

THE FIX

A TRADES CONVERSATION

HOSTED BY **Oatey**

Guests: Oatey Ambassadors, Rob Lupton Jr and Grant Blundell

Run Time: 23 minutes, 53 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, 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.

00:00:47 Katherine Lehtinen

Well, Doug, once again, we are knocking it out of the park with our guests.

00:00:51 Doug Buchan

I'll tell you what, Katherine, I got up this morning and you know me, I'm trying to always figure out how I can describe our guest. And the first thing I had to do was turn on the light switch, right? Electricity? Yeah. Today's guest is electric, okay? Then I sat down, I started eating my breakfast cereal, pulled out that box of Wheaties and it's normally got sports people on it. And I said to myself, today's guest, he should be on a box of Wheaties. That's how awesome he is.

00:01:18 Katherine Lehtinen

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I so agree. Well, welcome Scott Caron. He is the host of the Elite Trades Championship Series and also contributor to This Old House.

00:01:27 **Scott Caron**

Thank you very much. It's great to be here. Thank you for having me on too.

00:01:31 **Katherine Lehtinen**

You got it. It's been wonderful to read your background and all the things that you've been working on And so let's share a little bit with our listeners your journey You know, let's start with the electrical industry and what inspired you to establish, you know, your Caron electric

00:01:46 **Scott Caron**

About 35 years ago. I got into the trades right out of high school Wasn't a college person decided to do something that I could work with my hands and earn a living started in basically before that into the fast -food industry most of us probably have started there serving people hamburgers and coffee and then realized that I wanted to do something that felt a little bit more applicable to my talents which is building discovering and figuring out different ways to make things work and build things that's kind of where it all came

00:02:24 **Katherine Lehtinen**

from. That's awesome. 35 years. That's impressive, too. Thank you. Yeah, it was it was a vision that

00:02:32 **Scott Caron**

I had just a minute by minute. It certainly didn't think it would come up to this point. But yeah, looking back after starting in the trades in the late 80s, here we are in 2024. And it's

00:02:46 **Katherine Lehtinen**

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been one heck of a ride. Awesome. So as a master electrician, what are some of the misconceptions about the electrical trade that you've encountered, and how do you combat them?

00:02:57 **Scott Caron**

First of all, the most mystical thing is being a master electrician certainly has no relevance on the amount of knowledge as one that works with wires, pipe, and devices. Being the master in the state of Massachusetts, we have two licenses. The first one is called the Journeyman. That's basically a working license. You can own a business just with one employee. Then if you want to own a larger business and they teach you some of the basics of the law of business, basically saying if you install a light fixture in someone's house and they don't pay you, you cannot go take it down. That's kind of the logistics of it. That ends up getting into the master part of things. So I don't really, I look back and I see why I did the masters so I could help more people and hire more employees, but I certainly don't think I know any more than many journeymen out there that could work circles around me. But it was a kind of a logical move for me to become a master in the electrical field. It's one

00:04:04 **Scott Caron**

of the few trades, plumbing, electrical, that actually do have licensed master programs, which is kind of cool. Hopefully someday we'll get there with the HVAC and carpentry and landscaping, masonry. I would love to see them held to the same standards that we are with the trades, because we have to meet inspections, we have to have our work looked at, we have to carry certain licenses and insurances and recertifications and stuff like that, so it's really exciting for the trades, it legitimizes things, and it kind of keeps us all on the same plane. They're getting there, they've just in the last five to eight years come up with licensing for the HVAC industry in our area, which is great, but yeah, that's kind of where we're at with the licensing portion of it.

00:04:58 **Doug Buchan**

Yeah. Well, first of all, I think Scott has undersold himself a little bit because I did some background checking on Scott, and he actually started in the trades, we'll say, back before he was at the age of 10 with his dad, okay?

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00:05:13 **Doug Buchan**

Anyhow, Scott, I encourage everybody who's listening to our podcast today to read more about you. I mean, I tried to consume as much knowledge as I could about you, and you have a great background. I mean, the diversity that you had is just fantastic. So with that being said, I can't imagine what else you would want to achieve throughout the rest of your career besides being cloned so we could have more of you. But can you tell us one of the goals or dreams that you have that you, did you want to make sure you accomplish before, you know, your time is, uh, you know, winding down into trades.

00:05:56 **Scott Caron**

I was just speaking to somebody yesterday about this Doug actually, um, in my I'm 55 right now. I, I'm fairly active in all aspects of life. Um, have a bunch of kids don't, none of them really seem too interested in the trades yet, which they range from 10, 11, to 20, which is okay. It's really okay. I thought passing on a legacy with my name, Karen Electric is my company name as well, so I thought it would mean something to me, but it's actually not as important as I thought. What does mean a lot to me is touching and affecting more people in life with the trade and with the vision of what I have seen over the number of years that I've been involved with it. So, for an example, a lot of people in the industry, they'll work in a trade, they'll retire from the trade when they get to the retirement age, and then they'll exit the trade, or they'll take up something else that's just keeping them busy. I never look at myself as that. What I see is carrying on with programs like the ETCS program

00:07:11 **Scott Caron**

that I'm involved with, with, I was, being involved with This Old House was miraculous for me. It was something I grew up with as a child, watching the show, and being able to be their electrician for the eight seasons that I did it, was just, it wasn't a dream, because I never thought of it happening, but it was, it touched so many people on so many levels, because it's an international show, I would get emails and responses from all over the world, like, you guys are so funny, why do you still use this, and when we use that, and we do things differently, and that was cool. And then being able to go around the entire country, we hit 50 states, which was really impressive. And we took every single state and did a segment in it, whether it was electrical, plumbing,

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landscaping, or painting, or something to that effect. It's the America's original home improvement show. So to be able to affect so many lives on that aspect, it was interesting. And that's what I kind of got the spark like to

00:08:14 **Scott Caron**

be able to now teach the trade But not so much that but to be able to make people Aware of the trade you would get so many people saying like what is what is it? What is it like to be an electrician and I said well, it's electricity and well, what is electricity? I'm afraid of electricity. So, you know to your trade dog and I would use water I would say, well, this is what you have. Water and electricity are very similar. They don't like each other, but they're very similar. And if you can't vision and picture electricity, you can picture water. And then people listened, and they were interested in what I had to say. And the challenge that I had with this whole house was Scott came to me and said, we've been going on for 35 years, 36 years. We've never really been able to explain electricity to the audiences. Are you able to do this? And I, without even thinking about it, I just said yes. And we did. We were able to effectively show people how, what, and where electricity affects their

00:09:21 **Scott Caron**

lives. And it was a good thing. I had a really aggressive producer who was just constantly challenging me to bring new items to the audience and to be able to experience fun things. So it was, it was really cool.

00:09:40 **Katherine Lehtinen**

That's really fun. Yeah. Maybe, you know, with water and electricity, not getting along, is that maybe why plumbers and electricians sometimes don't get along on the job site?

00:09:48 **Doug Buchan**

See, I'm going to be honest with you. I have to somewhat disagree because the human body needs water and electricity to function. So I think we're, I think Scott and I could be friends in the trades world. I think so too.

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00:10:01 **Scott Caron**

There's no question about it. Problem is, plumbers and electricians actually work probably the closest out of all the trades because generally, and HVAC too, but generally plumbers and electricians are elbow to elbow in a bathroom, trying to buy for space. Yeah, we always do let the plumbers go in first because they have large pipes that don't bend as easily. We let them do their drain, waste, and vent, and then we come in with our flexible, wimpy wires and run them along the walls. But yeah, I mean, I have some of my best friends.

00:10:37 **Katherine Lehtinen**

Oh, I think it's a love -hate. It's a hate -love relationship, you know, I think so, too I think they I love seeing some of it back and forth that happens on social media between the two Trades, but it's fun. It's much respect though

00:10:49 **Scott Caron**

Yeah, it is. It's a great thing You know, I think We all share the same fear It's the fear of being rushed and having the pressure of having to get something done sure that that's kind of the linchpin with all of us is we all have the same accomplishment is to get the final inspections or the final goal is to have people living and using it using our spaces so yeah we understand we know pressure well Scott you talked a little bit about

00:11:22 **Katherine Lehtinen**

how um people you know don't understand electricity or don't understand um you know plumbing and it's One of the things we talk a lot about on this show is how do we continue to bring awareness? I think a lot of it is there's opportunity that's now been missed within our school systems that are no longer talking about the trades, but also there's some encouraging aspects where trades are being talked about more. So how do you see the talent pipeline in the trades industry? And what steps can be taken to ensure growth and longevity as we are at this kind of turning point with a lot of open jobs and roles that are out there and then educating our youth and also young adults about the trades. So there's two questions there

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00:12:09 **Scott Caron**

what do I believe is happening I'm unclear I'm part of the as I had said earlier is why I got into the trades is because I didn't feel academically I was interested enough to get into the college the four or six year program of learning. I skated by high school with just thinking about what I was doing after school. So for me that worked. The exciting part of school for me was getting into the shops and being able to work with my hands. Unfortunately the shops have diminished in the public school systems. They were never in the private school systems and the technical schools are now starting to pick up some speed so I think that's wonderful and and maybe with you know cool people like Doug and I they start to see that you can be cool and be in the trades but when I was growing up it wasn't really a viable option to go into the trades unless you are a failure in the school academic sure kind of like you had the choice of going to college and if you couldn't cut it in college then you'd

00:13:19 **Scott Caron**

you have to get into a trade. Or you would, with no disrespect to McDonald's, or you'd just go to McDonald's and work. Which is where I started, I started off at McDonald's and it was one of the best experiences of my life. It gave me that, I used to call it like a 60 second window to meet somebody. And it became me, I became a really good talker. Hi, how can I help you, what do you want? Okay, and then we had this exchange. So getting into the trades now is going to be, it is becoming more of a, not a choice, It's like yeah, I'm doing this because I want to do this career path, or I'm doing this because I think it's a great career, and that's what it's turning into is it's it's a great career. Yeah, I Think so many kids to be from zero Experience to licensed and licensed doesn't always mean it's the top of it, but it feels nice I've trained so many kids and they come to me and they say I want to learn. I want to be an electrician Okay. Well, I need you to show up on time. I need you to

00:14:25 **Scott Caron**

act interested. I need you to progress I need you to be motivated to progress you need if I leave you on a job and you Don't progress. You're not getting good to me, right? So that's really important show up on time Be motivated and progress be able to say this is what I've learned and I can apply it If I show you how to install a device or a light fixture or pull a wire a certain way, I expect that repetitive thing. And then as far as trade in

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general, you know, honestly, Katherine, it is just, it's unbelievable what's going on here because every day we have to see customers when they call us up.

00:15:12 Katherine Lehtinen

Every day. Yep.

00:15:13 Scott Caron

And we're unable to get out there and help them out. However, on a monetary basis, they don't really care what they pay because the numbers are going up sharp, like really fast.

00:15:30 Scott Caron

That's what's going to happen is that these young kids are going to see where the money is. If that is their driving force, they're going to see the money and they're going to be like, this is great. And they'll always be able to eat, they'll always be able to support a family, whether or not they can buy a house. I don't even know if the future of housing is to buy a house, it's there, find it, try out the different trades, pick a trade, speak to somebody, get a mentor, work with them and then get into the job, if you're lucky enough to get into the right company, stay with that company, don't jump around from company to company to company, doesn't look good on your resume, doesn't do anything for your head, I was fortunate enough to find the right person stick with them and they you have an opportunity to learn so yeah both great things

00:16:20 Katherine Lehtinen

that's awesome that's great insight you know you recently served as the host of elite trades championship series can you tell us more about that competition and the showcasing of skills within the trades industry i know that might be a really big question because of how much how cool it was and the opportunity but i think that that alone helps us start that even have more of that conversation about the trades and it's another avenue of showcasing the trades.

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00:16:47 **Scott Caron**

The Elite Trades Championship Series is there to explain exactly what I had just said prior is what is this trade all about. We're there to make kings and queens out of the people in trades. The whole thing started was a promotion of what exactly is the trades about and the great thing about the Elite Trades championship series now is that it has auto, it has auto tech, it has electrical, it has plumbing, it has HVAC, and the basics of the trade is starting to be noticed, like what do they do, then we brought a little fun into it, let's compete, let's competition, and then we brought great sponsors in which they're able to showcase their products and say, hey, this is what I am, this is what we have, trades people, because everyone is involved now, The trades people see these products they get in at the at the early stages, and they say okay

00:17:52 **Scott Caron**

ABC screwdrivers, they're the best must be the best the lead trade championship series is using them So then they start to pick up those and start to use those It's good. It's a lot of fun To see these competitors do everything that they do every day and and now start to earn respect, more respect, earn money, a lot of money, and also they're coming back every year to really try and fight to get those high placings again. So it's it's good. There was nothing like it ever when I was coming up into the trades and now it's this is our I think we started in 16. Now here we are. I don't do math.

00:18:39 **Doug Buchan**

You know what, that's a great segue into a question I have for you, Scott, you know, being a business owner myself for a lot of years, you know, there's always that one special person that comes through your life, right, that just makes a mark on your memory that, you know, is inspiring and humbling and just makes you feel totally satisfied. Do you have one of those persons and moments that you can share with us?

00:19:05 **Scott Caron**

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I think I was fortunate enough to have a handy dad that dropped some seeds in my life that allowed me to water them and grow and figure out where I was going. I had a very supportive mother who always claimed I was so smart and I could do anything. So I think it starts at home. If you don't have that support at home, which is okay, not everybody has a support, then my best advice is to not look at somebody as the most successful financially or the most successful maybe physically, but I think you have to trust your gut. And I had a lot of people that I was surrounded by that I trusted my gut. There was a lot of times I could have gone right and I went left. There was a lot of times that I did go right, but you have to trust your gut. If somebody that you feel is intelligent, that is really showing you the right way to do something, listen to them. And then if they're also on the opposite end of things, they don't feel like a mentor, or you don't feel like they're the right person, don't

00:20:14 **Scott Caron**

be afraid to walk away. Trust your gut. I mean, I have a really good gut, and over the years there's been a lot of good people that have surrounded me. but I think, boy, I don't know if there's a barometer that you could actually go on. I think that it does start out with trusting somebody, but don't trust everybody. So I think back now over the years, and I think of some of the things that some people have told me, and I think back like, wow, they were really good, and some of them were really bad. And I think we've all done that in our career, where we've been able to think back on that. But yeah, that's it, just trust you guys.

00:21:01 **Doug Buchan**

Yeah, I agree with you a lot on that because aligning yourself with successful people creates success for yourself. And the more success you have, the more confidence that you build in yourself and then you learn who to trust and who not to trust. So it's an ever evolving you know, success story, we'll say. So -

00:21:26 **Scott Caron**

Another

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00:21:26 **Doug Buchan**

way of putting it, Doug, actually,

00:21:28 **Scott Caron**

surrounding yourself with good people, surrounding yourself with a community that is supportive of what you're doing. And there's two principles that I always went with my whole life. I never walked away from a problem. I always hit it head on. If I couldn't find something that was causing a problem, I never quit and that was the first thing I ever did, was I just never quit. I always took it on as a challenge to discover what a problem was, no matter what the cost. Many times I didn't earn the money that I wanted to, but I still never walked away from a problem. The other thing is that you have to be a good person, you have to be truthful, you have to tell the truth. You have to make sure you can stand and be behind your word. And that's the career part of it. Other than that, I don't think I'm great at anything. I think I'm good at a lot.

00:22:32 **Doug Buchan**

Fantastic summary. I need to be his BFF.

00:22:39 **Katherine Lehtinen**

Well, we can I don't really know where that goes.

00:22:42 **Scott Caron**

from here, but you know, I think that what you're doing, podcasts are wonderful, they give everybody the opportunity to listen and reach out. Here people have an opportunity to listen to my words for whatever they're worth, and that could change one person's life.

00:23:04 **Katherine Lehtinen**

That's what it's about.

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00:23:04 **Scott Caron**

If it does, we're doing our job.

00:23:07 **Katherine Lehtinen** That's right, totally. So looking ahead, what do you hope to achieve in terms of promoting education, fostering the innovation in the trade, inspiring this next generation of essential pros through your work in the trade industry?

00:23:26 **Scott Caron**

So, I'll start with looking ahead. Looking ahead for me is what we do. We do it at every single day. We're mostly looking ahead. We don't usually look behind us because what has already happened is really old news. So with the team at the ETCS program that we're involved with, and we're always trying to figure out the best way to touch as many people in the trades as we can. Sometimes we've gone through the trade schools, a lot of the programs and training that they have. We're trying to touch those people. Those are our best audience right now. We have their attention. Generally, general rule is that you're never too old to get into a trade. You can make a decision certainly based on what you know about past experiences, but the most important thing to remember is that you are never too old to get into a trade. I mean, certainly gender doesn't matter at all. We're proving that over and over again. I've had electrical apprentices that have been female. I personally think they're the best.

00:24:44 **Scott Caron**

They listen, they have blinders on like horses so they can kind of like focus on what you're teaching them. A lot of the younger boys, and I have two of them, that have my last name, they just don't fall for the play. They're just like a pony that comes out of the gate to get your attention. So we're working with that, we're trying to find the special spot where we can figure out how to manage that. So we are going to be focusing on more women in the trades, we're focusing on the schools that are bringing the attention to the trades, that's the best. And then

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also the existing people that are in the trades themselves, whether they're an apprentice. So an apprentice leads up to a journeyman. Some apprentices have one, two, three, four, five year programs, and then they're able to sit down for tasks to become a journeyman. So the apprentices, they could actually work for 10 years as an apprentice. It doesn't matter. They don't have to sit down for the exam. I've run into many apprentices

00:25:52 **Scott Caron**

in my career that have excellent working skills. They're able to do things that some licensed electricians or plumbers or HVAC techs can't do. So we're focusing on that, and then we're also focusing on working with the best products that are out there and that are available to these people that are learning, because we want to grab their attention. And for me, I'm a tool person. I'm a products person. If, like I know, oh, we're speaking with Oatey. I just realized. I have it up on my website. So with Oatey, okay, there's solvents, there's all kinds of glues, there's all kinds of products. There is a right product for the right job. I am cuckoo when it comes to that stuff. I will not use a product that isn't exactly specified for that job. I don't know what it is. I'm kind of like right on the racetrack and if there's a special cutter for a special type of pipe or a special type of fitting, that's me. and I know that there are chemicals out there that are used with certain products and they

00:27:00 **Scott Caron**

matter. So I love that, I love the specific nature of each product. And what we're trying to do right now, bringing in many different sponsors and partners in this program, is we're focused on bringing them in and saying, well, this is what you need to use, this is the right way to do it. But there are other ways, however, this is the way we decided to do it. With this old house, that was very important to me because I wanted to make sure that people knew what this product was, what it was used for, and how it was done. Because if you learn the right way once, you don't have to think about learning it again. And that's kind of where we were at, is just let's use the right products, let's do it the right way. Every electrician out there uses a screwdriver as a chisel and a pair of pliers as a hammer. But there is a chisel and

00:27:51 **Doug Buchan**

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there is a hammer yeah you do have to admit though every tool bag needs a True chisel.

00:28:03 **Scott Caron**

Having so many employees over the course of my life has taught me so many terms. They call it a, not a, shoot, there's a, a chisel.

00:28:16 **Scott Caron**

A chisel.

00:28:20 **Scott Caron**

I love it. I just remember that once.

00:28:22 **Scott Caron**

I'm like, yeah, a chisel. They just basically take a wood chisel and beat the daylights out of it and make a chisel. Yeah, there is this many, many tools and many products that are used for different things and it's changing. It's constantly changing. Just in the plumbing business, copper was it, right? And then copper kind of let up a little bit to some plastics and now plastics are letting up to PEX, you know, PEX B and geez, I don't even know what the future is, but it's exciting to follow along with those products like as electricians we've run pecks for plumbers before because there's nobody that can run flexible wire better than electricians right so we just would take a roll of pecks and be at home and be this is great we can drill holes and we know how to manipulate it on corners and plumbers are looking at us going wow that's pretty cool that's how you do that you come up to a corner and you drill one hole in one side and one hole in the other side and they meet you go around the

00:29:27 **Doug Buchan**

corner So it's funny how the trades are merging that way, but it's exciting also.

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00:29:32 **Katherine Lehtinen**

Yeah, it's awesome. Well, Scott, I think we could probably talk for a very long time, but I have to tell you I learned a ton today, and I appreciate you taking the time and educating both Doug and I as well as our listeners and got to learn a little bit more about you, about this old house, about the Elite Trades Championship. So looking forward as how we can continue to grow our partnership and supporting your journey and all of our journey in helping the trades in the next generation.

00:30:02 **Scott Caron**

It's always a pleasure to meet you both. Yeah, and I have to say, you've been very enjoyable to talk to, Scott, and I hope to learn more about you in the future on much bigger things that you get into.

00:30:15 **Scott Caron**

Grace, don't go too deep on that Google. Probably some stuff out there. Is anyone looking for money or calling?

00:30:24 **Scott Caron**

all right I will thank you thank you