



Podcast Transcript | *The Fix*

Season 2, Episode 10

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Guests: Trey Young and Germaine Nelson

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Questions or Feedback: 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, 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.

All right, Doug, this is going to be a great episode. I am so looking forward to it.

Doug: Our Ambassador journey is getting better all the time, Katherine. I think we're at the top of the apex right now.

Katherine: You got it. Today on our podcast, we've got Germaine Nelson and Trey Young. Welcome, guys.

Germaine Nelson: Hey.

Trey Young: Hey, what's going on?

Katherine: All right.

Doug: Can you see the enthusiasm in the air, Katherine?

Katherine: I know. It's been a long day, they were just getting done with work and making some time for us. We'll get it there by the time we're done with this call, I guarantee it. Thank you both for taking some time to join us today. We're really

looking forward to learning more about your stories, your journey, and everything in between. I want to get started off with Germaine, will you take us through and our listeners through, where do you reside? What type of plumbing do you do? How long have you been in the business and the trades and what does that makeup look like? Take us through.

Germaine: I'm Germaine, and I've been doing plumbing for 21 years. It sounds so cliché, I rather it be like 25 or 19 but 21 years. It's probably been a little more actually because I started when I was 15, and right now I'm 37. I'll be 38 next month, September 26th.

Katherine: Happy birthday.

Germaine: Thank you. I started my business three years ago. I'll tell you how I started. I was working in the field and I went to my boss at the time. I made like so much money within this six-month period. I was a salesman, they moved me out of the truck and turned me into a salesman. That was the best thing they could have done because then I learned the business. However, I went and asked my boss for a raise, he told me he couldn't justify it. He said, "But I'll buy you a new truck." I said, "Thanks." That was it.

Two weeks later, I was out on my own, no money. I went home and told my wife, I said, "I quit." She said, "About time, [unintelligible 00:03:04]".

[laughter]

The mandate is, we do residential, commercial. Mostly, it's about 50/50. That's pretty much it. We do rough-in, we do service calls. We do a lot of water heater, tankless and tank.

Katherine: How many today? You said you're on your third one today? Right?

Germaine: Yes, today was three. 75-gallon, 50-gallon, and another 50-gallon. I think we have one more to troubleshoot at a crab house. The beauty is, I'm allergic to crab. He's going to be in there. [laughs]

Katherine: Food? Crabs?

Germaine: Yes, crabs. Not the other crab [unintelligible 00:04:01]. The crabs that you eat.

Doug: We have a plumbing contractor, lives in Maryland, crab capital of the world, and he's allergic to crab.

Germaine: And allergic. [laughs]

Katherine: Oh, my goodness. I'm glad you're sending in the other guy. How cool though, coming home and being like, "Listen, I quit," and having a supportive wife who says, "Great, it's about time. Let's go do this." That's pretty cool.

Germaine: I was surprised. Even now [unintelligible 00:04:29] goosebumps. I get goosebumps every time.

Katherine: That's pretty cool. Great. Hey, Trey, can you take us through your resume and what you're up to, where you live, your role?

Trey: My name is Trey Young, coming out of St. Louis, Missouri. Normally, we will do residential rehabs. We do a lot of new construction as well, remodels, a lot of water heaters, just the basic stuff. You can go, always go to my page and just take a look. I really enjoy what I do. Every day it's great.

Katherine: I like it. Awesome. I'm going to ask both of you guys to answer this, but can you correlate for me how you've seen your interaction in the work that you do on social media, to the work that you do in the trades? Have you seen any growth or recognition from posting your work out on social media?

Germaine: Trey, you go.

Trey: It's never anything direct. I'll be in the supply house sometimes and one of the guys might come on and like, "Watch your videos all the time." Aside from that, in real life, from what I post online, I get a lot of messages talking about firing. What I do for the trade is definitely positive. Which is always a good thing. I really enjoy that and I love that.

Katherine: That's awesome. Celebrity in a supply house, I like it [laughs]. How about you, Germaine?

Germaine: I don't have as many followers as Trey, probably got about 30,000 more. When it comes to social media and posting the things like that, we noticed that people they go to the website. We get booking, especially when we do a bathroom remodel. For some reason, we do a bathroom remodel, we post it and every time we do it, we get a call about someone want a bathroom remodel.

Katherine: Because they like what they saw?

Germaine: Yes. Whether they go for it or not, that's different. They call, I see it a lot. I think people they want me to show everything, from beginning to end. That's what they tell me. I can improve on that part maybe.

Doug: Guys, I have a question for you. Social media, since we've started the podcast, everybody's learned it. I'm a total Boomer, don't know much about it, but I've learned a lot and I continue to learn a lot. One of my questions I have for both of you, Germaine, I'll let you answer first. What's the most positive thing that you've gained from the social media? I think you've touched on it slightly. Then, are there any negatives to the social media?

Germaine: Yes, there are negative. Positive, we get a lot of positive feedback, especially when it comes to Oatey and different things like that, showing different products. It makes you feel a little special because certain things aren't out and you're showing them and then people they're DM'ing you. Some people they won't comment on your picture because they're embarrassed, but they'll DM you.

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When it comes to negative comments, we get those, or I get those all the time. I get DMs people telling me where we don't do it, "You're not supposed to do it this way." Last week, I did just a short video, just to put something up on X pipe and how you remove the fitting or something, if you get in a jam or anything like that. There's one guy for some reason, just wanted to be a jerk and he was like, "The manual doesn't say this, this, and that." I really didn't have to say anything because it's like four other guys [unintelligible 00:08:44] him like, "No."

You get negative comments, but you really have to have tough skin if you want to be a face or you want to be active in social media.

Katherine: Sure. Very true.

Doug: Okay. Trey, what about you?

Trey: Definitely, just to touch on what Germaine has said, the negative, and I don't even like to talk about the negative, but the negative is obviously the comments. You're going to get those guys that think they know better, and that's okay. Me personally, I'm just here to learn. I don't necessarily post anything to advertise, just basically inspire and just show things off. The positives, the positives are great. You obviously get to work with great companies like Oatey and other companies. How great is that.

To go out to Cleveland, Ohio and then tour the facility and whatnot, just from posting work online, that's amazing. That's one of the biggest positives. Then interaction with the plumbing community because the plumbing community is huge. It's all over United States, it's really global. So many from other states and different countries have so much information to share. That is really also one of the positives of this whole deal.

Katherine: Yes. That's great. Trey, we stick with you for a little bit. What would you say is your biggest pet peeve on the job site?

Trey: The biggest pet peeve, and this is just something I ran into is, when you have multiple trades on one job, especially when you have a lot to do. You have electricians in the way. I love electricians but they're constantly in the way. HVAC is usually in the way. When you have a bunch of different trades in one spot, everybody's stepping over everybody.

Katherine: Yes, for sure. How about you, Germaine?

Germaine: My biggest pet peeve is the customer watching.

[laughter]

Bottom line. They're over your shoulder, they're trying to tell you. I tell them all the time. I say, well, listen, we charge extra \$100 an hour to watch. They laugh, but I'm serious.

Katherine: Yes.

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Germaine: Yes. That's my biggest pet peeve. It's so annoying.

Katherine: Yes.

Doug: I used to run into that trouble when I was out in the field. One thing to remember, Germaine, I hope you relax just a little bit is, you're sharing their space, their private space. A lot of times they just want to get to know you a little bit, and then once they have confidence in you, they normally leave you alone. Just keep that in mind.

Germaine, I do have a question for you because you have children. Are your children at this point in time, are they showing any interest in your trade or anything like that?

Germaine: Not at all.

Doug: Not at all [laughs].

Germaine: Not at all. My son, he plays baseball, and my daughter she does ballet, but they're not at all. I try to instill, not necessarily plumbing, but just for my son to be handy. My daughter is well, but I try to change door knobs. My son, he gets **[unintelligible 00:11:59]** for the air conditioning, run the house by himself like light bulbs, stuff like that. My daughter, she put toys and things together, so right now it's not necessarily that they're **[unintelligible 00:12:09]**, they're like, all right, I want to be a plumber. Although if you ask my daughter what your daddy do, she'll say, kind of mechanical. She don't even say a plumber. That's it. I try to teach them entrepreneurship. Just a little bit because I wasn't taught it. They may not go in that direction, but just to give them the information.

Doug: Sure. Absolutely.

Germaine: Yes.

Doug: Trey, what about you? Is there anybody out there that you mentor or take under your wing to show him the ropes?

Trey: Well, my son is six years old and my daughter's nine. My daughter's not interested in plumbing whatsoever. Son, he's got two-inch PVC in his room, a stick inch and a half. He likes to just mess around with the PVC. I'm going to bring him with me once he gets a little bit bigger. Now, whether he is still interested after seeing actual job site work, I don't know. Aside from the kids, I used to have somebody that would run around with me and I was teaching him the ropes. He went on to do his own thing. Aside from that, I'm just solo. I take Instagram with me.

Katherine: Yes, that's what's under your wing. I like it, for sure.

Germaine: I will say though, when it comes to training, right now I think I have three guys that I've trained over the years, they're mechanic now.

Katherine: Oh, they're mechanic? They went from plumbing into mechanic?

Germaine: No, when I say mechanic, a technician.

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Katherine: Technician for you, got it.

Germaine: Plumbing technician. Even if they're with another company, but I've trained three guys throughout my career.

Katherine: That is awesome. Germaine, talk about maybe some of the strategies you've employed to learn the business side of the trades, as you made the transition from owning your own business.

Germaine: Some of the strategies that we use, we put things out there like when it comes to social media and different avenues. We put it out there and then we'll leave it. I learned that you can't just be down someone's throat all the time like, buy this, do this, we're the best. We don't lie either. I see some companies that say, get a plumber in your home for \$50. You can't even get a tank of gas with that.

Katherine: Kidding.

Germaine: We're just honest, we do flat rates. We give customers pricing up front, like no hidden fees or anything like that, really. Right now, I'm still young in it and I'm learning from different guys that own their own business and that's a lot bigger than me, but as of right now, that's about it. Honesty is big for us, and quality.

Katherine: I think things change too, right? There's so many different avenues to talk to your customers and how to go about it and where they are, that you've got to continue to learn, like you said, and continue to grow, figure out ways to grow. There's always things that are evolving and changing.

Germaine: Yes. We text customers a lot. My office, they'll text a customer and we're big on calling back as well. Let's just say you call, even if you call us on accident, someone's going to call you back.

Katherine: That's huge.

Germaine: Yes.

Doug: Yes. Return phone calls are a big deal and that's what gets you trust with your customers. Absolutely. My question for both of you, Germaine, I'll let you go ahead and answer this first is, the industry obviously it's struggling to get new blood into it, a lot of guys and a lot of ladies out there they look at plumbing and they turn their nose down to it. What type of things are you experiencing in your region?

Germaine: Honestly, Doug, it's hard. It's hard because you tell these guys, they see you now. They don't see how hard you work to get to where you are. I was having a conversation earlier this week and I told the guy, I said, when I came into this field, I made \$5.25 an hour. I would get like a \$0.50 raise. Now, it's like \$15 minimum wage and you don't know anything. They still don't want that. I'll tell you, plumbers sometimes we, although we're dirty a lot, when we clean up, I feel like we clean up. We like nice things, we like cars, motorcycles, different things. I feel like we go to the extreme sometimes.

Doug: Yes. We're not afraid to get dirty, but I tell you what though, Hercules Body Wipes will clean you right up there, buddy .

Germaine: Exactly. They see these things and they're like, I want this, but I'm like, listen, you can get that but you have to work.

Katherine: Put in the work.

Germaine: It's hard with these young guys to get them in the trade. They have to really want to do it. If they really want to do it, they really want to be a plumber, that's their passion, then it's easier. I tell guys, I'm like, listen, if you're just looking for a job, it's not for you. It's different. Plumbing is a different beast. Different.

Doug: That's fantastic. Trey, what about you?

Trey: I'm sorry, what was the question again? I want to answer it.

Doug: Okay. Basically, one of the things that our podcast is about is, we're trying to make sure we have a lot of young folks out there who aren't sure of career paths, what the opportunities are in plumbing and things like that. My question is basically, what are you experiencing in your region there in St. Louis? Are you having trouble with getting interest in the plumbing field? Are you guys doing okay? Are you guys running special programs? Things like that.

Trey: Here locally, I think just about everywhere else, it's hard to find younger guys. Now you've got guys that are circulating between companies. They've been doing it for a little while, or they have already gotten a taste and you got that pool, but actually just new people maybe coming straight from high school or even straight to your college, it's just not happening. I did a little series with the American Plumber Stories and we went into detail with it.

There's definitely a stigmatism with plumbing. You can go ask any young kid on the street what's the first thing that pops up when you think about plumbing. One, plunger and the other's got to be a toilet. We have to break that stigmatism. That's really what one of my goals is, which is why when you go look at my page, you don't see that. I try to show what you don't expect to see from plumbing, which is you show up like any other job, just do what you got to do and then you're gone.

I think once that stigmatism breaks, we're going to get an influx of new blood into the trade.

Katherine: Yes. That's great. One of the things that I always ask all of our **[unintelligible 00:19:59]** on the podcast is really, what would be your hopes and dreams for this trade? You know, where would you like to see it go and succeed? Trey, you want to kick us off with that?

Trey: I think it may be naive, but I feel like trade is where it's supposed to be at, honestly. It's just that people aren't coming into it, which is, it's a good thing. I mean, it's not a good thing, but it's not necessarily a bad thing. Right now, it's like **[unintelligible 00:20:33]** right now, but it is a bad thing because eventually it's going to get to a point where nobody's going to be able to do **[inaudible 00:20:41]**. I feel

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like honestly, trade itself is where it's supposed to be at, but like I said, it's got to be broke in order to keep it going in a healthy manner.

Katherine: What can brands like Oatey, do to help with getting rid of that stigmatism? Because we get it, we understand. What would be your message out to partners in the trades and brands that could help in that area?

Trey: I think your campaign with social media is great. TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, like that. Then try to make it fun, try to make it appealing. That's how you're going to reach the new crowd. Different things get to different ages and I think this younger age, it's definitely social media. If you can make it fun, you can get a trend going by plumbing product or viral video, something entertaining, that's how you're going to break that stigmatism.

Katherine: Okay. I think that's a challenge. I like it. Viral video on plumbing. All right. I got you. TikTok here we come.

Germaine: That's a good one [chuckles].

Katherine: Germaine, how about you? What would you say would be your hopes and dreams for the trades and where you would like to see it continue to go?

Germaine: I probably have to piggyback off Trey. Trade is constantly evolving, so it's heading in the right direction. You just have to continue to educate yourself, but like he said, it's just people getting into the trade with the stigmatism of everything is a toilet or a plunger or a drain or different things like that. It's a lot more in it, and we're on the side where I'm always learning the technology of the trade. You know what I mean? Like you have booster pumps, you have tankless water heaters, you have so many things that's working with technology that I feel like the trade is moving forward. It is not stuck. No shade to electricians, but I mean, you got wires, that's all you have.

[laughter]

Katherine: No shade, but shade.

Germaine: Yes, I feel like it's going in the right direction. You just have to get the young people into it, and to see that it is a career versus job.

Katherine: Yes. I agree. Well, listen. One, I really appreciate personally the friendships that we've made over the year. I appreciate your partnerships with Oatey in the Ambassador program. We love working with you guys and getting to help support you. Thank you so much for supporting us and thanks for taking time out of your busy schedules to talk to Doug and I for just a little bit of time.

Trey: Thank you.

Germaine: Oatey has been great. I really appreciate it. I've always wanted to know, I was like, how did I get picked? I mean, that's for another day.

[laughter]

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Doug: Well, you know, I want you guys to keep doing what you're doing because I tell you, I used to have a saying back in my day and it was, if work was fun, it would be spelled F-U-N, right? Well, after getting to know you guys, I've seen that you've actually made learning fun and you made it accessible. I used to have an acronym for work. Work is when you take the time to train and it's when others retain that knowledge, you know you had a great work week. I think you guys are doing a great job out there, and I hope you continue to have great success.

Trey: Thank you.

Germaine: All right. We appreciate it. Thank you.

Katherine: All right. And that's a wrap. Thanks everyone. See you next time.

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