



## Podcast Transcript | *The Fix*

### Season 2, Episode 8

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**Guests:** Danielle Browne and Thomas Young

**Run Time:** 28:22

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

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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, jobsite 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.

[music]

All right, Ambassador Fest 2022, we are here. Doug, our next two guests are some of the coolest people we know.

**Doug:** I'm going to tell you something, I came up with a new acronym for this mini-series.

**Katherine:** Nice.

**Doug:** It's the SMRs.

**Katherine:** SMRs okay.

**Doug:** Social Media Royalty.

**Katherine:** Nice.

**Doug:** We are bringing the packages, let me tell you.

**Katherine:** I love it. Well, both of our guests, they have a huge heart and are really awesome at their craft. Welcome, Thomas Young, from TY Custom.

**Thomas Young:** Thank you.

**Katherine:** And Danielle Browne, thelittlestplumber.

**Danielle Browne ("Twig"):** Thank you for having me.

**Katherine:** We're so excited, this is going to be a great episode for us to get to know you our listeners and talk a little bit about your craft, your trade, and what you do. Thomas, kick us off and let us know where you reside. Tell us a little bit about yourself.

**Thomas:** Yes, I'm out of Northern California. I'm about an hour east of San Francisco and about an hour south of Sacramento. I am an ex-service plumber. Now I'm a remodel contractor and I've been doing that for about five years. I run my own company and do a lot of bathroom renovation but then kitchens and pretty much anything when it comes to construction now. I like new experiences and learning new things and growing so it's been really good.

**Katherine:** Awesome.

**Doug:** I have a quick question because he says he's an hour from here and an hour from there, now is that as the crow flies?

**Katherine:** [laughs]

**Doug:** Because I know traffic out there takes you six hours to go one mile.

**Thomas:** Yes, that's without traffic, perfect conditions.

**Katherine:** Does that ever happen?

**Thomas:** At 4:00 AM.

**Katherine:** Going out to the job, right?

**Thomas:** Yes.

**Katherine:** All right. Danielle, tell us a little bit about yourself, where you reside, type of plumbing you do. Fill us in.

**Danielle:** All right. Well, I'm from Newfoundland, Canada, that's the furthest easterly point of North America, tiny little cold island. Cleveland feels tropical to me right now so this is--

**Katherine:** 60 degrees right now.

**Danielle:** Exactly, this is brilliant. I'm a 37-year-old [unintelligible 00:02:54] plumber. I've been in plumbing trade now for over 15 years. I do mostly service and mechanical plumbing at a major university. We take care of about 300 buildings,  
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including ocean science research facilities, and farms, and homes. I get my hands on a lot of stuff, I'm very fortunate to work with some pretty amazing plumbing people and experiences.

**Katherine:** Tell us a little bit more about that, what is it like being one-- only plumbers-- there's not a lot of plumbers in Newfoundland, right? There's only a couple of you, so let alone a female plumber. Tell us a little bit about your experience and how you are great at the business that you and the craft that you work on. Tell us a little about it.

**Danielle:** I guess when I first started with plumbing, I had already been in the automotive industry before so being in the trades wasn't exactly a shock to me, but it was certainly a shock to the people on the worksite when I showed up. I had an older gentleman approach me and they said, "What's the difference between a Yeti and a female plumber?" I said, "What?" He said there's been sightings of yetis.

**Katherine:** Oh, wow.

**Danielle:** There was no malice to it, but it was true, I was the first female plumber in Newfoundland, so I was the first female plumber in my province. It's been incredible ever since honestly, the amount of respect and support I get from the guys in the trades has been incredible, honestly. Just coming up through I wish I could have another three hours to talk about my hilarious experiences. For those of you who don't know what I look like, I look like Justin Bieber.

[laughter]

**Danielle:** When I walk onto a site, a couple of people, they're trying to figure out exactly what I am so I get a couple of people staring at me, but at the end of the day, they usually come up to me, they're like, "You're actually a really good plumber." I'm like,"

**Katherine:** I'm pretty cool too.

**Danielle:** -"Hell yes, I am."

[laughter]

**Danielle:** I love it. My life completely changed once I got a pipe wrench in my hand.

**Katherine:** I'll say, from following you on social media, some of the places and experiences that you get to go and work on, it's amazing. It's so cool. I'm so glad that you bring us along for that journey.

**Danielle:** Thank you. It's fun to show people a different type of plumber that you can be, the fact that I get to work in the Atlantic Ocean with animals, and the mechanical aspect of it, I think needs to be shown more for sure. We don't all just install toilets.

**Katherine:** Right, absolutely.

**Doug:** One of the things I like about having Danielle here, and we're going to have another young lady here on our upcoming episodes, is the fact that you took that chance, because one of the things that we talk about here is take that chance, try out the mechanicals, we talked about Habitat for Humanity here in Ohio, you go out there for a couple of days, you're doing something good and then you're getting a feel for, "Hey, I might like this." I love the fact that you gave yourself the chance, the opportunity to experience it, you had that initial Yeti situation, but you overcame it.

Then I had a few females that have worked for me in the past on crews and one of the things I found was once they proved themselves, you became part of the family instantly, but unfortunately, that initial test, it makes or breaks you.

**Danielle:** There's no question, there's absolutely a test. To this day, every time I walk onto a new site, or a new job, I have to prove myself to every new person that I see, which doesn't bug me anymore, but back then there was a bit of pressure on me for sure. It's also a great learning experience to know what it's like to prove people wrong or change somebody's opinion. At the end of the day that outweighs any fear or any type of hesitation that I would have. Proving people or changing people's minds is like chasing a high every time it's--

**Doug:** they no longer look at you as what your gender is, they look at you as a true technician at that point.

**Danielle:** Yes, for sure. I've found that a lot of older gentlemen tend to have this Dad thing where all of a sudden, they just want to take care of you.

**Doug:** That's what we do.

**Danielle:** Yes, 100%, if you allow that-- I know a lot of people tend to be like, "Don't, it's degrading," or whatever, it's not. It's a beautiful thing if you accept somebody because they're showing you how they love, you know what I mean?

**Katherine:** Yes.

**Danielle:** You're meeting these rough and tumble guys, and all of a sudden, they come up to you, they're like, "Anybody gives you a hard time you let me know." You could take that a bad way like, "Well, I can take care of myself." Or you can be like, "That's really kind of you to say." That's just guys, just their way of saying like, "Hey, I care about you."

**Doug:** Absolutely.

**Katherine:** So super cool.

**Doug:** Good for you. Good for you.

**Katherine:** Thomas, I'm going to talk a little bit about you had a pretty big scare in your life and it made you really step back and have some discussions with yourself about what do you want to do and how do you want to change your career and your life. Can you talk to us a little bit about how your cancer diagnosis and recovery impacted your decision to get into the work that you're doing now?

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**Thomas:** It was about five years ago, I had a scare. I had stage three colon cancer and it kind of came out of nowhere. I didn't even have time to really process it. Actually working on a job, and on a Monday, and someone actually noticed that I was on the floor in pain, and they're like, "Are you okay?" I'm like, "yes, I'm just having some stomach pains." It hadn't happened to me for a couple of months, but I don't really pay attention to it. I'm in the trades, I'm just like, "Okay, I'm going to have some pains here and there," and I just figured it was something with maybe I wasn't eating enough. I didn't really think too much about it, didn't really listen to what my body was trying to tell me. I've learned since to do that.

That was a Monday and then I ended up-- the person was like, "[unintelligible 00:09:30] the hospital because if you can't even stand up right now, something's wrong." I ended up going over to Kaiser Hospital in my area, and I had a CT scan. It was still early in the day. They got me in for a colonoscopy actually, the next day, there was a cancelation so I went over there and had that fun experience and I was a little bit nervous. Just because it's something you don't want to go through in life. It really is not-- It's totally worth it. I think just as a man or just a person in general, you're like, "I don't want anything going--" Anyone that is holding off on that, if you have any concerns, get it done because you don't even feel it. You wake up in the morning, and you just want to go back to sleep after they're done with it.

Anyway, I had a colonoscopy on Tuesday, and then Wednesday I was in ER having surgery. It happened so fast that I couldn't even process it. I didn't really even get to realize what was happening, which is probably good, because I wasn't really overly worried either. Because the time, let's say, if they schedule a surgery out for two weeks, you're worried the whole two weeks.

After the colonoscopy, they knew something was wrong, and they ended up finding out I had a tumor and then went through the whole process of surgery. Then I had to wait three months to start chemo until everything was cured. Then had six months of chemo, super-depressing, because it's like, two weeks of being sick, and then you start feeling good for four or five days, and then again, it's just over and over. It seems like it's lasting forever. During that time, I was like, "You know what? Do I want to go back to work? Do I want to go back to the same thing?"

I was thinking my life would be stressful. I was like, "Maybe it's stress-related." I didn't really know. I didn't really know why it happened and whatever, but I decided to go on my own. I've always loved every aspect of the trades. I like working on electrical. Plumbing is where my heart is still, that's my favorite trade, but I still enjoy electrical, I do tile, and just a lot of all general trades. I decided just to take a leap, during the time I decided, "I'm just going to do this for myself." Originally, I thought it was going to be a lot less work, and I can kind of pick my hours, but now I feel like I work more.

I've been about five years and just been super busy. Don't really pay for advertising, it's just word of mouth, and I keep really busy. It's just like a reset on life. You get to realize that, "You know what? Well, I think a lot of guys are going through this, a lot of people are going through this." I went through it, and I got through it. I went through some really hard times, where I was down and out depressed, didn't really

want to get off the couch, but you can pull through. Life's not perfect, but you're not alone, you can get through it. I did, and I'm coming back.

I have a new outlook, a new perspective on life, and realized that life is about growing, adapting learning, and at any age, you can still just make a drastic change in your life and be a better person. It's really helped me realize that as long as I keep being humble, being in the trades is always about a learning experience. Someone always has a better way of doing it, and you can't be stuck in your ways. I also do that in my life. Now, I'm just like, "Okay, wow, maybe I shouldn't have said that or done that." It's been a good experience.

**Katherine:** Yes, wow.

**Doug:** Thanks for sharing that. I give you the badge of bravery for that one. I've never had anything that serious happen to me, but as contractors and stuff, we always get injured, we always wonder, "Hey, do I want to get back in the game? Next time it might be worse." In your case, you had an illness. I've learned that you did the best thing you possibly could. You attacked it, you kept busy, and when you keep busy, you don't dwell on stuff as much. I think your body's naturally going to be healing at a better rate than it is if you're just sitting at home on the couch. Thanks for sharing that. What a great story.

**Thomas:** Yes, and I have a clean bill of health.

**Katherine:** Awesome.

**Thomas:** Been in remission now for a while, and from everything, I get my tests, and now I'm like, "Okay." I listen to my body. Anything I'm like, "Okay." Our body is like a piece of mechanical equipment. If something's wrong, you just got to listen. It's going to show you, if you really pay attention what's going on.

**Doug:** That's fantastic. I do have a question for you, though. You said that you do a lot of the different trades yourself, so you're going to do an entire project yourself. You're not going to reach out for subs and stuff. Now, do you have multiple licenses then?

**Thomas:** Yes.

**Doug:** That's fantastic.

**Thomas:** I do sub some things out when I need to.

**Doug:** Okay. Now, do you bring in people as you need them, or do you have people on your payroll? How do you work with that?

**Thomas:** I've had people on my payroll, and sometimes it's easier to just sub stuff.

**Katherine:** [laughs]

**Doug:** Yes, I get it. Yes. [unintelligible 00:15:23].

**Thomas:** Yes. Now actually, I've had three, four guys working for me sometimes, and then now I just realized that, "You know what?--" I just again realized, again, because I was so busy, I took some more people with me, but now I'm going to pull back again and say, "You know what? I think it's better just to keep-- do what I can do," because it's hard to depend on people, and when it's your name, they can make you look bad. I've decided, "You know what? I think I'm just going to--" The people that have their name on the business, they usually take more pride in it.

I know if I call this guy or this guy, I know they're going to show up, and they'll represent me well, too. The people that I do use to sub on stuff, I know them well, and I could text them and invite them over for a drink or something like that. It's like a relationship, and I trust them. I would have them go to my mom's house and work. I know they're going to be there. I think that's better for me to actually have subs instead of--

**Doug:** That's a great philosophy. I like that. Then Danielle, are you a business owner yourself or are you connected with other affiliations where you go, and then they'll sub you out, or pick you up from someone else? How's your [crosstalk]?

**Danielle:** Yes. Actually, I have got three different scenarios on the go. I have my Monday to Friday job at the university, and then I'm also a subcontractor myself. I will go out and do work, licensed and insured, and all that stuff, on evenings and weekends. Then if somebody wants to hire me for a contracted job, I'll also do that as well.

**Doug:** Wow. Basically, you're 24/7?

**Danielle:** Right. I haven't slept [crosstalk] very tired.

**Doug:** That's awesome. A lot of Red Bull.

**Danielle:** Yes, exactly.

[laughter]

**Danielle:** I'm trying to get sponsored by Red Bull now. [crosstalk].

**Doug:** There you go.

**Danielle:** I like it.

**Katherine:** Well, thank you both for telling us a little bit more about your journey and what you've been doing. I want to shift gears a little bit, and let's talk about Oatey Ambassadors. I'd like to hear from both of you. What's your favorite part about being an Oatey Ambassador, and really, why do you think that's a value for plumbers to be a part of the program? Danielle, you want to kick us off?

**Danielle:** I would love that.

**Doug:** Did you see her smile?

**Katherine:** Aha.

**Danielle:** [chuckles]

**Doug:** As soon as you said that, man, I couldn't see yours anymore she smiled--

**Katherine:** [laughs]

**Danielle:** Honestly, I've been doing this Instagram thing for a while now, and I will say that Oatey does it different. Oatey does it better than anybody, I would say. No shame to anybody else who's ever given me an opportunity, but Oatey has this brilliant way of bringing different types of industry professionals together to give their consumers a broader prospect or idea on what Oatey has to offer, but not only that, but what we have to offer as plumbers and trades workers. I will say the thing I love the most about being an Oatey Ambassador is you bringing us together.

Like I met Ty today, and as soon as I met him, within minutes, I was like, "I love this guy." I wrote a girl from home and I was like, "I love this guy. I just met this guy, and we just clicked instantly and we have an insane--" We're in love now, and we're getting married.

[laughter]

**Danielle:** No, that's not true, -

[laughter]

**Danielle:** -but we clicked instantly.

**Katherine:** That's great.

**Danielle:** These connections-- I realize how fortunate I am to say this, but not many people get to have these experiences. The fact that Oatey can provide this for me and for the guys, I'm very aware of how special this is for myself. Not to get too emotional, but thank you very much.

**Katherine:** Oh my gosh, our pleasure.

**Doug:** Thank you. Yes, absolutely.

**Thomas:** Yes, this is an awesome experience. Oatey actually reached out. They had an ambassador form to fill out. I saw it on social media and I was like, "You know what? I'm going to put myself out there and fill this thing out, saying, 'Hey, listen, I was a service plumber for years but now I'm in every aspect of the trades.'" Oatey is a company that has-- landscapers use it to do sprinklers. Electricians use the nail plates for stuff. There are so many different tradesmen that use Oatey.

In California, you walk into a Home Depot and there's a whole aisle of Oatey. It's just like, "Wow, everywhere you look is Oatey." Just the way Oatey takes care of their ambassadors is awesome. They have these awesome truck stock boxes. I think there are three boxes a year. Then Oatey's brought us out here to Cleveland;

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beautiful city, and they make you feel special. They may make you feel like you're part of the Oatey family, like their hashtag: #TeamOatey.

I feel like part of the team, same thing, everything Twig says is exactly the same. I really am so happy to have met her. I'm so happy that we clicked. I had an idea that we'd click honestly, and social media is just a really cool way to get to know people and you get to learn and you get to see other people's work and you can look at Oatey products and you're like, "Okay, wow, cool, there's different things." Just Oatey the fact that they have this ambassador, it's awesome because they're giving back to the tradesmen.

A lot of times people are like, I think the trades are slowly becoming-- People are starting to respect us more.

**Danielle:** I agree.

**Thomas:** I think now, and hopefully as more kids need to get into it, we need tradesmen and so I just think that it's cool that they're doing this because it's going to show people on Instagram like, "Wow, look at these. There's some really cool perks to being a tradesman." I will tell you right now, I love it. I love being a tradesman. I have no disrespect for people that work at a desk all day, but I love that I get to go and work in the field. Sometimes like for example, we brought up earlier about being a business owner.

I probably could just sit at a desk and have guys running for me, but just the fact that Oatey is showing that they're taking care of the tradesmen and being an ambassador for them it's a blessing, and very blessed to be here and very happy to be here. I'm super excited. This is just the first thing on these amazing couple of days we're going to be here. Excited to see what else I have in store.

**Katherine:** It's awesome. Well, you guys couldn't have said it better and that's exactly what we want our ambassadors to be an extension of who we are. The fact that you feel that we do that makes me so proud of this group and so proud of the partnership that we've built here and really we love showcasing the work that you guys do on social media. The banter that goes back and forth on the marketing team, like, "Did you just see that video? Did you see that post? Oh my gosh, they love this product." We love that you guys love Oatey and it just makes it that much easier and that much more fun.

I always close out with this last question and I'm really interested to hear what your answer is for this. *The Fix* was founded on the fact that we want and need to promote the trades and we want to make sure that we're doing our part in making sure people understand the trades and what an opportunity it is. If you could say anything to the next generation or to what your hopes and dreams would be for the trades, I would love to hear that. I'll open up to whoever wants to go first because I dropped this on you at the last minute.

**Danielle:** No worries. I see tradespeople as the people who build our communities. If you are out there and you don't know how to-- you know you want to contribute to your community somehow, you know you want to work but you might not be an

academic. You might have struggled in high school, you might have a learning disability, or anything that keeps you back but you know that you are an intelligent person, the trades is where you need to be because you can show your intelligence through your work. You can take care of your community. We build homes for people, we build hospitals for people, and those things are never going to go away. The world is always building, always changing, always rearranging, and progressive. The only way to do that is strictly through tradespeople we build the world. If you want to get out there, honestly it's probably the most rewarding thing you can do because you get to wake up, you get to volunteer if you want to and you're going to have money in your account.

**Katherine:** Yes, absolutely.

**Danielle:** Make a good living for the rest of your life. As long as you take care of your body like Ty was saying and take care of your mind, you can take care of your community. It's a brilliant, brilliant career to get into.

**Katherine:** Yes, it's a great way.

**Thomas:** Yes, I agree with everything she said. One thing she was saying too is it's like an art form. You know what I mean? Some guys can just go and they can just maybe do a job and maybe not take credit, but if you have an artist-like outlook on stuff or if you enjoyed art growing up, you can really do some awesome stuff and take pride in your work, plus if you liked toys growing up, the trades have some of the coolest toys.

We have these tools that-- It's always innovating, press tools. We were talking about cold expansion pex and stuff like that. As adults, we get to play with toys still. It's like, so many great things and great products and it's always innovating. There's always something new, you're never going to get bored. Every day is a new experience and a new adventure and every day is another opportunity to learn and grow. I love the trades and--

**Katherine:** It's awesome.

**Doug:** Fantastic.

**Katherine:** Doug, do you have any closing thoughts?

**Doug:** I'm going to be honest with you. All my kids are grown now so I'm going to adopt both of you.

**Katherine:** [laughs]

**Danielle:** Oh, perfect.

**Doug:** You're the first influencers I've ever sat down with. That's not my wheelhouse, I'm a boomer. I love the passion you guys brought today. I love the honesty. I can tell you just by meeting both of you briefly, the only thing that would limit any successes in your life are you yourself.

**Danielle:** Thank you very much. That's really kind of you to say.

**Doug:** Great episode.

**Katherine:** I love it.

**Doug:** I tell you what I'm just going to jack up on Red Bull and let's go another 26 minutes here, Katherine.

**Katherine:** [laughs]

**Danielle:** Let's do it, let's go. Let's go, boss.

**Katherine:** Well, listen, I obviously thank both of you for taking time to be here with us at Ambassador Fest. I appreciate our friendships. I appreciate your input, your feedback, and your support to the Oatey company. As Doug said, I wish you both as much success that this world has to offer. Thank you so much.

**Doug:** Yes, absolutely.

**Danielle:** Thank you.

**Thomas:** Thank you.

**Katherine:** 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.

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