

# THE FIX

## A TRADES CONVERSATION

HOSTED BY **Oatey**

**Guests:** Emily Cox, Building Badasses

**Run Time:** 18m 31s

**Questions or Feedback:** [thefix@oatey.com](mailto:thefix@oatey.com)

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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, 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.

00:00:45 **Katherine Lehtinen**

All right, Doug, you know, normally I give my intro about our guest today, but I think

00:00:50 **Doug Buchan**

you're going to take it today, right? Let me tell you something. I was so excited about this, which I know is normal, but this one, I elevated all of my possible memory, gray matter, to bring up some conversation parts. Let's do it. Let me start off. This is going to be the fastest minute podcasting ever, right? Okay, so I want to start off by talking about a few women in history who've faced diversity. Yeah, just to, you know, overcome the equalities things that women face on a daily basis. Yeah, right. Yep. So I picked out some different individual career. Our guest is looking at you right now going where in the world is he going? I am here for the ride. I'm pumped. So let's start off with sports, Katherine. Billie Jean King. Okay. Now I know some of our listeners are going to be too young to remember this,

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00:01:39 **Katherine Lehtinen**

but as a boomer, I'm all over this. I'm not a boomer yet, but tennis.

00:01:44 **Doug Buchan**

So Billie Jean King. Okay. She overcame those gender gaps, right? What about aviation? Amelia Earhart, first woman to fly over the Atlantic. Let's talk about medicine. Now this one here, because I have kids in the medical field, this one here, Marie Curie, Most people don't even know who she is, but she was a woman who won the Nobel Prize. Okay, and she actually won it twice. She actually coined the term radioactivity, right? And then she also helped develop the atomic age, chemistry, physics, and medicine, while fighting all the bias within that community at that time. What about manufacturing? Now this isn't a live person, but Rosie the Riveter. Do we remember her? All right, what she was there for was to show women's importance during World War II. After Rosie the Riveter became out there and visual, over the next four years, the women's workforce actually grew by 50%. Amazing. Yeah, we need another Rosie. Military, yeah, we do need another Rosie. Military and computer science. Grace

00:02:46 **Doug Buchan**

Murphy Hopper. I do remember this lady. And she was one of the first women to become a rear admiral in the Navy. right? And her knowledge with mathematics, she was named the founding mother of computer language. So all of our software today that's fast and fancy, you can thank her for that. An advocate of a supreme level, Susan B. Anthony. You know, it was just unfortunate that Susan B. Anthony didn't actually live to see the 19th Amendment to come to fruition. What about media, Barbara Walters. Oh, good. Who doesn't love Barbara? My goodness, right. She was the first woman newscaster on Primetime News Network. We have our own couple of women here. We have Molly Elkman. Yeah. Okay. Yeah. The house that she built. All right. And then we also have Twig. Yeah. Oh, yeah. Okay. Daniel Brown. Absolutely. She is one of our Oatey ambassadors. So I'm going to classify all these women as real badasses. Okay. Oh, they were. And today we're going to add another badass to the head conversation okay with

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00:03:55 **Doug Buchan**

Emily Cox. I need to take a

00:03:57 **Katherine Lehtinen**

break now. That was really good. I wish I got my applause button on the stand but so welcome Emily that is probably we will give you that soundbite for your intro wherever you go from this point forward. I absolutely need it. I feel I am under so

00:04:16 **Speaker 3**

So much pressure right now.

00:04:17 **Katherine Lehtinen**

Deliver.

00:04:19 **Speaker 3**

All of that excellent company you're putting me in.

00:04:22 **Katherine Lehtinen**

I love it. Well, Emily is with Building Badasses, which is an award -winning designers and extensive backgrounds in architect and interiors. Building Badasses was born out of frustration with the disconnect and lack of women in and around the job site.

00:04:37 **Speaker 3**

So amazing.

00:04:38 **Katherine Lehtinen**

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And so Emily, I mean, take us through, you know, a little bit about your background and why in the world building badasses?

00:04:47 **Speaker 3**

Well, I started off as a very small child in a very small Southern town. Oh, I love it. Let's start down, yep. Who had to walk to and from school. Oh, exactly. Uphill both ways. Yep, many a tobacco field. No, I'm from a small town in South Carolina that many of you might know as being close to the amazing tourist Mecca called South of the Border. If you've ever driven on I-95. You know I always joke that I grew up in the shadow of the sombrero of South of the Border, but I was always interested in a blend of art and sciences and so I ended up going to Clemson University to study architecture and I did my undergrad there and then got my master's and I realized when I got out into the field that there was a real disconnect between what we were learning in school and what was actually being done on the job and then that just was magnified by a factor of a hundred when you went out into the job site and you actually witnessed what was necessary to get what you drew on paper built. Yeah. And

00:05:55 **Speaker 3**

so you know I realized that there were very few women on the job sites and that it was a little bit more difficult than I would of like to have gotten conversations started and to collaborate with the tradesmen who were trying to execute the things I was trying to draw. So from that perspective I started Building Badasses as an opportunity to bring the women who are working in all aspects of the building industry together so that we could answer each other's questions and support each other and trying to take the industry a little farther a little

00:06:33 **Katherine Lehtinen**

faster. I love it. Well tell me about when did you start building Badasses and

00:06:37 **Speaker 3**

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what does it look like today? So I started building Badasses about seven years ago and it's grown into about a thousand members locally around the Charleston, South Carolina area and we have about 10,000 people who follow along at home from all sorts of other nooks and crannies of the US. I love it, from digital connections from digital connections we have our own podcast and you know our reputation precedes us but we we meet locally at industry suppliers around the Charleston area each month and we use it as an opportunity to network and you know bitch about the things that don't work for us in the industry and figure out how to change how to change it I love it so you know

00:07:29 **Katherine Lehtinen**

building Badasses was created for that bridge and gap of women in the trades. What are some of the challenges that you know did you face in the building this community and how has it empowered women since the inception? So what have those like how do you reach women and are they open to coming and connecting with others and what challenges have you had? Well I think that there's an inherent

00:07:51 **Speaker 3**

sort of distrust that happens in any industry where you're competing for work And so, one significant thing that we worked really hard to overcome is this mentality of competition. And we really push the idea of collaboration instead. So, you know, on a Tuesday event night in January, we may be at Ferguson Plumbing, but if you're at Gateway, I still want you to come to the event. So, you know, the idea is really that there's plenty of work to go around, and the more we help each other excel, the more opportunities we'll have as a group.

00:08:27 **Katherine Lehtinen**

Yeah for sure. Tell me a little bit about the mixture of people that come to any one of these events. Are they, you know, what is their background? Are a lot of them, have they been in the trades for a long time? Are they on the design and architect side? Are they on the

00:08:40 **Speaker 3**

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implementation side? We find that we're heavily weighted towards architecture, design, and suppliers, vendors. So what we're really trying to do is to both reach out to women who are finding it hard to find us. Yeah. We're trying to look in every nook and cranny of the job site to turn them up and make sure they know that we're here to support them and we're also trying to encourage women who are looking for a new aspect of the building industry to get involved with to consider actually joining a trade as opposed to other aspects of the building industry that

00:09:19 **Katherine Lehtinen**

might be a little more saturated. Right. I would think things like your local trade schools or even union or your pre -apprentice programs? I don't know if they have a lot of pre -apprentice programs in Charleston or? You know we're

00:09:33 **Speaker 3**

a right -to -work state so there are fewer sure fewer opportunities for that type of support but we do have pretty phenomenal trade schools and also we have a really great well it is still considered a trade school but a historic trades program in Charleston called the American College of the Building Arts. Okay. So we have men and women getting trained in historic types of specialties like stone carving, timber framing, that type of that type of very specialized

00:10:11 **Katherine Lehtinen**

work. That is so cool. I love it. You know with the current labor shortage I'm sure that everyone's feeling it even down in your area you know how can we better or promote the trades as a viable career option for young women? Like, how are you, you know, what part of your organization is tackling that?

00:10:28 **Speaker 3**

Well, we're really pushing hard to get visibility to just really straightforward, basic facts of the matter. Yep. So trying to touch on very frequently in all forms of communication that our platform allows to drive home, hey,

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there is a chronic, very serious need for skilled labor in the market and that is only going to grow as boomers retire and while historically over the last several decades we've glamorized the pursuit of a college education and a higher education which there's nothing wrong with that yep but when it's being when it's being shined up to the detriment of respect for trades that actually create build things that last I think that's really detrimental to our society on a lot of different levels so just you know nuts and bolts conversations about hey would you like to make a lot of money yeah short amount of time yep would you like to be able to drive down the street and point out to your kid that you built something that's standing there would you you know these are these

00:11:45 **Speaker 3**

are very real things would you would you would you like job security and benefits and to pick and choose the jobs that you work you know depending on which trade you you undertake but I think all of those basic factual touch points are really critical for women who are looking at planning a future and understanding that in a lot of ways we culturally don't have the security that for women that we would all enjoy.

00:12:18 **Doug Buchan**

You know, that's gonna bring a question to my mind. So we have those insecurities right out there and the women feel them. What does your organization do like when it comes to connecting those women with contractors? Do you have a pool of contractors that are willing to give these women the opportunity to gain the experience and the confidence in that trade and then if you do, what is Badass' follow -up with that? How do you stay engaged throughout that

00:12:51 **Speaker 3**

whole process? Well we definitely do have a pool of contractors who are constantly reaching out for skilled subs and they know that the women who are engaged in our group are really motivated to to pursue and promote involvements involvement in the trades so I think we are one of the first stops beyond their typical go -to subs when they find that they're in need which in our region Charleston, South Carolina the coastal area we're one of the fastest -growing retirement destinations in the nation and so frankly we're a small town with small town

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resources and we're built along a string of sea islands that are connected by bridges and so a lot of tradesmen are driving an hour and a half to work every day that's not an exaggeration that's very real and so in order to afford and in order to live in an affordable place they have to they have that level of commute so we're seeing fewer and fewer and fewer well I shouldn't say that we're seeing fewer people involved in the trades. We're seeing

00:14:04 **Speaker 3**

a greater need than the existing trades people in the area can meet. And so yes, we are really proud that we frequently get requests to connect contractors with our members who are skilled tradeswomen. And as far as what further support we offer, really we offer private, a private group conversation. So a private place where women can ask other women their questions about construction or about business or about education or about some aspect of the construction process that they don't do all day every day. It's very intimidating especially as a young woman so much of what we need to know in the building industry we have to learn on the job. There is no school that teaches you all aspects of of what it is we do and so it's really difficult for young women to look around and only have men to ask their questions. When you're already doubted, your knowledge and your skill set is already inherently doubted on the job site, the last thing you want to do is to admit that you don't know something.

00:15:15 **Speaker 3**

And so we really provide what I hope is a very safe place to come to and be like, holy shit, I don't know how to do this. I've never done this before, I know I can, but you know, how would you go about it? What product would you use? Or or more importantly, what product would you not use? So those are the kinds of things that we really work hard to encourage our membership to meet each other's needs in that.

00:15:39 **Katherine Lehtinen**

Yeah. Long -term, big vision, what does building badassess represent?



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00:15:45 **Speaker 3**

It represents 51%, 51%, that's the number. I want 51 % of people in every trade to be female because 51 % of the population is female. And that's what I want. Until we're there, I'm not satisfied. You know, I want a really terrible female plumber to have every shot at a job that a really terrible male plumber has because until you can be really, really shitty doing your job and still get paid, we don't have equality or parity. So that's the goal, that's the vision.

00:16:24 **Katherine Lehtinen**

I love it. So what advice would you, you know, give to women looking to enter in the trades or an architect or in, you know, building design or interior design? You know, what would you tell them about before they started that journey?

00:16:40 **Speaker 3**

I would say cross -contamination is really important and what I mean by that is our industry is built on layers upon layers upon layers of different types of work that have to come together to make one final result. There is no one person who can take a project from start to finish very efficiently, effectively, or economically. So in what I think are, in order to gain the best results, it takes a lot of different people touching a lot of different aspects of the job. You cannot hope to be an expert in all those aspects. I want you to know enough to be dangerous. So I want you if you are a tile supplier to know enough about plumbing to recognize that you know we can't your that your client a designer can line up three linear drains and make sure that the car wash of a shower will drain properly. You know you need to be able to speak to that in order to give your client the fullest of design and construction opportunities to have a successful project in the end. And so that's really the

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goal is, I would say, to expose yourself to as many aspects of the industry as possible so that you can speak to those points of connection and those layers of overlap that are

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00:18:04 **Katherine Lehtinen**

inherent to the building process. I love it. I think great perspective. Well Emily, thank you so much for joining us today. It was very delightful. I love hearing everything about it. I can't wait to see where Building Badasses go and how you continue to reach for the stars not only in your area but even beyond. Thank you

00:18:23 **Speaker 3**

so much for having me. It was an awesome opportunity to chit -chat and you know solve all the world's trades problems together. You got it. One step at a time. That's our plan.