



Podcast Transcript | *The Fix*

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Guests: Oatey Ambassadors Shay Lorette, Evan Berns

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Questions or Feedback: thefix@oatey.com

00:00:07 **Katherine Lehtenin**

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.

00:00:48 **Katherine Lehtenin**

All right, Doug, we have quite the rock star group today.

00:00:52 **Doug Buchan**

Yeah. You know what? I think people forgot about our breakfast talk we had a few episodes ago about the Oats.

00:00:58 **Katherine Lehtenin**

Yeah.

00:00:58 **Doug Buchan**

Well, we brought the Oats back. We got the Oatey Ambassador Team Series rolling again.

00:01:02 **Katherine Lehtenin**

I love it. And we're actually going to talk to two of our newest ambassadors to the program this year, which I'm super excited about. So good morning, Shay. Good morning. All right. And we also have Evan. Good morning, Evan.

00:01:15 **Evan Berns**

Good morning. Thanks for having us.

00:01:17 **Katherine Lehtenin**

You got it. I know it's super early out in California, but we appreciate you guys taking some time to talk with us a little bit and get to know a little bit more about you and have our listeners understand kind of the world that you guys are working within. So let's get this started. Evan, can you tell me a little bit about yourself, your background in the plumbing industry, and you know, still pretty young, 23, right?

00:01:40 **Doug Buchan**

So I'm 22. I think I'm boots older than

00:01:50 **Katherine Lehtenin**

Tell us a little bit of how you got into plumbing in your career path so far

00:01:55 **Evan Berns**

Yeah, my brother -in -law actually brought me into the industry I'm a different sort of plumber. Most people would start out like as an apprenticeship kind of learning new construction but he had a need for a service technician and so he brought me directly into that world and And I never really saw that new construction side of plumbing. So I've been doing it for like four years with him. Before that, I just had a landscaping job doing, we'd installed like sprinklers and patios, retaining walls, stuff like that. And so I knew that I wanted to work with my hands, but I knew I didn't really want to be outside all day and doing that sort of intensive labor. And so he brought me in and ever since I started working with tools and, and doing the plumbing side, I really love that aspect of the trades versus just hard manual labor.

00:02:47 **Katherine Lehtenin**

Yeah, for sure. That's pretty cool. I love it. Got to have family bring in through right? You said that you have that representation and someone that says, Hey, you know, come and try this out for a little bit, just great. So Shay, you transition from working in plumbing supplies to becoming a licensed service plumber. Share a little bit about your background and what inspired you, you know, really to jump into a plumbing career?

00:03:10 **Shay Lorette**

Well, you know, I got in late. So I got into the trade late. I'm 37. And, you know, I kind of had a rough go in life. I was a little bit of a knucklehead. Did a bunch of different jobs. But yeah, I had started back in Home Depot's heyday in the plumbing department back when our journeymen were all up in it. And so, you know, I had a real good foundation late of residential service with, they used to have a really good training program too that you know you'd sit in front of a computer and learn all different types of plumbing for like two weeks straight eight hours a day and then so it laid a really good foundation and there came a point towards the end of that time where I was just kind of going through some personal like discovery and learning more about like my faith and so I stepped away and I actually got involved in like these ministries where I would lead groups for addicts and I got involved with an organization when me and my wife, we went to Shreveport, Louisiana. There's a there's

00:04:24 **Shay Lorette**

this place called The Hub and they deal with like victims of human trafficking and those who struggle in poverty and I got involved in that ministry where I was going there once a week. And during that time, like all that stuff was very rewarding. but our time in Louisiana was coming to an end. And this dude I was going to church with, my friend, he was a mechanical plumber, or he is a mechanical plumber in the union. And I was talking with him and I was like, yeah, man, I worked in the plumbing department for like, you know, I was a home dealer for like eight years.

00:04:59 **Katherine Lehtenin**

Yeah.

00:04:59 **Shay Lorette**

And I loved it, you know, and I got family members who were all electricians, but I'm like gravitating towards plumbing.

00:05:05 **Katherine Lehtenin**

I can only imagine the dinner conversations that happen. Oh yeah, yeah, yeah.

00:05:10 **Shay Lorette**

For sure. No, we're all cool. But, uh, but yeah, I was talking with him. He was like, well, you know, I can probably give you a reference to the union because we were moving to Dallas at that time. And, uh, so he was a reference for me and got me connected. And so I went into the local 100 in Dallas and had that, uh, conversation. And that's how I got into it. I joined the union and, uh, entered in with, uh, Roger Wakefield's company. We were, uh, just service. So I, unlike Evan, don't have any new construction. I pretty much learned all service so and that was kind of my introduction into the actual trade So I had a good foundation laid for like basic oil repair and stuff like that

00:05:57 [Katherine Lehtenin](#)

Yeah entered in through that way. Well, you know, I was gonna go right into the Roger Wakefield experience You know Will you tell me a little bit about what that was like? I'm sure you probably worked with him during some time that he it was just Roger Wakefield service company And then he's kind of catapulted into this, you know plumbing icon now through his YouTube and content. So tell me a little bit about how he and that group really impacted your career.

00:06:24 [Shay Lorette](#)

Well, I mean, so yeah, I got to see it, I got to see the rise of it. So when I started, he was already making videos in his office, you know, the basic of like, he was making a lot of videos at that time of, you know, choosing your career path in plumbing, the difference between new construction service, You know, union, non -union, all that. And yeah, I was a part of the team and I got to see him starting to really like get serious with it. Sure. And so there was a period, there was, there was one video. So I'm, he had like a little social media team and they made, they ended up making a video on DIY, like a real plumber reacts to DIY toilet plunge or something with like cellophane wrap. I think it was something like that, but that video went viral.

00:07:20 [Katherine Lehtenin](#)

Oh my gosh.

00:07:22 [Shay Lorette](#)

It went viral. And everyone was so stoked, like, yeah, it's popping off right now. Like during live time, he had shot from like 30 ,000 subscribers to like 50 ,000 subscribers in one weekend. Wow. And then like two weeks later, it shot up another 20 and then he just kept going from there.

00:07:42 [Katherine Lehtenin](#)

Yeah.

00:07:42 [Shay Lorette](#)

So it was cool to see like the evolution. That was kind of like a real turning point, because from there, that's when we started to see him get connected with Ferguson on like a professional level. And then just, you know, everything grew out of that. And then from that point, how it affected me was he ended up getting some new guys and there's this dude Austin, he doesn't work with him anymore, but he would always encourage me because I was watching videos like I like to watch the videos. And there were guys that I would watch actually doing plumbing work, service work, old timers like Chuck Barron and Steve Lab and guys like that. And he also kept telling me, man, dudes want to see plumbing. They want to see plumbing. Why don't you make videos? I don't know, dude. And then he also actually inspired me to start, you know, recording my work.

00:08:36 [Evan Berns](#)

Yeah.

00:08:37 [Shay Lorette](#)

One of the, it's one of the social media guys, so yeah, that, that inspired me to start doing it and it actually makes my job more fun. That's why I do it. Like I have fun doing and recording and stuff like that.

00:08:48 [Katherine Lehtenin](#)

Well, and that's what it should be, right? It should be that it's a fun thing, not that it is, you know, something feel like additional work when you have to go home and do it. For sure. So similar to Roger Wakefield, I mean, you both of you have some pretty impressive following and also have had a couple, I know Evan, you've had a couple of videos that have gone viral. You know, can you tell us a little bit about your journey and how you both came to such big presence on social and in the plumbing community you know maybe Evan you kind of kick it off of how that's transitioned for you. Yeah I kind of my

00:09:24 **Evan Berns**

first video was posted sort of as a joke between my wife because she would spend a lot of time watching tik -toks and whatnot and I saw these young kids that didn't have to work anymore because they're making tik -toks and so I thought well I'll make videos and that was kind of my start was just throwing a video up and that one got, I think right now it's at like 480 ,000 something views, but that kind of catapulted me and kind of motivated me to keep posting. I'm going to stay consistent because I got that first video is okay, but you need followers, you need to keep putting out that consistent content. And so my goal from the start was to post one video a day, and at first I just started doing it on TikTok, But eventually, I got to talking with other people kind of on the online community that did the same thing. And so I would talk with Boston Plumbing Monster, if you guys know him, he was a huge mentor to me. Just, you know, we would talk back and forth about, hey, you can make money

00:10:28 **Evan Berns**

doing this, or you can make money doing that on this platform. And so eventually, I got to four platforms, I got Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram. And my most recent platform is YouTube. I started posting there consistently about one year ago. And now it's grown to like my biggest platform. So I think that is the biggest determining factor is just your consistency. How, even if it's only, you know, one video a week or three videos a week, you just gotta stay consistent and stay motivated and you can have success doing it.

00:11:05 **Katherine Lehtenin**

Yeah, that's pretty cool. How about you, Shane?

00:11:08 **Shay Lorette**

Yeah, he nailed that on consistency because I felt that there were times where I would just get so burnt, like I'd get frustrated and I just stopped making videos for like two weeks, I just sat on footage and yeah, my momentum got crushed.

00:11:24 **Katherine Lehtenin**

Yeah.

00:11:26 **Shay Lorette**

Yeah, I pretty much was just making videos and I was intentionally making videos kind of for guys like me who would kind of wake up. I kind of had a routine, especially in the beginning of my plumbing career, where I would wake up and pop on plumbing videos. It kind of like motivate me, you know, like, I don't know, I just, I found motivation. So I, I started with making those videos, um, kind of like for guys like me who would wake up and want to watch a plumbing video or just check out what plumbing is like, if they're interested. And then, yeah, um, I had a few videos have some pretty high success and that generated a little bit of a following, and then that just grew. And yeah, it's still growing. My biggest platform is on YouTube. I, again, though, like my momentum on the other videos, I make a lot of short-term content right now. You know, I have a lot of long-term stack. I just have ideas that I wanna do with the long-term to make it different, but I've been mentally, like, exhausted

00:12:36 **Shay Lorette**

from doing it. But yeah, I think staying consistent, for sure, is like what I need to do. And yeah, that's what I've been, just posting videos.

00:12:48 **Katherine Lehtenin**

Awesome.

00:12:49 **Doug Buchan**

Yeah, you know, I have a question for the guys because, you know, to me, they're younger guys and that's what we're trying to do.

00:12:55 **Katherine Lehtenin**

Well, they kind of are from you, Doug.

00:12:58 **Doug Buchan**

That, you know, we're trying to make sure. Me too. We're trying to make sure that that's what our show is encouraging, you know, young people in the trades. So Evan, you interest me because of your age, you know, 22 years old. I'll tell you about my first service call real quick. I went to a lady's house. I was there to snake out a drain. She asked me if I knew what the heck I was doing. I said, oh, sure, I've done hundreds of these. I put my bucket underneath the sink. I pulled the P-trap off, or the J-bend. I dumped it in the sink and water ran everywhere, okay? So, lost all credibility. My question to you guys, you know, being younger guys, do you have a lot of people to question that and say, hey, you know, how the heck do you really know what's going on? You know, you haven't had enough time in the field. You know, do you get that? And then if you do, how do you address it?

00:13:50 **Evan Berns**

Oh yeah, I've had this one lady stand with her arms across the doorframe, acting like she wasn't gonna let me into her house, and she's going, how long have you been doing this? And of course, I told her a little white lie and told her four years, this is a couple years back. But yeah, I always would just say that I've been doing it longer than I have, and that's just to make the customer feel comfortable.

00:14:14 **Katherine Lehtenin**

Yeah.

00:14:14 **Evan Berns**

But yeah, even when I first started posting videos, I didn't really want to get my face because I thought I would get more negativity and more hate just from my age alone. I've gotten over that at this point. But yeah, it definitely is something that people look at you at the supply house and think how did this guy get his own band already? He looks, yeah.

00:14:37 **Shay Lorette**

Yeah. Jay, what about you? For me, once I actually tell them I'm 37, or, you know, when I was, cause I started, I started in the trade when I was 32. So I do sometimes in person too, I do look younger than what

00:14:51 **Doug Buchan**

I am. I

00:14:51 **Katherine Lehtenin**

would have never guessed you were 37.

00:14:53 **Doug Buchan**

That's why I asked, because I'm looking at you on the screen here and I'm like, there's no way.

00:14:56 **Katherine Lehtenin**

27, 25. Yeah.

00:14:58 **Shay Lorette**

So when I, when I tell them my age, I usually get the blow back, the head back. Oh, okay.

00:15:04 **Doug Buchan**

Okay. It's that good California life, right? It is, it is bro.

00:15:10 **Katherine Lehtenin**

Maybe that's like me, I always tell my husband I'm 29, forever.

00:15:12 **Doug Buchan**

hour. You look 29. Yeah, thanks Doug. I appreciate it. You know, when you're doing your videos and stuff like that, and you're sharing conversation with people all over the United States, I know one of the difficult things I have here at Oatey being in my position is communicating with people in different regions, because there might be something we do here in Ohio. Well there is things we do here in Ohio that aren't done in other regions. How do you communicate those messages? And then when you get the blow back on that, you know, how do you extinguish it quickly? So one of the challenges I have here at Oatey is I work with people all over the United States and international. So there's things we do here in Ohio that aren't done in other regions. So my question to you guys are when you're creating your content, you know, and you're getting blow back saying, Hey, what are you talking about? That's not how you do that kind of stuff. You know, how do you handle that, you know, to defuse it. And,

00:16:04 **Doug Buchan**

you know, do you give explanation on, you know, why you're showing that?

00:16:08 **Shay Lorette**

I think in the beginning, man, I know personally, I I started to address those things like I had videos with like I was working on gas and Tons of dudes from New York would just fire off about street fittings and you know And at first, you know, I would I would respond back like well, it's legal in my area you know, it's it's code in my area and It gets to the point where if it's a lot, you know at the first one or two I might address it like, well, you know, my area is what we do, blah, blah, blah. But if it starts becoming one like one of those videos where every other comment is like not legal in my area or, you know, just make it stupid comments, I will sometimes I'll do like a light troll back where I just do like a smiley face upside down or or like, you know, have fun with it, you know, like, oh, man, that's great. Maybe you should teach me more, you know something stupid.

00:17:16 **Katherine Lehtenin**

Kill them with kindness.

00:17:17 **Shay Lorette**

Yeah, kill them with kindness. Evan, what about you?

00:17:21 **Evan Berns**

I think I had a lot of water heater videos early on and we would use like flexible gas, flexible water connectors. And I didn't know there was any other way, but everybody was telling me you're a hack for hooking them up like that. They need to be hard piped, that's not legal. And yeah, I don't think I really address them in like my voiceovers or anything, but sometimes I'll comment back or Luckily, I have a pretty good following of people that know me and so they'll just say hey, you know, he's in, California This is how it's done Yeah Or I'll have something in like an attic a waterline in the attic or in a crawl space and they say that's gonna freeze You're an idiot Yeah

00:17:59 **Doug Buchan**

Yeah, they forget Yeah, they forget here on the East Coast and the Midwest that you guys could wake up any morning with the ground moving under you.

00:18:09 **Evan Berns**

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

00:18:11 **Doug Buchan**

Yeah. For sure.

00:18:12 **Evan Berns**

I'm more worried about stuff boiling than freezing. Yeah. Yeah.

00:18:17 **Katherine Lehtenin**

So the both of you work with a number of brands as ambassadors or programs or influencers. You know, how do you go about working with brands? What are some of the things you take into consideration when partnering with a brand? What are some of the things you can tell listeners about?

00:18:33 **Shay Lorette**

So for me, I just got to believe in the product. I got to be using it already. You know, like I've been working with General a little bit lately. And you know, I'm happy to be working with them because I've been using their stuff for a long time. And there was stuff that I believed in. So, um, you know, I do get hit up occasionally by other companies and small companies, and I don't really do, I don't say or commit to anything. Like I may try some of the stuff out, but, um, I can't commit to anything unless I like fully believe in it.

00:19:13 **Katherine Lehtenin**

Right.

00:19:13 **Shay Lorette**

And, uh, I don't want to just, you know, be a part of something for free stuff. Uh, so that's really what it comes down to me. Like it, does the, is the company making quality stuff? Because that's what I'm big on, even though people in my videos say otherwise, like quality, you know, high quality work and high quality customer service. So yeah, it's got, it's got to fall into that.

00:19:40 **Katherine Lehtenin**

Yeah, it's got to match your personal brand and your company brand. Makes sense.

00:19:45 **Evan Berns**

Yeah, I think when I first started out, there's like that excitement of like, oh, I get a free product, whatever, right. But I found it harder to make a good video using it, like whether it's a tool that you wouldn't normally use or something like that. And I just found that they didn't perform as well. So same thing with Shay, like I'll try to use stuff that I'm already using and just reach out to that brand to see if they wanna partner for free products, stuff like that. With Rigid, I've done a bunch of work and I didn't really work with them before, or I didn't use their tools before working with them, but everybody was telling me to buy them and use them. So that was kind of my one exception to that rule. But it gets to be a lot, like it's a lot of commitment to work with all these different brands and they all want me to post a certain amount of times for a week or month and I just get kind of careful about what else I want to take on. Is it something that I really value, do I really

00:20:42 **Evan Berns**

want to stand behind their product and represent them?

00:20:45 **Katherine Lehtenin**

Yeah. Well, I'm going to kind of draw this out a little bit longer and maybe you can tell people because obviously this is a yearly program with the Ambassador Program, but what was one of the reasons that you thought the ambassador program from Oatey was a good fit? And then why now that you're in the program? Do you believe in the program?

00:21:04 **Shay Lorette**

Well, I mean, I was using so much Oatey product already. Like, I'm like, man, if I can get on this team, like this crew, it's gonna be perfect. Because there's no other stuff that I was using as much as I was Oatey. Sure. And like, and not just Oatey, but like, you know, the vast umbrella of everything you guys

are over. And then when I was looking at the team members from the previous years, I'm like, man, all these guys are so rad. Like the like the the squad is cool. So that means like the people over in leading this thing got to be cool. So that's what led me to kind of reach out and be like, man, I wonder if I wonder if I'm eligible for this thing. Yeah. So yeah. But then and then when getting in with you guys and then meeting you guys like the Ambassador Fest was huge for me, too because I got to meet you guys in person and just see the whole vibe of OD and Man, like I want to stay on this great. I want to

00:22:13 **Shay Lorette**

It's just a blessing to be a part of what you guys are doing and all the innovation is really cool. Thanks. I appreciate that

00:22:21 **Evan Berns**

Yeah Before I applied to the Oatey Ambassadors program I thought I was using like Oatey glue and Oatey boxes I had no idea I was using Oatey tape, Oatey dope, Oatey leak detector all that so same thing with Shay like you guys are much bigger than you appear just as Oatey you guys have those other brands that are high quality and represent you as well. Yeah I think being a part of the program was awesome but being in Cleveland just set like a whole different standard for what Oatey means and what you guys are. So just all the staff at Oatey when we went to the headquarters was amazing to meet and talk to.

00:23:01 **Katherine Lehtenin**

That's great. Well, I appreciate it. So as we kind of wrap out a little bit of our conversation today, I think we could both sit here for hours and talk to you guys, but I know you both have to go to work and we will make sure that happens. But, you know, I think we all have similar goals, you know, and helping promote the trades, the next generation, you know, really trying to educate those, it's a noble, great and lucrative career. You know, what do you think we can do as manufacturers, as plumbers and trade advocates to really help spread the word to kids, young adults, that this is an opportunity for them? You know, what do you think is something that we can do to help promote the trades?

00:23:44 **Shay Lorette**

I mean, getting into schools, I think that's a common thing that at least I've been hearing. And again, I started way late in life, at least, not way late, but I started later. I started in my 30s. Had I known really what plumbing was about, especially with service, because I'm very ADD, and service for me really works being able to go to a bunch of different jobs in a day. And, you know, working in a team or with other plumbers and building camaraderie and there's just a lot of stuff I don't think is talked about. I don't know. I mean, I don't really hear it talked about. What I hear usually about the trades is that your journeyman treats you like dog trash. And you know, you get stuck on a broom and I understand like that is true in a lot of applications, especially new construction. But like on the service side, um, at the companies that I've worked for, like, I've been blessed man to work with teams and companies that like valued, like respect and when I was learning and even the guys

00:25:02 **Shay Lorette**

that I was teaching and do teach, like we, we give opportunity and respect to one another and we help try to make each other better plumbers. And like, it's just a really non -toxic atmosphere. Yeah. And I feel like there are a lot of companies like that out there that that do actually have like real good core values and they want to they want to grow the business. So I feel like if if younger people know like you're not just going to I mean, they might but they won't just go to a company and be treated like trash, but they can go somewhere to really learn a career that can support you and a family.

00:25:43 **Katherine Lehtenin**

Right. Absolutely.

00:25:44 **Shay Lorette**

in this high -inflated life we live in, you can make money and provide for your family and feel a sense of reward from it, so.

00:25:54 [Katherine Lehtenin](#)

Yeah, that's awesome.

00:25:55 [Evan Berns](#)

Yeah, I think it's just not talked about enough. Like when I was in high school, the only question people were worried about is what college are you going to? Where are you applying to college? And nobody was really asking like, what do you wanna do? Or how are you gonna make money in life? So I think a lot of people end up with degrees that they don't really need or they don't want to use. And so I think what Oatey could do is I guess get into career centers. I know we had a career center in my school but we didn't have any trades representation or anybody talking about that as a viable option. So yeah I love seeing like the workshops that you guys do at different schools and stuff like that and just putting it out there because I think if it's talked about more more people would choose it because they don't really want to go to college. That's just where people push them to.

00:26:44 [Katherine Lehtenin](#)

Right. I would agree with that. Yeah, I would agree. Well, thank you both for your time today. It was so great to get to know both of you a little bit further and hear about your stories, your successes. And I know from mine, I so appreciate the partnership that you guys both have with us as an organization. You are amazing brand ambassadors for us. And we appreciate all

00:27:07 [Doug Buchan](#)

all

00:27:07 [Katherine Lehtenin](#)

the work that you do, so thank you.

00:27:10 [Doug Buchan](#)

Yep, I gotta, like, what's the word? Repeat that? Yeah, ditto. Ditto, that's it, ditto. I gotta ditto that.

00:27:22 [Shay Lorette](#)

We appreciate you guys a lot. We thank you guys for everything you're doing for us, for the community. I mean, you guys are awesome.

00:27:29 [Katherine Lehtenin](#)

You got it. Thanks, guys. Ditto that, right?