



Guests: Lori Tschol, Women in Plumbing and Pipping

Run Time: 25 minutes, 28 seconds

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00:00:04 [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, 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 trades people and inspire the next generation of essential pros. Let's start the conversation.

00:00:44 [Katherine Lehtinen](#)

Well, Doug, our guest today is a rock star helping lead the path for women in the trades and building a foundation for empowerment and support. Absolutely. I mean,

00:00:56 [Doug Buchan](#)

you know, if you want to talk about that foundation and building upon it, our guest today is that individual. Also, we got a chill in the air. Winter's right around the corner. I think I read on the news

there was 23 % of the nation right now has snow on the ground. Okay. And our guest today is going to take us into that HVAC system world. I love it. Okay. Which is very exciting for me because I think this is our first guest in that area. I think so too. So welcome

00:01:23 **Katherine Lehtinen**

Lori Tschol, owner of Eagle Pipe Heating and Air and also the founding member of Women in Plumbing

00:01:30 **Lori Tschol**

and Piping. Thank you. It's such a pleasure to be here and talk with you today. Well, we're

00:01:37 **Katherine Lehtinen**

really excited to learn a little bit more about women in plumbing and piping and make sure I get

00:01:42 **Lori Tschol**

this right. That acronym is WIP, correct? Correct. All right. We are we are called WIP, Women in

00:01:49 **Katherine Lehtinen**

Plumbing and Piping. That would be us. I love it. Well, listen, your career path has been quite diverse, you know, so can you give us a little bit of your background and share kind of the pivotal moments of your experiences that led you to what your current role is as owner of Eagle

00:02:05 **Lori Tschol**

Pipe Heating and Air? Sure. So I have a unique journey. I had been with McDonald's for over 30 some years. So I started out, you know, behind the counter. Welcome to McDonald's. Can I take your

order, please? And grew it into a \$10 million company as a franchisee. So I was very fortunate, you know, a lot of hard work, a lot of sweat equity. And so so much of what I do now in the trades really came from that foundation of working hard and really committing to people and mentoring. So I retired and I thought, what the heck? You know, I was a little bit too young. Not that I'm still young, but I was very young at the time. And I said, you know, I need to kind of get on with my life. And also, I could never afford myself. I retired, but it was like, I can't afford myself. I have to go back to work. So I went into retail, which is something that I decided that is not my future. Sure. And bought Pandora jewelry stores, beautiful baubles, loved it, except for all my money was sitting in display

00:03:14 [Lori Tschol](#)

cases and not in my bank. Yeah. So said, whoo, not a good move, Lori, not one of the best ones. And my brother had been in this industry for years and years. He's now in it. Forty three years. Wow. And I I took a look and I said, work so hard. Technician mentality, never going to get over and above and beyond because he loves to work. He's like all of our guys out there that loves to work, saves everybody on that essential worker part. And I'm like, we need to do more than this. So I established my company in 2015. I'm 100 percent woman owned, built it from the ground, didn't buy it, not generational and said, let's go for it. And so as I sit today, we not only do HVAC, commercial, residential, we do a lot of gas piping, commercial and residential. But that's my brother's forte. So we send him off to the wilds and gas piping and then we just added plumbing. So I'm super excited to go down this journey of plumbing. And of course, my future, I'm looking at another vertical. So at some point

00:04:31 [Lori Tschol](#)

I'll be doing electrical. I've got people testing now. So if I built a 10 million dollar company before, that's just my platform to work into

00:04:41 [Katherine Lehtinen](#)

what we're going to be today. I love it. Just always looking for that next opportunity where

00:04:46 **Doug Buchan**

you can continue to build upon. Really inspiring. Her energy level makes me almost embarrassed,

00:04:52 **Lori Tschol**

like I have to do more.

00:04:56 **Lori Tschol**

Well, you know, TikTok at my age, the clock is ticking. You know, it's a little bit different. If I was in my 20s, I probably would probably not be full steam ahead. You know, you hit your 60s and you're like, oh man, I got to get moving on this. And third career, you know, third career.

00:05:16 **Katherine Lehtinen**

Which is really impressive because a lot of people don't do that. And that, I believe, brings such a well-rounded perspective into, you know, your third career that you're entering into. And it's good that you were able to figure out that this is not for me. This is a little bit more of what I like to do, which is really interesting. So as a business owner, you know, specializing in, you know, commercial gas pipe and heating and cooling, what inspired you to enter the HVAC? I know you talked a little bit about your brother, but you know, what was there, how did all of a sudden you're like, yep, this is exactly where I want to go. And then what unique challenges, especially being an all woman-owned business and opportunities have you kind of

00:05:53 **Lori Tschol**

encountered in the field? Sure. So I was very, very active with McDonald's on building and trades. You know, we did different committees there and I would go to Oakbrook a lot and I would help participate on the new building designs. And this was back in, you know, 2010. So as the new McDonald's buildings were rolling out, I was a part of that. So I've always loved that. Even being a McDonald's manager, having to go up and change my fan belts on the So I've always had just like basic, basic knowledge. So once I start down this path, I'm like, I don't have a clue about any of this

stuff. And it's me as the owner, my brother out there working and my first employee, who is now my operations manager, we're like, okay, he's got this figured out, but we don't. And so we started taking some classes through our distributor. And once I got in, I thought, okay, not that this is easy by any means, but I have all the business background. So for me, I look at it. I work on my business. I work in it.

00:06:59 **Lori Tschol**

So I understand it, but I am constantly working on it. So I come at a different angle. I don't come from get out of the truck and figure out how to build a business. I come from build a business to understanding when I get out of the truck, what it is I'm doing. So I think that has helped me along quite a bit. The challenges for me, I can't say I've had a tough challenge. I think people are always a challenge, but I've had, okay, now you know my age when I say I've had thousands of employees. So it's not 10 here when you have different McDonald's restaurants as you build. So people are always a challenge. I do not feel like I have a challenge walking into any business scenario. I am newer on the plumbing side of things, but I know I can walk in and I have the confidence to carry myself that I have built something and I'm building. I ask for help. And I think that's a real key. I do not know it all. I know a lot about business. I'm learning about plumbing. I will get in the truck, I'll go

00:08:09 **Lori Tschol**

out with my plumber and say, okay, now I get it so that I can stock his truck, give him what he needs. But my overall achievement is to give great customer service. So my years of business comes down to customer service, taking care of my employees, and just to make sure that I keep a handle on the day -to -day of my business. That's the success that I work on.

00:08:41 **Katherine Lehtinen**

I love that perspective going from really understanding that you understand the business aspect and then you're learning about the trade that you're in right now, which is great.

00:08:51 **Doug Buchan**

I love the fact that Laurie had mentioned she's not afraid to ask questions. A lot of people, they're afraid to ask questions because it makes them look inferior possibly and it makes them conscious about, well, will this affect me somehow from getting future work? I love the fact that you're making yourself vulnerable enough to ask those questions. And a lot of people will always reach out to help you because in the technician community, I think like here in Ohio, I'm not sure about the Washington area, but I'm sure it's kind of similar. We all want to help

00:09:23 **Lori Tschol**

each other achieve. That's what I love about this industry. It is an entire family of people that will help you everywhere you turn. Just a quick little story. So this is my confidence level. I'm driving down the road. Some guy calls me on some, I'm not sure if it was a government project or whatever. He's like, can you do this? I'm like, oh yeah, absolutely. We can be there. We can do it. I picked up the phone. I called my brother. I go, what is it?

00:09:57 **Katherine Lehtinen**

A little bit of fake it till you make it, right?

00:10:00 **Lori Tschol**

That's right. I said, I have no clue. He goes, oh no, we can go.

00:10:07 **Doug Buchan**

That's awesome. Laurie, I have a couple of questions and the questions are all going to be around basically the same thing. So first of all, how do you achieve employee retention? You had mentioned you take care of your employees. And what way do you do that so that your employees

00:10:25 **Lori Tschol**

stay with your company? I hate to say the golden handcuffs because I know when I worked for McDonald's, that's where I was locked in on benefits and all that. That's kind of like the good old days. So now it's really building a culture. It's making sure that they feel valued. You know what? A big deal it is that we stock our kitchens and these guys can come in and grab food and take food with them. And when they come in sometimes, if they want to grab four bags of chips, I don't care if that's your lunch, I wouldn't recommend it. So, you know, food, taking care of them, activities, teamwork. We celebrated Halloween yesterday, recognizing everything that they do. And I think most importantly, open door, come in, sit down. What do you need on your trucks? How can we supply you? Just put them all in new uniforms, new jackets, coveralls. And when I look at my layer of management, Washington state is long-term care insurance, long-term healthcare insurance. It's a requirement by law or your

00:11:32 [Lori Tschol](#)

0.58% on your payroll tax. So on my key employees, I purchased them long-term care insurance. And not only do I pay for that, I also encourage them. There's \$300,000 in life insurance. There's an investment account. At some point in time, you want to borrow against your money and buy a house, you start putting money in. So there's all different avenues. At the end of the day, they have to feel like they're valued and they're listened to. I just lost a superstar two days ago, you know, gut punch. And the first thing I said to him was, well, I wish you well. I said, I'm disappointed that you didn't come to us ahead of time. He had one or two frustrations that never brought it to light. And we could have fixed those. And I said, but I said, best of luck. The door is open. I know the company is going to go work for, and I hope he's successful, but if not, I take them back in a second. So it's work in progress. It's every day. It's not, hey, go away for a week and checking in. It's every

00:12:41 [Lori Tschol](#)

day.

00:12:42 [Doug Buchan](#)

That's fantastic. What about the employees? Like you're going to have veterans. You're going to have older folks that have been in the field. They've been out there in the trenches for a while. Then

you have new people coming into the trades, those technicians. How do you keep the balance between the older veterans and the newbies coming in to make both of them happy with today's technology and understanding that, hey, there's more to it than just putting a product in?

00:13:15 **Lori Tschol**

Oh my gosh, that is, and I have that. So I go from, I have an 18 year old apprentice up to 63. And the 63 year old who knows it all, Mr. MacGyver,

00:13:36 **Lori Tschol**

the young out of trade school coming in, extra classes, whips out that iPad or whips out the phone and, hey, you know what? I think when we commissioned this X, Y, and Z. And so it almost starts forming a relationship where everybody knows their place. So the older technician, we know what he's great at and he goes in and he gets it going. The younger person, we rely on them. Notes and service tight and make sure you get the pictures, put the sticker on the front, whatever, because we know they have the capacity to remember it and to do it and to work through the technology. So it's, that's like a work in progress. You know, you have to be careful because you have those old tapes that play and you're like, well, wait a minute. How come my service guy isn't here at 10 to seven? If you're not 10 minutes early, you're late. Old tape, new tape. Wait a minute. My first call isn't until seven 45. Why should I clock in, wait in the warehouse to go out on a call? Cause I can't go see the customer

00:14:53 **Lori Tschol**

till eight o'clock. So it's, it's lots

00:14:56 **Doug Buchan**

of dialogue. That's awesome. That's awesome. Katherine, I have one last thing. So I, I encourage everybody to look at your website in your region. I found it very fascinating. And every time I clicked on something new, I found something else out different about you. I like the fact that you have the

the Eagle's nest, the preventative maintenance. I like the fact that you promote that because it does get you back into that customer's home annually. But one of the things that I'm curious about is you also have indoor air quality. How did COVID affect your thought

00:15:36 **Lori Tschol**

process on indoor air quality? Well, I think we really started upping our game and learning about it. And we have some amazing suppliers out there that will do so much training, dynamic air. They're awesome. You know, they will do so much training. I think it's somewhat of a harder sell. We have to really work on our service and maintenance guys. Well, even in our install, by the time it gets to install, we want to have already had sold that system. But COVID really made people step up. They just did a series on 60 Minutes the other night that talked about how indoor air quality made a huge impact on COVID. And I thought that here opportunity, I'm like, okay, how can we run with this? How can we run with this? Because this is kind of the next surge with people are kind of forgetting about COVID, but this is still real out there. So it's training, it's talking to people, it's making sure that when our guys go out in their trucks, they have a system on their trucks that they can talk to that

00:16:43 **Lori Tschol**

customer. Do you have allergens? You know, are your kids coming in? Are they not feeling well? Is it allergies? Do you have dogs? Do you have cats? You know, I have it in my home. We gave our technicians, every single one of them, a system for their home, so they can see how it works. And that helps them also.

00:17:06 **Katherine Lehtinen**

Yeah. Yeah. And then they can just talk their own personal experiences, which always, you know, helps sell it even more. Absolutely. Well, I'm going to change directions just a little bit because I want to talk about WIPP. You know, and, you know, we know that it's making some significant contributions to empower women in the trades. Can you share some of the initiatives and programs WIPP is involved in to promote and the contributions of plumbing and

00:17:30 **Lori Tschol**

pipng? Sure. This is such an amazing event. So it's a community of connection, and it's empowerment for women. And the minute I joined, I said, Oh, this is our mission. It's near and to my heart. So we do mentoring, networking, education. And I love this one, recognition, because there are so many of our folks that they don't receive the recognition. The most important thing is that we're getting the word out. And there's an entire community. When you go to that website and you join, you can be part of a community. So you can have questions answered. You can post like this amazing podcast. We'll post this in the community. So now everyone can hear, know who you guys are, get the word out, listen to this amazing podcast with you two as hosts. So that's how it works. We are joining with WIPP, women in HVACR on conferences so that they have a table, we have a table, and we really kind of cross promote. So the minute I talk to anybody about women in HVACR, I talk about WIPP. And I say, because

00:18:44 **Lori Tschol**

a lot of companies do HVAC and plumbing, or if you're just plumbing, this is the group to join. Most importantly, we are trying to develop chapters in every state. So one of the goals is to have 50 chapters or 50 ambassadors to go out and really talk about this. So I will be the chapter president for the state of Washington. And we will start putting together at least a monthly, could be a quick Zoom call when PHCC has any of their events, we'll probably get together. And we'll figure out in this state how we can foster more women to mentor, train, develop, and move forward. And also, what can we do in the schools? So how can we get these young ladies, how can we give back into these communities to keep this interest going on this amazing trade, plumbing? I mean, everyone needs a plumber, come on.

00:19:46 **Katherine Lehtinen**

Beth Dombkowski Yes. Well, and I, if you don't have someone for Ohio, I'd love to make the introduction to Doreen Cannon. She was a trainer at the Local 55 for over, gosh, maybe 30 years, 25 years. And she's now at Cleveland Builds, which is a pre -apprentice nonprofit that we had actually on the show. So she's spectacular, so well respected in the community. And really, she actually was on our podcast, so you can actually hear her story as well. So really cool. So that's wonderful. So obviously, as we talked a little bit about the PHCCs, we always look for opportunities to partner and

help support. So we would definitely want to figure out how OD can support women in plumbing and piping, if that means it's a donation, or if it is hosting maybe the local chapter here at our university, we would be more than happy to help support however we can.

00:20:40 **Lori Tschol**

Beth Dombkowski That is awesome. And just hosting and getting the word out. We're seeing, you know, different things where we can take this on the road. So as we work through each of the chapters, women in HVACR, they do road shows. So it's kind of the same thing. We need to get the word out. There are so many folks. And one other thing that I want to jump in on this, Elite Trades Championship. Are the two of you familiar with that? That just took place in Tampa. Okay, well, we need to get you more involved in that, because I'll tell you right now, this is where WIP is going to come in. Women in HVACR, we were there, we were part of the sponsors. And my next call is going to be to Kim to say, how can we get WIP involved in this? Because their goal is to get more women into the trades. So you have all these apprentices and all these professionals. There was one woman on the electrical side. And I want to see next year, a woman in plumbing, I want to see a woman in HVAC. And if they just

00:21:48 **Lori Tschol**

get to the apprenticeship part of it, whatever it takes, we need to be well represented. Because this will be on CBS Sports, four nights in December. You want to talk about how powerful that will be to see a woman up on stage, win \$40,000. And that's what we're talking about here. So that's all part of what we're trying to do with WIP. Get the word out, make sure that we're a part of these programs. And we would love to do some more conversations on how we can work with you on support and sponsorship.

00:22:25 **Katherine Lehtinen**

Yeah, that would be great. Well, we will definitely do that. So as I kind of close out our conversation today, because I feel like Doug, we could probably talk for like another 40 minutes. I want to be honest with you,

00:22:34 **Doug Buchan**

I think we need like three episodes here with Laurie.

00:22:37 **Katherine Lehtinen**

I agree. I mean, I barely got to all my questions. But I really want to close out with the final one, which is, what are your visions and aspirations for the future of the industry? And particularly for women? And how do you kind of see your contributions

00:22:53 **Lori Tschol**

to the industry's growth? Sure. So I will be up on stage a week from now, as the President of Women and HVAC are giving my vision for that organization. Awesome. And what I see so much now is the fact that we have to have young professional women that are now interested in not only this trades, but they're able to carry on. We have a lot of folks that have been in this industry for a long time, but they can't always get involved. So whatever that might take, how can we get you involved? How can you mentor someone? I mentor quite a few women. They will call me. It could be a brief phone call. It could be an hour session, or it could be a structured program. Everyone needs somebody they can pick up the phone and call. I mean, if I'm in my truck and I'm fixing an HVAC unit, I'm going to call the guy. If I'm under the sink and I can't figure out something, I'm going to call my buddy. These women have to be able to feel that same way. They should be able to call someone, whether a mentor, and

00:24:04 **Lori Tschol**

not feel like this is a dumb question. And whenever they walk into a room, they also need to see a face that they can gravitate to. When you've got a woman up on stage at the Elite Championship and all the women are there cheering her on, that makes a difference than just having a crowd. And so I think the real vision that we need to look at is not only are the trades an amazing opportunity, making sure that everyone understands the full range, not only from a financial perspective, but it's a very satisfying, fulfilling career. And as you move into different stages in your life, there's always something for you. You know, you might start out, you'll learn the business. You might go into a

training role, a management role. How do you become an owner of the business? How can we start training you now to get into that role so

00:25:01 **Katherine Lehtinen**

you have lifelong success? Yeah, for sure. Well, thank you, Lori, so much for the conversation today. Greatly appreciate you taking the time, educating us on women in plumbing and piping, and really telling your story more of how you're getting involved in making a difference. So thank

00:25:18 **Doug Buchan**

you for everything. Yeah, absolutely. Thank you, Lori. You're a fantastic guest. We appreciate you.

00:25:23 **Lori Tschol**

You're so welcome. Thanks for the opportunity.