

THE FIX

A TRADES CONVERSATION

HOSTED BY **Oatey**

Guests: Doug Winston, Bring Back the Trades

Run Time: 19 minutes, 49 seconds

Questions or Feedback: thefix@oatey.com

00:00:06 Katherine Lehtinen

Welcome to The Fix, the podcast made for the trades, where we sit down with inspiring individuals across the trades to discuss their unique take on the industry, including career paths, job site stories, overcoming challenges, and everything in between. I'm your host, Catherine, a marketer here at ODEE with my co-host and friend, Doug, one of ODEE's resident experts in all things trades. The Fix is more than a podcast. It's a community, a community built to support tradespeople and inspire the next generation of essential pros. Let's start the conversation.

00:00:48 Katherine Lehtinen

Well, Doug, our guest today has a vision to reach students and not only reach them but grant them with scholarships.

00:00:55 Doug Buchan

Let me tell you something. Once we explain a little bit more about today's guest, they're going to understand why when I woke up this morning, I found some electricity in the air, okay. And this gentleman today, he also brings a whole new meaning to where the rubber meets the road. Oh, good plug. I like that too.

00:01:13 Katherine Lehtinen

Well, welcome Doug Winston from Bringing Back the Trades. Thank you very much. We're excited to have you on today. So could you share a little bit with us your inspiration behind founding Bringing Back the Trades and the organization's core mission?

00:01:28 Doug Winston

Okay, so I am not the founder of Bring Back the Truth. Steve Perler is the founder. Okay, great. And he founded it, I believe, back in 2017. I became involved with Steve probably about three years ago, interestingly enough. I saw one of his posts on LinkedIn and the logo grabbed my eye and I said, I got to be involved with these guys. So I reached out to him and we had a talk and we hit it off and realized we

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were both cut from the same cloth, and had the same vision for helping our young men and women explore the skilled trades and realize that there's a lot of great careers out there, and there's a lot of open positions available. And then I said to him, well, I got an idea that you might like, and I explained to him that I race cars semi -professionally in the Pirelli Trans Am series. And I said, I think that logo would look great slapped on the hood of this car, and I think we could use that to raise some awareness. And he loved the idea. And from there, our relationship started. And

00:02:33 Doug Winston

ultimately, I've been creating a lot of content, which you can find on LinkedIn, which we find one of the most important conduits for getting kids into the trades is getting parents educated in the fact that the skilled trades offer great careers and great opportunities and that every kid doesn't have to go to college. So with that in mind, I was asked to become a board member here at Bring Back the Trades. And we've been working on a lot of different programs. So I know you've talked about scholarships and that was really one of the initial focuses was to help give some kids money to get into trade schools and help finance that. And that's still an ongoing thing and we've increased the contribution As the organization goes every month, video essays are accepted and they're used to pick a winner. So we've been doing that, but what we found out that there's a bigger, bigger mission out there. And that mission is getting information. One of the ways we do that are the Bring Back the Trades

00:03:47 Doug Winston

Days, which are skilled trades exhibitions where they're done locally And local businesses come in there, plumbers, electricians, contractors, machinists, you name it. Any type of skilled trade is welcome there. And basically, they show the means and methods of which these tradesmen use every day. So the plumber lets the kids cut a little piece of pipe with a pipe cutter, and they put together the fitting. And he sweats it, so there's obviously no injury risk there for the kids. But at least they understand, what does a plumber do? What does an electrician do? You know, we find today that if we ask the average kid, what does an electrician do, the answers might come anywhere from, I don't know, to fix radios. There's really no real knowledge as to what the trades involve. So getting those core means and methods out there and getting kids interested is a big part of the mission. But what we're embarking on now is that now that we're seeing a resurgence in interest in the trades, parents

00:04:51 Doug Winston

are coming to me And Steve and I spend hours and hours a week speaking to parents who come and say, how does my kid get started in the trade? Where do we start? So with that in mind, we are embarking on a complete revamp of the website and with a very major strategic partner to be announced in the near future, we are going to have a mentoring and information portal where a young man or woman can go in there and simply click on, I am interested in being a, and there'll be a

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dropdown menu, and here's my zip code. And they'll have the opportunity to not only look at some videos as to what does a plumber do, what does an electrician do, but also get information about apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship and various different career opportunities that are available in their area and how to get started, whether it be a trade school, union, a non-union program, a registered apprenticeship program, or maybe a corporation who has an on-the-job training program. So that's going to be part of

00:05:59 Doug Winston

it. And also, we're going to have the ability to have face-to-face mentoring through a Zoom type of portal where a kid will be able to ask someone who's maybe a retiree who's worked in the trade for 40 years and say to them, I'm thinking about being a plumber. What does a plumber do every day? What's it like to be a plumber? and how much money did you make as a plumber and you know you're obviously from my area so you know what do you suggest the best pathway to get there so providing information is the most valuable resource that we can get out today and that's what we're working on. Yeah that's

00:06:33 Katherine Lehtinen

remarkable and I think getting information and getting it to the right people's hands is super important and having a resource as simple as you think about it a place where students can go and say I'm interested how do I learn more or a parent how do I help my child

00:06:48 Doug Winston

make a decision. It's not just information, it's accurate information. We get horror stories every day. During one of our board of directors meetings, we actually heard a story where we had a kid who wanted to be a plumber and his mother went to his guidance counselor. He was a senior in high school and he said, my son would like to be a plumber. Can you recommend a trade school? And she said, well I can't help you with that, but you know maybe you could try the local community college. So she reached out, went to the community college and they told him, Oh yes, we have a plumbing one on one course and he has to take that before he can apply for the plumbers union. Oh, what? So she signs him up. He takes the class. He says, mom, this was horrible. The guy teaching it wasn't even a plumber. We didn't learn anything. It was really, really bad. And then the worst part of the story is he realizes that he missed the recruitment for the apprenticeship program in the plumber's union. And, you

00:07:44 Doug Winston

know, they do a recruitment every two years. So there's a silver lining to the story. He did get a job working at a local shipyard as a plumber, and now he is a plumber's apprentice on a place where they build submarines. Let's talk a little bit about

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00:07:58 Katherine Lehtinen

diversity in the workplace, you know, workforce. It's a topic of increasing importance. You know, what steps is Bring Back the Trades taking to encourage participation from underrepresented groups in the skilled trades?

00:08:12 Doug Winston

It's a great question. So one of the things you'll find very interesting was the majority of scholarship applications back in I believe 2022 were predominantly female, which was very surprising. We've got a lot of girls that are very interested in welding and just the last week Steve was had posted a picture from Saturday's event at one of the community colleges where young girl who was really trying to get his attention and said, I just want to thank you. You inspired me to go out and I'm going to school to be a welder now and I love what I'm doing. Awesome. We're seeing a lot of that. You bring up a good point about the underrepresented communities. One of the things that we really are happy to see being implemented are pre -apprenticeship programs. These are very important to get into the high schools, especially in the underserved communities because, you know, to apply for an apprenticeship, it's not a really difficult process. There's a test involved, and the test is typically basic

00:09:17 Doug Winston

reading comprehension and some basic math. Unfortunately, when we get into the urban areas and the underserved communities, the grades are not what they need to be in those areas. So with the pre -apprenticeship program, we can find kids that are interested in the trades, get them oriented, give them some grade related content where they're going to learn some stuff and then kind of inspire them to say well hey you just built a birdhouse now you want to figure out what the angle of the roof is you got to pay attention in geometry and try to inspire them to get a little more involved in those basics that they just need to hone their skills on and the nice part about the pre -apprentice program is that if they're accepted into that and they go and they successfully complete it they have a spot in the apprenticeship program so that's a huge huge tool to helping out those communities. And it's something that we're very excited about.

00:10:09 Doug Buchan

Yeah, that's great. Innovation. I'm an innovation type of guy because everything I used to do was same and repetitive in today's world. I'm learning innovation all the time. Yeah. How does your organization use that? How do you promote it? You know, what does innovation mean to you?

00:10:26 Doug Winston

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Well, look, innovation is happening every day. If you just look at some of the manufacturers that are making great labor and body saving tools, right? Let's look at a like Milwaukee Tool, who's an innovator in the industry. And some of the things they're coming out with today here, you know, we've got cordless tooling that weighs the same thing as a corded piece of equipment did. It helps with ergonomics. We're looking at a lot of different things here in means and methods. I mean, there's a lot of breaking technology in the trades. If you look at some of these things that they're working on, and I don't agree 100 % with all the implementation methods, but the concepts are good. But using technology, things like lasers to layout, I don't know if you're familiar, but Hilti has a system where you literally will use a CAD drawing and it will lay out points, and then you set up a laser, and it will literally show you where to mount that box, where to put that pipe, where everything goes. Basically,

00:11:31 Doug Winston

the layout is done. If you know anything about construction, layout is huge. It takes a lot more time to lay things out than it does. Installing a piece of pipe is easy. Figuring out where it's got to go is the hard part. We're seeing a ton of innovation in that, and with things like BIM, where we're getting three - dimensional drawings, and prefab is a huge, huge thing right now in the industry where using BIM, where we can send out and do coordination drawings, and have the electrical contractor, the mechanical contractor, the plumbing contractor, Everybody picks their space where they're going to run their piping and now the electrical contractor can go out there and he can bend all of that pipe in his shop and he can Put together the pipe racks and they get out there and you're just throwing them in there The work has been done and have been done off -site. So, you know, there's a ton of innovation out there. And again, it leads to making the Trades themselves a little more friendlier

00:12:31 Doug Winston

than they were years ago. You know, you there's a lot of people who say yeah Yeah, the trades are backbreaking labor, but the money is good. And, you know, we try to say it's, you know, look, is it physical work? Yes. If you don't gravitate towards physical work, you're not going to make it. But the fact of the matter is, and one of the arguments I really, really hate, someone challenged me on this recently and said, you know, the trades are great. You can make good money. But by the time you're 50, your body is shot and then, you know, you've given your body to make money. And I said, well, I think you're looking at this the wrong way. You know, ideally there's a progression. You start out as an apprentice, you become a journeyman. As you get more proficient, you become a foreman. Maybe you're a non -working foreman. You could become a general foreman in charge of a crew of foreman. And then there's plenty of escalation. There's plenty of advancement opportunities within the trades. You

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know, a really well seasoned foreman many times gets brought into the office and let's make him an estimator. And from an estimator, he becomes a project manager. From a project manager, he becomes a project executive. And you never know, that guy may be the vice president of the company one day. So we try to look and say, listen, yes, it's a physical business, construction, trades in general, not all trades, because the use of the word trades is also very misused. We look at people in the sense of We think of trades, we think of construction, but we've got automotive, we've got the service industries where we, again, a chef, a baker, these people, those are skilled trades, and they have the ability to make a good living. So we wouldn't challenge them to say that it's physically demanding work. No, you're not sitting behind a desk, but you're also not pounding rocks all day. So there is a lot of aspects that no one looks at. And what I try to say is that even if you're an older person in

00:14:37 Doug Winston

the trades, well, you're using your head, not your back. The young guys use their back. The older guys use their head. Yeah. Right. So, again, these are all the concepts that parents and educators have used over the years to tell kids that if you don't go to college, you'll never be successful. So, again, you know, I think we're fighting back with information, statistics. And I do, like I said, a lot of posts on LinkedIn, and one of the ones, probably the most successful post I've ever done, got about a million and a half views. And it was probably shared 30,000 times and liked 50,000 times. And it basically compared the wage earnings of an electrician and an accountant from the day they start in the trade to 10 years into their career. And people like to see numbers. And when they see that trade jobs have parity with degreed careers, there's a lot of excitement and a lot of people say, you know what, this makes sense. And, you know, the probably the biggest thing that we need to do as

00:15:55 Doug Winston

industry people in general in the trades is to stop convincing people that the trades are for dumb kids. They're for kids that aren't college material. You know, I will I will say to parents, you know, like they say, well, my my son is not college material. And I said, well, your son is probably bored. He's probably not interested in math. but I can almost guarantee you that if he's into building things there's something that he'll do with his hands and I can almost guarantee you that if you find that and get him excited about it not only will he become a good student for that but he'll also gravitate towards paying attention to those ancillary things like math that he's going to need to use to be proficient in that because let's face it, I mean I hated math as a kid, but if you tell me that there's a formula to figure out how much fuel I need to put in my race car to go

00:16:55 Katherine Lehtinen

faster, oh I'm gonna figure it out. That's right, that's right. Well as we're talking about kind of the future and looking towards that future, what are some of the emerging trends in the skilled trades that you

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think young professionals should be aware of and how is bringing back the trades, preparing them for those changes?

00:17:14 Doug Winston

Well, again, we're trying to introduce kids to all industries, but we also like to do some spotlighting of, you know, particular industries that have a lot of openings. Earlier this week, I talked about the manufacturing industry. And one of the big complaints we have is that we don't make anything in this country anymore. But that's not true. Right across the street from here. It is not true. So there's probably a shortage of about 350,000 manufacturing jobs right now. A lot of them, CNC machinist is a big one that there's a lot of, you know, there's a lot of open positions for. Again, welding and fabrication, all of these things. Manufacturing is coming back. There's huge investments being made for manufacturing, just the construction supporting the manufacturing, there's going to be \$201 billion spent this year on construction to support new manufacturing facilities. And \$88 billion just in the renewable portion of that sector, the renewable manufacturing sector, you're looking at \$88

00:18:24 Doug Winston

billion. So we just looked at \$300 billion dollars being spent. And that's not on office jobs.

00:18:31 Katherine Lehtinen

Yeah. So Doug, as you look into the future and success of Bring Back the Trades, what are you hoping in your vision of the initiatives that the team is working on for the next 10 years?

00:18:44 Doug Winston

Well, we're working on rolling out nationwide. It started out as a small grassroots movement in New Hampshire. We're working on now expanding into the New York metropolitan area. We've got a lot of interest from CEOs of companies, trade associations, and a lot of people who are very interested in the advancement of their industry within their geographic area. So we're working on, number one, expanding our national footprint, but most importantly, getting that information out to parents and kids and to show them that there are great six-figure jobs out there in the skilled trades. and really we measure success in one way and that is helping kids find a career

00:19:29 Katherine Lehtinen

they're passionate about. Yeah I love that. Well thank you Doug so much for giving us a little bit more insight into Bring Back the Trades and we look forward to continuing to support the initiatives that you and Steve are doing

00:19:41 Doug Winston

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for that group. Thank you for having me. I appreciate it. Thank you. Thank you.