me for an expert witness, and it allowed me to expand my business. I actually started doing some restoration work.

Katherine: That's really cool, how it went from your own business, entrepreneurship, and then really start to grow from living, like you said, outside of your van to now working with some of the large insurance companies to do claim work. It's really impressive.

Doug: Absolutely. The thing is, there's going to be challenges no matter what you do in life.

Katherine: Sure. Absolutely.

Doug: There's going to be competition no matter what you do in your life, but the thing is you have to believe in yourself. I tell you what, there was nobody who believed in me more than me.

Katherine: [laughs] That's awesome though.

Doug: I refused to let the rest of the industry tell me I couldn't do something. One of the very first big jobs I had was-- I actually piped in part of the manufacturing plant, here at Oatey, in Cleveland, Ohio.

Katherine: No way. That's so cool.

Doug: Absolutely. There was a gentleman named Ron Miller. He gave me the opportunity to do some piping and our molding area of our plant. It's still there. If I know it was going to last this long, I actually would have charged a little bit more.

Katherine: [laughs] You know what? We have to make sure we get a signature on that for sure sometime.

Doug: I expanded out from there, kept growing, kept hiring guys. I had the fortunate experiences of working all over the United States-

Katherine: Very cool.

Doug: -in some phase or another. Also led a lot of high-end restaurant remodels and build-outs and stuff like that.

Katherine: That's good. You really even expanded then, went from plumbing into working with insurance, and then really started working even just across all the different trades, and really understanding how big projects get put together and executed.

Doug: Absolutely. The one thing that I learned was, I used to think as a plumber, I was the number one dog on the site, but I soon realized that it's a team effort. Even though there's multiple trades there, there's one guy, that conductor, the superintendent, whatever you want to call him, and he led all of us in layers throughout that project, so at the end, we completed it, and hopefully with very little callbacks or mistakes.

Katherine: That's great. That's so cool. Then after that time working, building out restaurants, and building out big buildings throughout the United States, did you end up here at Oatey, your next path?

Doug: Yes. Believe it or not, I beat myself up over the years. I didn't work smart all the time, and I decided that I was just going to come home and retire. I had helped one of the temporary recruiters here at the Oatey Company with a large insurance claim at their home. They were working here and this job opening came up for an applications manager.

Katherine: Awesome.

Doug: Something new that Oatey started. She gave me a call and I was finishing up a restaurant in Syracuse, New York. She said, "You should come in, you should look at this." I said, "I'm going home. I am going to hang up the boots and I'm going to retire." I told him I would stop in at least interview I did. Met with my children. My children said, "Dad, if you retire, we will leave home."

[laughter]

Doug: I gave Oatey a chance, and I tell you what, it's been a great way to basically come to a place where I'll end my career. I'm very passionate about Oatey. I look forward to coming into work every day. Love my teammates. It goes without saying we're such a diverse company that I learn stuff every day because everybody brings something new to the table.

Katherine: Well said, well said for sure. I know, for myself coming into Oatey and I heard that there was a master plumber on staff, I was like, "Yes, thank goodness," because, from a marketer standpoint, the worst thing that we could do is execute or communicate or do things improperly that all of a sudden, everyone's going, "Are you crazy? That's not the way you do it." It's great. We have a great relationship with the technical team to work through blogs, content information that we put out into the marketplace. I'm so thankful for that relationship, for sure.

Doug: Oh, absolutely. Most of you may never get a chance to meet Katherine in person, but I've really grown to consider Katherine as a friend, and someone who I

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trust to lead our other team members in the right direction. She's not ever going to throw somebody out there and say, "Hey, let's just get it out there. We'll sort out the problems later." Her and her team, they sort through stuff, they bring in the technical applications, people. We have Aaron, who is also an applications manager and licensed plumber. He works almost exclusively with the marketing team now. The stuff we are putting out there, are there some glitches? Absolutely. Life is full of them, but the content that we put out, we try to put out stuff that's actually experienced in the field.

Katherine: Which is great, especially because that's what we want to portray. As you talked a little bit earlier about VoC, it's important for us to make sure that whatever product we're putting out there, we really do have the Voice of Customer. That doesn't mean this customer in this building who has a Master Plumber license. No, we actually go out, work in the job sites with the contractors, with our rep agencies, understand what works, what doesn't work, and we bring it back as we're developing products as we're learning to improve upon our products. I think it's one of the best features Oatey has to offer.

Doug: Oh, absolutely. I've always made a reference that Oatey is like buying a diamond. It's forever. What do you look for when you buy that diamond? You look for the three C's. One of the three C's is conversation. We're constantly having internal and external conversation. Then we collaborate about it. Then what's that do? It allows us to create consistency.

Katherine: Absolutely. I've never heard that yet. I love that.

Doug: You like that?

Katherine: Yes. Welcome to marketing.

Doug: I'm getting all [unintelligible 00:12:31].

Katherine: [laughs] I love it. Well, obviously, my background is a little bit different. I did not go through the trades, even though I definitely connect well with the trades. I like to be hands-on. I definitely like to get into the details. I like doing projects around the house, but I spent most of my career wherever the job was, I went. I worked for CPG companies all over the US, learning sales, marketing, product development.

Really, what I always tell young professionals, building that platform to your career and trying to really understand where I fit in best and what I like the best. After I made a nice dent, and learning a lot of different things in a lot of different places, made the trip to Oatey. A friend of mine had said, "Hey, you got to come check out this company. It's really cool. We got a lot of fun stuff happening." "Oatey? I don't think I know Oatey," and then my dad had actually said, "You know Oatey," as he showed me things on his shelf that he had at his house from Oatey. Then I'm like, "Oh, I do know Oatey."

Spent some time, got to meet the team and I actually got to interview with the team that I'd be working with, and sold me right there. People is such a big portion of this organization, really make who we are. It's been such a fun journey to work with the

social media team, the communications team, digital marketing on our websites. Oatey University, which is such a beautiful special place, product development. There's just a lot of great things happening here at Oatey and it's really fun.

Doug: Oh, absolutely. It's kind of funny when I think about my career path. Construction, like you said, I've been very fortunate, I've experienced all levels of construction throughout my life. I come here, and my younger teammates-- To me, social media, I used to read a newspaper, and then when I would run into somebody later, we'd socially talk about it.

Katherine: [laughs] That's your social media, right?

Doug: Oh, yes, absolutely. Here I'm learning about blogging and tweeting, Instagram-ing, LinkedIn-ing. I'm learning all this stuff. It's very exciting. Our younger teammates bring a lot to the table, and it helps us connect to our customers in the field instantly.

Katherine: Absolutely.

Doug: Everything's about instant gratification and we're trying to keep up with that here at Oatey.

Katherine: It's something that the pandemic actually really taught us, correct? We had the ability to kind of connect pretty quickly with our end users on a lot of these subjects, that we needed to tell them about new products. We needed to discuss things that were happening. It's been a blessing to have that as well.

Doug: Yes. You call it a blessing. I call it anxiety because, if I remember correctly, you came to my supervisor and you had said to him, "Hey, we want to put Doug on a WebEx so we can virtually train." Doug wasn't very keen on that if I remember correctly. I remember sweating a lot, anxiety. Who knows? I might have even blacked out every now and then.

Katherine: Yes, but you did awesome. It's all of us to learn, correct?

Doug: Yes.

Katherine: Through all this, that's the key is that we have to continue to keep growing and learning, even though all these things are new and new avenue is a new pass. We have to go out and try just like The Fix. We're having this conversation to talk about the trades, but how to get more people into the trades, what the journey looks like, and it's important for us to have that conversation and to get things moving in the right direction.

Doug: Absolutely. Here one of the things we're very good at Oatey is we listen not only to our internal teammates but everybody on the outside. I think it's helped us survive really well through the pandemic. It's helped us support our customers on the products they need, the support they need to put them in. When I come here to Oatey, I've learned a lot of things to do them the right way, working through the insurance companies, I've actually learned a lot of ways that people do them the wrong way.

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I still learn stuff every day when I talk to our contractors because we are nationwide. There is stuff they do on the West Coast that sometimes I scratch my head, but then I think about it, and I'm like, "You know what? Makes sense for that region."

Katherine: Yes. Absolutely. I'm going to switch gears a little bit and I want to talk about getting into the trades and some things about the trades that attracted you and some input there. The first question I want to ask you, Doug, is if you could go back all those many years ago, sitting on the steps, watching that contractor pull out that HVA system, what would you say to him at that time? If you're looking back, what would be your comment back to him?

Doug: At the time, in that moment, I thanked him for giving me the opportunity to try. He gave me some support along the way. Basically, I was a tear-out guy, but he gave me some pointers on, "Hey, this is why I put things in this way and this is how I size things." I would probably like to go back and say, "Hey, look at who Doug is today because you gave me the opportunity to tear something out."

Katherine: Gave you the chance-

Doug: Yes, absolutely.

Katherine: -which is really cool. Could you describe maybe someone in your career who was very influential to getting you to where you are today, or maybe there's a couple of people who helped get you where you are today?

Doug: Yes. As a contractor, people will often say, "Hey, you're your own boss." I somewhat dispute that because every time I went to meet with a new client, I had a new boss. I had to acclimate myself to their personalities, their needs and make sure that they were happy at the end of the day. Influential people that I've met, my first master plumber that I trained under, Bill, awesome gentleman, took the time even if he would lose money on the job to show me the right way to do things.

Katherine: Very cool.

Doug: Met another gentleman, Larry, who I worked for for a little while. He would actually come in on Saturdays and give up his time, and him and I would meet, and then he would discuss other stuff with me. Along the way, I've met all kinds of superintendents, vice-presidents, and owners of companies. Every one of them has their own unique story that if you listen to it, we're all similar because we wanted to be successful.

Being successful, a lot of hard work, challenge yourself, there's always going to be challenges out there. Never be too full of yourself. I'll tell you a funny story. When Bill sent me out to a service call for the very first time, I was a young guy. and as a young guy, people in the field, they're like, "Oh, he doesn't know what hell he's doing." You're too young to have the right experiences.

It was a simple service called a Snake Out a Drain. Got in, set my tarp up, had my power snake out, and ready to go. The lady's looking at me and she asked me straight up, she goes, "Are you old enough to know what you're doing?" I was like, "Oh, sure, I got this, I got this." All of our plumbers out there, they'll know what I'm

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about to say. I pulled the trap off and then took it and dumped it right back in the sink, and the water just went everywhere all over the cabinet space. I learned at that moment in time, leave the ego at the door, and just focus on what you're doing.

Katherine: Yes. Oh my gosh. That's a great story. Like you said, I'm sure there's many people who can relate to that for sure.

Doug: Oh, absolutely.

Katherine: Yes. You have to learn through some of your failures to be able to grow as well.

Doug: I've learned as many valuable things through failures as I have through successes. Absolutely.

Katherine: For you, you had a gentleman that combined in your life to be able to give you a way into the trades and help you through a little bit. What about maybe someone who's out there that doesn't know the trades is an option? What's a great avenue for them?

Doug: Great question because if you want to experience the trades, I always use Habitat for Humanity. It's a great cause. Oatey's actually very big in participating with Habitat for Humanity. What I would recommend is if you think you want to work with your hands, if you think you'd like to be your own boss someday, that hypothetical boom boss, go to your local Habitat for Humanity.

They'll put you out on a job site. You'll be able to paint. You'll be able to drywall. You might be able to put some roofing on. You'll be able to do electric, HVAC and also plumbing. Experience all those in little microbursts. You're helping the community, you're gaining your comfort zone at that point. Now you can go, you can apply yourself to the trades. If, say, you do choose plumbing, now you can go, you can try to choose a non-union path or you can also choose the union.

A lot of guys do very well in union. They'll go in, they'll sign up, they'll do their four-year apprentice program. They'll also probably get some community college time. After their fourth year, they'll take their journeyman's test and now they're elevated to a new position where they can probably run a project, or work for a higher-end company that will allow them to be more successful in different areas. Non-union, there's always non-union plumbers out there that are looking for apprentices.

Katherine: Sure.

Doug: Don't be afraid of showing up on a job and them looking at you and saying, "Hey kid, go get the coffee for the crew," or, "Hey kid, go over there and sweep up the floor." Just remember, sweeping up the floor and cleaning, that is the last thing that people remember when you leave that home.

Katherine: That is right. That's so true.

Doug: Your job site should be as clean or cleaner when you leave than it was when you got there.

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Katherine: Yes. It doesn't matter if you did a good job on the project. If you leave in a mess, that's what they're going to remember.

Doug: Absolutely. I can't tell you how many bathroom floors I sanitized before I did work in them.

Katherine: [laughs] Yes. Before-- [crosstalk]

Doug: That's right.

Katherine: I understand that. Yes, for sure. Well, what about some training requirements for someone who wants to get into the trades? What's some recommendations for understanding the apprentice program or going through the union, but is there any other training requirements or training programs that are out there that students could look at?

Doug: Depending on your location in the United States, I'm sure there's trade schools out there all over the United States. We do have a couple here in Ohio. We have one Max Hayes for example. Max Hayes takes a lot of high school kids and they'll put them on that co-op program where they'll do classroom time and then they'll do hands-on time. We've actually had Max Hayes come through our Oatey University several times before with groups of kids.

Katherine: Yes, it's really cool.

Doug: Absolutely. It's great to see those young kids. If you're at home and you're flushing your toilet, it's just a function, but when we're bringing you here and we show you closet flanges and wax seals and T bolts and how the toilets go in and why it's important to pay attention, the kids become interested because, you know what, they're using their heads.

Katherine: Yes. Doug, I remember a couple of years back with Habitat for Humanity, anyone who had a home built that year, we actually brought them into Oatey University to do just basic plumbing, understanding if something fell down the drain, how could you get it out of the P-trap or how to maybe change things that were happening in your toilet. I think programs like that are another great way or extension from Habitat for Humanity of-- maybe there's a son or a daughter in the house that comes and learns a little bit at Oatey University about how to do basic plumbing and to understand that, "Oh, this is a really great career path that you can go into."

Doug: Absolutely. I was fortunate enough to be chosen to lead that session. It was for two hours. We had a group of homeowners who'd come in, and part of their program was they had to attend self-help classes. We had talked about, like you said, fixing faucets and fixing toilets and how to clear your drains out and everybody was very interactive.

At first, everybody went sit in the back of the room and stuff, and then we got them interactive, a lot of questions going on. I do remember a lady at the end, she came up to me, and she goes, "How can my son become a plumber?" I said, "You know what? He's just got to take the first step," and a great place to start was Habitat for

Humanity. I don't know where the young man ended up, but I'm sure his mom twisted his ear a little bit and said, "You're going to go serve a day."

Katherine: No, but I think it's great. That's how these conversations and things happen, it's just by experience and exposure and trying to drive people to the right place to be able to learn a little bit more.

Doug: Yes, absolutely. I think everybody out there who is maybe afraid of going to school to take tests or doesn't want to type on a computer or become a gamer and you want to use your hands, you want to see something develop and evolve so that at the end, you can see what you did and be proud of it, the trades are that place. Reach out. With today's Googling and everything else, I'm sure you could Google on where to go with that.

[laughter]

Katherine: Reading new words, Googling. Oh, man. Here's another big one coming off of that then; misconceptions. What do you think are some of the biggest misconceptions about the trades or even just the plumbing trade?

Doug: Well, the plumbing trade, obviously, everybody thinks that you smell like crap, you look like crap, and you work in crap.

Katherine: We've heard that a lot from our social followers.

Doug: The thing is that's part of the job. Depending on what you go into, you may experience crap.

Katherine: We probably all do, right?

Doug: Absolutely.

Katherine: No matter what trade you're in.

Doug: Crap runs downhill and everybody gets hit every now and then. The thing is, don't be afraid of those experiences. Use them so that you can say, "Okay, that's one more experience I had. That's one more thing I can build on. Now I'm even a better mechanic." When you look upon service people, sometimes you're like, "Oh, well, they weren't smart enough to be a programmer for computers." That's not true.

If you're a technician of any type in any trade, you're a problem-solver. My recommendation is on your way to your job sites. I used to tell my guys, "Hey, you're still on my time. I'm paying you to drive. I don't want you texting. I don't want you listening to the radio and jamming out. I want you thinking about the job that you're going to and all the different possibilities that you can run into so that no matter what you hit, you're going to be efficient at it."

Katherine: Makes sense. Definitely don't text and drive. That would be bad.

Doug: Yes, that's bad.

Katherine: Maybe a little jamming out though, get you pumped and ready for the job.

Doug: Play *The Fix* music.

Katherine: There you go. Listen to the podcast in between.

Doug: That's right.

Katherine: Got it. I want to talk a little about future set. Doug, when you look at what do the trades look like over the next 5 to 10 years, what do you see happening?

Doug: What I see happening is I see people starting to realize that if you're a true, good technician, there's always going to be a place for you to work. There's always something to repair. Right now we're in the middle of a housing boom. Tons of houses are being built. The economy itself, it should readjust, and then you're going to go through that law where, "Okay, we're not going to build new homes as rapidly as we are today, but guess what? People are going to start fixing what they have."

There's always something to fix. Low intense projects, fixing a toilet, things of that nature, homeowners will try that all day long, but there's so much need for that kitchen sink that was rotted out, and I have to cut it out and figure out how to re-pipe it without blowing the cabinet out. Bathroom remodels. How do I get the DWV system changed out without tearing out every wall in the house?

For those technicians who really hone their skills, there will always be work for them. I can tell you in my many decades of a career that we never once were without work. Even when the economy took a hit in 2008, what I did was I changed my business plan and we know that there was no longer going to be news stuff being built. I created restoration plans for a lot of big companies that I worked for, and they were willing to invest in that because they knew the economy would also adjust itself.

Katherine: Right. Absolutely. Now, how about with a lot of technicians and plumbers retiring, and what the future looks like for those getting into the trades, how do you see that as balancing itself out and a lot of people who maybe want to sell off their business or want to walk away from the trades, but they want to make sure that they can pass it down or sell it to someone, how can we get more people into the trades to be a part of that?

Doug: I think communication, I really do. Right now we're broadcasting here from Oatey University. This was an environment that we created during the pandemic. We have so many hands-on things. We actually have a three-room ranch home built here in our building so that-

Katherine: Pretty cool.

Doug: -you can do-- Yes, absolutely. The conversation; reach out to tradesmen that you may know. If you have a plumber at your house and he is working and he is fixing something, "Hey," ask the guy some questions. You have a lot of big service companies out there with big names that are nationwide. Reach out to them. They're always looking for people to fill a truck and they'll pay you to train. There's not many

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places you can go and get paid to train. Now, you may not be the best right off the bat. You may not be making that a hundred thousand dollar dream salary that you're looking for, but you know what? You can make an honest wage. You can live a decent life and you can continue to grow.

Katherine: I think that's part of it. It's a journey. You're never going to get there right away. It's really about building the same way as I talked about a little bit my career, building your base, learning a lot of different disciplines, asking a lot of questions, understanding where to go, and then you'll be able to, maybe one day like yourself, decide, "Okay, I know I have enough knowledge. I've passed my test and now I can move on to start my own business, or work with insurance companies, or work with the county, or work on different buildings." I think that there's just a big opportunity once you get in and learn and really grow from there.

Doug: As anything in life, there's always going to be a changing of the guards. I'm constantly making sure my badge works every day because I'm sure my changing is coming. With that changing of guards, you need to replenish the pot. Checking with your local unions, the BA's will be happy to talk to you if you show up at one of the local unions and say, "Hey, I'm interested." They'll give you information. They might show you around the hall. They'll discuss the union side of it. Like I said, non-union you have the Habitats, you have a lot of non-union plumbers right now who are dying for people to work for.

Katherine: We see it in here all the time that they just want good candidates to come. They'll teach them everything they need to know. They just want people to show up, come do good work, and they'll teach them.

Doug: Absolutely. Another place is plumbing wholesalers. I tell you, those guys are warriors. They're on the front lines. They have the plumbers come in. The plumbers will either chat up, drink a cup of coffee, tell about something good that happened to them, or they're going to come in and they are going to be pissed.

Katherine: Hot, right? Yes. [laughs]

Doug: Absolutely. What that's going to do is it's going to give them insight on what's going on in the field. Visit one of your local wholesalers and say, "Hey, I'm a young guy. I'd like to get into the plumbing trade, and I think if I can learn about plumbing parts first, I'll do a better job when I get out there."

Katherine: That's a great idea.

Doug: Here at manufacturing. We have a large manufacturing plant right across the street here in Cleveland. We have so many great workers over there. Our corporate people, the wonderful team members, but without the people that work in our manufacturing plant, we wouldn't open up our doors.

Katherine: Yes, absolutely. Well, we learned that there's a lot of essential workers, definitely during the pandemic, and how key not only this trade is but also the manufacturing that happens across the street.

Doug: Absolutely.

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Katherine: Well, that's great. Well, I just want to leave one other final thought, Doug, anything that you want to leave our listeners to-- your either background with the trades, your thought on the trades, or just your thoughts on having this conversation on a weekly basis.

Doug: I can tell you that you need to find your way in life, but you can't find your way in life unless you experience things. It's like you waking up one day and saying, "You know what? I hear such great things about Colorado. I'm going to move there," but you know what? Take a two-week vacation there and experience a little bit because it might not be the place that fits your needs.

It's the same thing with the trades, get those experiences, have conversation, reach out to Oatey. We're always willing to talk to everyone. We have a complete social media team. They'll talk to you. They talked to me, so they'll talk to anybody.

Katherine: That's a great point. Anyone listening to this that once helped with getting people either apprentices into their workforce or those that maybe are following us, they're like, "Oh, I've been thinking about it, or I might want to get into the trades," reach out. We have a lot of contexts that are either our end users or our wholesalers or rep agencies. They'd be more than happy to put you in touch with people to have that continued conversation.

Doug: Absolutely. Our regional sales team, we have six members of the regional sales team. They manage multiple reps. If anybody reached out and said, "Hey, is anybody looking for an opportunity to hire somebody and train them?" I'm sure we could make a few emails and find some things out for you.

Katherine: Yes, that would be great. Well, listen, Doug, I want to thank you so much for your time today. It was great having a conversation with you. I always love having a conversation.

Doug: Love sitting next to you anyway, Katherine.

Katherine: [laughs] Well, thanks, everyone, for joining us on the first-ever episode of *The Fix*. I just want to thank my co-host, Doug, for joining us today, and we'll see you next week.

Thanks for joining us on this episode of *The Fix*. Be sure to follow us on your favorite podcast platform, so you don't miss our next conversation dropping every Wednesday. If you have feedback about the show or a topic you'd like to see covered, send us an email at thefix@oatey.com or give us a shout-out on social media. We would love to connect with you. Don't forget, you can get your daily fix by visiting oatey.com. And we'll catch you next time.