

THE FIX

A TRADES CONVERSATION

HOSTED BY **Oatey**

Guests: Justin Noftle & Nick Merritt, Oatey Ambassadors

Run Time: 17 minutes, 20 seconds

Questions or Feedback: thefix@oatey.com

00:00:06 Katherine Lehtinen

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, Catherine, a marketer here at ODEE with my co-host and friend Doug, one of ODEE'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.

00:00:46 Katherine Lehtinen

All right, Doug, it's Ambassador Week.

00:00:49 Doug Buchan

Yay. And you know what? We had a guest a couple episodes ago from Down Under. Yeah. Well, today we're going over top.

00:00:56 Katherine Lehtinen

That's right. And we do. We have two of our Canadian rock stars.

00:01:00 Justin Noftle



THE FIX

A TRADES CONVERSATION

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Absolutely.

00:01:01 **Katherine Lehtinen**

All right. We've got Justin with a handle of Trapworks. How's it going? And we've got Nick Handel, Creative Hands.

00:01:08 **Nick Merritt**

Thank you.

00:01:09 **Katherine Lehtinen**

Yeah. Well, we're so excited to have you both on and let's talk first a little bit about what inspired you to become a plumber and walk us through some of your journey to where you are today. Justin, will you kick it off for us?

00:01:21 **Justin Noftle**

Yeah. So I always found that just being in the trades and stuff like that, you had the opportunity of once you knew what the trade was all about, you had a chance of being your own entrepreneur. So I found that towards like leaning towards that kind of sense, but I started off in college just for a year just to kind of out of high school, didn't know what I wanted to do to be honest. My main career, I wanted to be a firefighter, took the tests and stuff like that, didn't really work out that way. But then after that, I ended up getting into heating and air for about four years. I started off like in residential doing furnaces, air conditioners, moved on just to kind of get a little bit better pay grade and went to the commercial side, started doing some commercial gas. Then I always found it hard to try to like get into a union just to be able to have like pension benefits and stuff like that. After you turn a certain age, like in Canada, you don't have your parents' benefits and stuff

THE FIX

A TRADES CONVERSATION

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00:02:19 **Justin Nofle**

like that. So I ended up getting into plumbing and never looked back.

00:02:24 **Katherine Lehtinen**

Love it. Well, that's a great adventure. I think a lot of people do that. They'll go to college for a year six months or two and figure out this is just not right for me. So it's great that you kept trying all those new things to kind of get you where you are today.

00:02:38 **Justin Nofle**

Yeah, I was never like the biggest book person. Sure. Never really enjoyed like reading till I got into plumbing. And then once you're focused on something that you do enjoy, I find like you put your mind to it. And you kind of have that tunnel vision. And

00:02:51 **Katherine Lehtinen**

yeah, everything connects.

00:02:53 **Justin Nofle**

Exactly.

00:02:53 **Katherine Lehtinen**

Yeah, which is awesome. All right, Nick. So tell us a little bit about what inspired you to become a plumber and your walk so far.

00:03:00 **Nick Merritt**

THE FIX

A TRADES CONVERSATION

HOSTED BY **Oatey**

What really inspired me really was just to be able to give back, you know, personally, throughout my walk of life. I grew up with a single parent growing up five, my five siblings. And you know, when I was younger, I didn't really know what I wanted to do. I kind of I struggled because I had the passion of drawing, like that was my real passion. So I went through out of school and I dropped out at a very young age, like I was dropped out of grade 10. I didn't really look back and I started working in the, I would say the factory industry. And it just happened that I bumped into a friend of mine that was already into the trade.

00:03:40 **Katherine Lehtinen**

Oh, cool.

00:03:41 **Nick Merritt**

And he took me under his wing as his apprentice and it just took off from there.

00:03:47 **Katherine Lehtinen**

That's awesome. And how long have you been in for now? I've been doing plumbing for about going on almost 11 years now. Awesome. So from your perspective point, and Nick we'll start with you, what prevailing misconceptions about the plumbing field would you like to dispel and what actions can there be taken to

00:04:05 **Nick Merritt**

kind of rectify that misconception? I could say personally like the benefits of it all, you know, kind of put me on the spot there.

00:04:15 **Katherine Lehtinen**

THE FIX

A TRADES CONVERSATION

HOSTED BY **Oatey**

I know, isn't that hard? You know, like, one of the things that I always hear, and they'll say that plumbers will be like, Oh, you play with poop all day. It's like, No, there's so many other things, you know, that you do like, mathematics and understanding how things work and understanding

00:04:29 Nick Merritt

how things are put together. So yeah, it's, it's, it's a very interesting, I would say, trade that we're all in, you know, it's not just every day you're dealing with being underneath the sink, you know, right, you're getting to deal with people at the same time, you're learning new things on the job site, you know, and you're also meeting people from all different walks of life.

00:04:48 Katherine Lehtinen

Right? Yeah, I think it's great. How about you?

00:04:50 Justin Noftle

I find it very true that a lot of people have the perception that plumbers just kind of play with poop. And that's not the case at all. I'm a new construction plumber. So I do a lot of like rough ins a lot of finishes. I just like the aspect of every day is different. You don't know what tomorrow is going to bring. And yeah, every situation, you're kind of using your head and kind of thought process to kind of break it down and figure out new ways of doing things and just trying to problem solve. So yeah, it's it keeps your your mind on edge and always thinking about the next better thing or better way of doing something.

00:05:24 Katherine Lehtinen

Yeah. And you're not sitting at a desk all day.

THE FIX

A TRADES CONVERSATION

HOSTED BY **Oatey**

00:05:27 **Justin Nofle**

Yeah, that I definitely cannot do. I like being on my feet.

00:05:32 **Katherine Lehtinen**

Until you get to rounding third base, and then you come and sit at a desk all day like Doug.

00:05:37 **Doug Buchan**

We are always welcoming ambassadors. I know. Right.

00:05:40 **Katherine Lehtinen**

I think we're now not to take your place, but at some point when you are ready to retire, we've got a good lineup of people that, you know, you

00:05:48 **Justin Nofle**

never know eventually when you're, uh, your knees and your back start to go in the trades for so long, too bad.

00:05:57 **Doug Buchan**

I was talking the other day and I was telling someone, I said, it's hard to believe I'm only 28 years old. You know? See? What do you mean? And dog ears? Yeah, dog ears.

00:06:06 **Justin Nofle**

I'm only 32 and the back feels 62, so.

00:06:10 **Doug Buchan**

THE FIX

A TRADES CONVERSATION

HOSTED BY **Oatey**

So I have a question for both of you guys. I mean, we're constantly talking about women in trades, you know, and we don't get a lot of time to, you know, talk to our folks from Canada. So a question for you is, Nick, we'll start with you. I'm gonna put you on the spot again. It's okay. You know, what's it like in Canada, you know, with the women in the trades? What are they doing to maybe help try to promote that? and what do you do, if anything, for that?

00:06:34 **Nick Merritt**

What I see now in the industry, there's a lot more women now coming into the trade. It's inspiring, right? Because the construction field, to begin with, is a very man -driven field, right? And so now seeing women coming into the trade more and more, it's great to see, actually. It really is. It opens up the doors for anybody to come in and want to, you know, get into the field.

00:07:01 **Justin Nofle**

No, it definitely is very inspiring, Jen. It's very nice to see that women are starting to come in the trade, and actually at the companies I've worked in in the past, there has been quite a few. And it's, you know what, it's nice to see and women can do the exact same things that men can, you know what I mean? So it's nice to see that there are some individuals that take up the trade and stuff like that because it kind of inspires the guys too, and it kind of changes the dynamic of things. And you know what, it's very nice to see.

00:07:31 **Katherine Lehtinen**

It's great. Hey, Justin, let's talk about technology and how it's impacting the industry. You know, what trends do you anticipate are going to continue to shape the future of plumbing services? Where do you see technology really helping and benefiting down the line?

THE FIX

A TRADES CONVERSATION

HOSTED BY **Oatey**

00:07:45 **Justin Nofle**

Well, just already in the last couple of years, just even just like the innovations of like press fittings and even like some things like such as like the sensors for like water services like that serve your home. Just the technology is definitely to our advantage in today's time compared to back in the old days where things were a lot different and you didn't have your phone to pull out and do homework on and I find now even like when you're in a pinch or you're in a situation where you're not familiar with something you can now kind of open up your phone there's different apps where you can kind of get that knowledge and figure out that problem right on site, where you're not reading a book or anything anymore. So it is definitely very helpful nowadays.

00:08:29 **Katherine Lehtinen**

Yeah, for sure. How about you technology?

00:08:32 **Nick Merritt**

Technology wise? Yeah, I would say this is the exact same thing, really, you know, like technology has gone so far, or we've taken it, and it benefits us so much on the in the industry and on the field as well. Yeah, you know, you can pretty much, if you want to search up anything, you can find it, you know, you have questions, it's right there at your fingertips.

00:08:52 **Katherine Lehtinen**

Yep, absolutely. So could you share a memorable or challenging project that has significantly influenced your approach to plumbing work? So maybe where you had a whole scenario that made something really challenging, and you had to pull in new tools that you really originally didn't think you would have to, or a funny scenario that's happened?

THE FIX

A TRADES CONVERSATION

HOSTED BY **Oatey**

00:09:14 **Justin Nofle**

Oh, like every every scenario is different. And that's kind of like the thing about plumbing is that every day is different. Every day is a new challenge. And there's some days that are very straightforward. And then there's some days where you're trying to think out of the box or you're kind of talking with fellow associates and stuff like that and just kind of gauging their ideas. But there's been some projects that, yeah, there's a lot of curse words and stuff like that. And then there's some days where it's like, wow, I could do this every day. But then you kind of fall into that rhythm of you kind of get bored. Yeah. Stuff like that. So I kind of like the new challenges and making your brain think. And I feel like that's what keeps you on edge and keeps you driven every day. Because if you're doing the same thing day in day out, you'd probably fall asleep on the job. Yeah. Yeah. So yeah, it's it's nice to see those challenges. And it's nice to overcome those challenges. And it makes

00:10:04 **Justin Nofle**

you feel you know what, like I accomplished something today. Yeah.

00:10:09 **Doug Buchan**

Yeah. All right, here we go. Enough of the formal questions. The most embarrassing moment that you've had in plumbing. And

00:10:16 **Nick Merritt**

And

00:10:16 **Doug Buchan**

I shared one with Jeff the other day, our other ambassador, and I told him my first service call. I went out. I was a young guy. I took the sink trap off. And then what I did was, the lady looked at me and she

THE FIX

A TRADES CONVERSATION

HOSTED BY **Oatey**

goes, are you old enough to know what you're doing? I said, absolutely. And I dumped the trap water into the sink.

00:10:36 Doug Buchan

So tell me about your most embarrassing moment.

00:10:39 Nick Merritt

Okay. So this moment was when I was going through my apprenticeship as a young plumber. And what ended up happening was my journeyman left me to pretty much turn on the water from the basement and then go and test all the fixtures. Lo and behold, when I finished doing my task underneath the sink installing the shutoff valves, I happened to leave one of the valves open. So when I went downstairs, I literally turned on the water and the water was going and running, and I'm thinking, okay, the house is not hasn't stopped filling up. Why? I run upstairs in the whole floor. Oh, that's that was one of the moments that I'll never forget.

00:11:24 Katherine Lehtinen

Yeah. Quick. Are you still his apprentice? Yeah. Afterwards. Okay, good. But it got me to learn

00:11:29 Nick Merritt

real quick to like, pretty much double check my work. Yeah, sure. When I was going to my

00:11:34 Justin Nofle

absolutely. Yeah. The only thing I could think of was like, top of my head was like, early in my career when we used to do water testing, for example, and we weren't familiar with like the Shernie clean seal balloons and stuff like that. We used to use the test plates and I remember inspectors would come

THE FIX

A TRADES CONVERSATION

HOSTED BY **Oatey**

around and then they would be familiar with our work and stuff like that. So we wouldn't have to water test certain houses. And it's famous for the towel guys or drywallers, for example, to use the bathtub as the bathroom and just follows all the way down to the bottom of the stack where the clean out is. And that was where our test plate was and yeah, they weren't broken out yet. So I remember in particular taking, we would take the claw, the hammer. Now I know you can actually smack the side of the clean out and probably bust that test flap. But I took off the cover and with the claw, the hammer, I would just kind of reef and just kind of knock out that test cap and yeah, all over you,

00:12:34 Justin Noftle

right before lunch, all over chest and stuff like that. So I came running out of the house just kind of freaking out and I was, I took off all my clothes and I'm walking outside like my boxers and I remember one of the cabinet guys saying to me like, hey, what happened? And I said, this is what happened. He goes, here's a bottle of Purell, go take a shower. I said, okay, I guess I'm working in my mutandis all day.

00:12:57 Katherine Lehtinen

That's awesome. That's awesome. I love it. Let's talk a little bit about the ambassador program. I would love to hear from both of you. What motivated your decision to join OD Ambassador Program? And how have OD products positively influenced your daily practices?

00:13:13 Nick Merritt

I would say with that question is, when I was younger, like going through my apprenticeship, I started using OD product from the very beginning. And I was always, you know, you know, inspired by the product, you know, the uniqueness about it, the durability. And eventually, when I saw that there was an ambassador program, I completely jumped on the

THE FIX

A TRADES CONVERSATION

HOSTED BY **Oatey**

00:13:41 **Katherine Lehtinen**

Yeah, yeah, the opportunity to be here. And this is year two. This is year two. Yeah, which is awesome.

00:13:48 **Justin Noftle**

I'm very grateful for every opportunity that you guys have provided us. And honestly, the ambassador program, it's very well like a tight knit family and it's very nice to be able to have others that we could bounce ideas off of like yourselves and just kind of gain the knowledge that we probably never would have gotten without being here and yeah, never would have thought that just posting Instagram videos or posting videos online would turn me out to under the mic right now.

00:14:18 **Katherine Lehtinen**

Here you are.

00:14:19 **Justin Noftle**

No, very blessed and very grateful for every opportunity that you guys have given us.

00:14:23 **Katherine Lehtinen**

No, we're excited that you're both here with us. So absolutely. Alright, so I'm going to take another turn. In your experience, you know, how crucial is ongoing education? Do you find that both of you are taking the time to continue your education? Or do you find educations out in the field? You know, what, what's your input there? I find that you're always learning new things

00:14:44 **Justin Noftle**

THE FIX

A TRADES CONVERSATION

HOSTED BY **Oatey**

day in day out. And even like over this past couple days, like just learning things, for example, like Doug showing us with the air emittance valves, like, just like in an actual scenario of being under use and how things work and stuff like that. Like I never knew once you completely choke that vent, how the the trap reaction works. And just like that oscillating effect. And yeah, it's it's very, it's very good to always want to learn. And I always tell like the younger generations now and just listen, just like I did, put your head down, listen to the older generations be a sponge. And you'll be learning things every single day. And even still, to this day, I learned stuff like this last couple days, just there's certain things that you don't know till you do it and you get your hands on it. And yeah, it's, you always got to be open minded and be willing to learn different things.

00:15:39 Katherine Lehtinen

Alright, so looking ahead, as we kind of wrap things up, what are your future, you know, projections for the plumbing industry and you know what do you envision this industry to be and kind of where the growth is and what can happen? You know we always like to get people's viewpoint of not only where do they think it's going to go and what are their hopes and dreams for the plumbing industry. Well I just

00:16:00 Justin Nofle

hope that the younger generations are motivated to get into the trades. I know that there's like different perspectives of the trades and yeah a lot of people don't think that they're able to work with their hands in certain ways and neither did I back then. And it was like you know what the trades gave me a very good path in life and I see where plumbing is going as a whole and just the innovations today compared to 10 years ago, 12 years ago, it's come a long way and I think it's going to progressively get even better. So yeah, for sure. How about you? What do you

THE FIX

A TRADES CONVERSATION

HOSTED BY **Oatey**

00:16:33 **Katherine Lehtinen**

envision the future being or what do you hope for the future to be for plumbing trade?

00:16:37 **Nick Merritt**

For the plumbing trade, I see that it's it's going to grow quite well, you know, definitely gonna grow quite well. And I would inspire a lot of the young youth to get into the trade because the way technology is actually moving, it's moving so fast right now where computers are taking over a lot of jobs, if you realize that, you know, no one's really picking up where us tradespeople are when it's all said and done, you know, we're still gonna be here, and no one's gonna

00:17:02 **Katherine Lehtinen**

be filling those shoes. Yeah, we need the youth to do it, so for sure. Well, thank you both, we appreciate your time, we appreciate you joining us for Ambassador Fest 2024. And we look forward to our continuing partnership.

00:17:15 **Justin Noftle**

Thank you very much, guys.

00:17:16 **Doug Buchan**

Thank you guys.