

Keith Williams Podcast – “Do What’s Right”

[00:00:00] **Angela Gardner:** Welcome to Women Talk Construction podcast.

[00:00:06] Today we have a very special guest on our podcast, but before we say who. For those of you new, we publish a new episode every Monday. If you are new to the community, please sign up and check out our great resources on our forum@breakingbarriersforum.com. Introduce yourself and start engaging with our community.

[00:00:31] And so I wanna get us started and introduce to you Keith Williams. He is a tech entrepreneur who founded Skill Stadium, an online platform that connects employers with skilled trade professionals, leveraging video to ensure a good match. He also does a, a lot of volunteering throughout his community.

[00:00:52] A couple of the organizations, our junior achievement and tech Impact. And he, he actually comes from the tech industry into our world of construction, which we greatly appreciate. The other thing too is he has 131 episodes released out there. Yay. So he’s a podcaster too. And hopefully everyone has been out there and checked out his really cool website Skill Stadium.

[00:01:15] I did. And I, I, I loved how he brought in the videos of employers. So that he shares that he wants to connect the right people with the right company, and that’s so incredibly important. Yes. That’s awesome. Awesome, Christie. Awesome. Yes. Yeah. So I’m gonna get us started with the questions, Keith, and of course this is gonna help our listeners kind of find out more about you and why you did this is.

[00:01:41] What ins, what inspired you to create this amazing online platform in construct for, I guess, for the skilled trades really,

[00:01:50] **Keith Williams:** right? Yes. Well, Angela and Christie, thank you for having me on the show. I’m really sick. Hey, Keith. Hey, how are you? I started because I felt that there’s a better way to G match employers and job seekers, particularly younger employers who don’t have as much experience.

[00:02:07] If we just look at a paper, resonates, not indicative what that young person can do, somebody who doesn’t have as much experience. So we are now possibly creating great opportunities for somebody who might have been overlooked, who doesn’t have the. The experience. On the other hand, people who do have experience video brings out their personality.

[00:02:26] So now you're getting a better feel for how will this person fit in the culture of my company. It speeds up the process and it helps make a better match for both people. And I had the opportunity to talk to people on both sides, and they felt that this would be a, a positive thing for them in terms of their employment search.

[00:02:44] Nice.

[00:02:45] **Angela Gardner:** Yes. Yeah, I agree. He has like, I think some of the employers that you have on there are like welders, electricians, right? A number of 'em. Yes. They're great videos. So are there certain

[00:02:56] **Christi Powell:** categories that you do provide over others in the field?

[00:03:01] **Keith Williams:** So I try and focus on plumbing, electrical, and hvac.

[00:03:05] Those are kinda the bread and butter. Then I've put other professions like welding, carpentry. On there, but I'm trying to focus on, mainly on the plumbing electric Cause I feel like those are m a p. Yes. Those are like foundation. Those are the foundation of, of careers and jobs. Mm-hmm. Where people are really looking.

[00:03:26] It's a little bit more

[00:03:27] **Christi Powell:** challeng. Yeah. I just wondered if you, what you thought about the carpentry aspect. A lot of people are doing that right now as well.

[00:03:34] **Keith Williams:** Well, for me, I thought for the carpentry, I really felt like video really comes in handy for carpentry because that is something that you're judged on.

[00:03:45] First of all, there's so many different areas of carpentry from what I've learned. You can be doing carpentry and construction, you can be doing carpentry for for example, building furniture. Mm-hmm. And I interviewed a young woman in Ontario who has a carpentry business, and, and I actually connected with her on TikTok and she uses the videos to showcase her work.

[00:04:05] Mm-hmm. Powerful. Oh, cool. That's so powerful. And that's why, you know, I'm an outsider in the skilled trade, right? So I, I said, wow, that's, she's onto something. So it reinforced. And I always ask people how, you know, how you use video? How will this video help you? So I'm always trying to learn. Mm-hmm. Cause he said, I'm an outsider.

[00:04:25] I didn't work in skill trades. And so, yes, I do feel like video is

advantageous for people who are in the carpentry industry, who are judged by the work that, yeah, not like you can write down, you can do a paper resume about how great a carpentry you are. Yeah. And show us. Yeah.

[00:04:48] Skilled

[00:04:48] **Christi Powell:** Trades Alliance exist to engage, educate, equip, encourage, and empower a sustainable construction, skilled trades workforce. We aim to advance the cultural landscape to drive respect to the skilled trades professionals and to unify and strengthen skilled trades workforce development initiatives.

[00:05:09] Their vision is to create a unified and resp. Affected culture within the construction industry where industry professionals have the same pride in their careers as they do with their work. Thank you for what you do for our Community Skilled Trades Alliance.

[00:05:30] So, In that regard, how do you build the partnerships with the schools and the community organizations and other groups to get the young people engaged and encouraged to, to join the skilled

[00:05:41] **Keith Williams:** trades? Sure. So that is 10% of the work I do is what I call get back paid forward. Mm-hmm. I like that. What I do is I reach out to the schools and I say, Hey look, particularly schools that have they have a cta career technical department, so they're ready.

[00:05:59] Schools that are gonna be more open to it, so. Mm-hmm. Okay. Say, Hey, you know, when you have a career day, I'm happy to come in and talk. I, you know, during the pandemic, we did a lot of stuff that was virtual online. Mm-hmm. And what happened is, I, I did, there are two things I did. I did a podcast, I did the day in the life interviews.

[00:06:16] I said, do you wanna learn about a profession you should go listen to or speak to people who actually doing the work? So I do these short day in the life video. I said they're on my website and I'd interview people who work in the profession to be just typical questions. Walk us through a day in the life of what you do.

[00:06:31] What do you make? Why did you do this job? Things that people would naturally ask them. Like younger. Mm-hmm. I'm a queer, boom. Put it on the video. So now when I go in the career day, cuz people are like, wait a minute, you don't work in tricks. Yeah. But these people who I've interviewed do. Mm-hmm. And people you wanna listen to them.

[00:06:47] And especially if you're in your community, they're now giving you real world advice on what it takes to be successful. There's no, there's no better

advice to get on a job than from somebody who's doing it right. You'd be crazy, you know, if you wanna be a doctor and you have an opportunity to talk to a doctor, who else is gonna give you better advice?

[00:07:08] Right. If you wanna be a carpenter, you talk to a carpenter, you wanna be a plumber, you talk to a plumber, right? So, yeah, those videos are powerful. And I interview people. I interview women. I interview young men, interview old men. Interview minorities, interview white people, interview every different background.

[00:07:25] So now you're getting a different perspective. A 20 year old carpenter who's a woman might have a different perspective than a 50 year old. Yes, yes. She's gonna give you a just a I'm, I've done enough.

[00:07:39] **Christi Powell:** Everybody has their own

[00:07:41] **Keith Williams:** right. And so I'm very conscious when I reach out to those folks because, It's a different story.

[00:07:48] Just like when I interview a business owner who's well established and he's telling me about, you know, how the challenges he's having, what he's going through, I might pull him back and say, well, talk to me when you first started. Hmm. Okay. Now it's a different perspective, right? So yeah, I made sure I'm very diverse in the people that I'm reaching out to, but like I said for the school, sorry, I got one little off topic.

[00:08:11] That's okay. Just reach out to the schools and I say, Hey, here's the information I have. I'm happy to come in and talk, and then I guide them to the, to the YouTube channel and the videos. Yeah. I say that's the best advice you're gonna get. Mm-hmm. And then tell 'em about like, so if they're professional associations and organizations, I tell 'em, go check out those organizations.

[00:08:32] What I'm doing is I'm doing the research for them and I'm place, right. You don't have to be like, oh, where do I go? What do I do? Start here. So Keith,

[00:08:42] **Angela Gardner:** that's kind

[00:08:43] **Christi Powell:** of what we're doing, isn't

[00:08:44] **Angela Gardner:** it Angela? It is. But I wanna ask, so can the career center students go on your website? And cuz I noticed where you can also, you know, look for a job on your website, right?

[00:08:55] Yes. So can they go on your website? Because some of them are younger than, you know, like we're an electrician and we can only hire a certain age. Because of where we go into the manufacturing facilities. But can these

students go on your platform and look at jobs and potentially look for like an internship or something, or.

[00:09:11] **Keith Williams:** We don't really have the internships. Okay. We we're still working on getting jobs on the site. We're still working on building the site up and getting more users. So it's a balance right now.

[00:09:23] **Angela Gardner:** Well then you need more users. People need to sign up more, right? Yes. That's why we're doing,

[00:09:29] **Keith Williams:** yes. The other thing is we do give.

[00:09:33] What I recommend to students is that the user is a research tool first. That's right. You wanna be able to have an idea of what you're applying for because if you're applying for a job, You have, first of all, you have to have the skillsets to apply from the job, right? Mm-hmm. Right. One of the things that we do on that, we make the job application a one pager.

[00:09:53] This is when they create their profile and we ask questions like, what's your ideal company culture? How far you want to commute. Right? And that, that's part of the matchup because I It's very important. It's very important. Yeah. You know? Cities are spread out. Yeah. If you're on one part of town, that could be a problem.

[00:10:10] And you need to know, you know, here's where I'm looking. And so I think it helps young people and even the employer to make sure that this is a good match. Because if you have a, I don't know, a 60 mile commute, that might not be mm-hmm. That might not be the ideal for you, you know, and. You, if you're somebody who doesn't want to get up early and they're starting the job at 70, 69 commute, well that, that could be a problem.

[00:10:35] But it's better to find that out upfront. Mm-hmm. And that's why when I do the platform, I ask them, like, ask some questions that are relevant. Cause I've talked to a lot of young people. And they don't like long applications. So I made the application one page

[00:10:51] allowed them to use a video. Right? 32nd elevator pitch. Who are you? What makes you good at what you do? Why should people hire you? You're gonna have to do that in the job, right? Anybody? Who's it? It, it's not a lot of work to do that. Everybody has a smartphone. Everybody's got a video on their phone. This is not porn.

[00:11:09] This is not you. Yeah. No, if you, you know, my mindset on this is if you can't say who you are and what you do and what makes you better at a job, you will never, you won't get the job. They're not gonna, they're just not gonna hire you. Cause that's a very basic thing that you have to answer. Yes, you have

the opportunity of you doing a 62nd video, show us the work you're doing.

[00:11:29] So now you can be creative and say, okay, I don't have a lot of experience, but here's how I would do this job. Or, here's what I know how to do. Mm-hmm. Here's where I might look at that and say, you know what? I could do that, I could, I could bring, I could work with that person rather than if they just sent in a paper application.

[00:11:46] Now we see human. So that's, that's why that, that the

[00:11:50] **Christi Powell:** human connection is back. Yeah,

[00:11:53] **Angela Gardner:** I like that a lot. Yeah. I love

[00:11:55] **Keith Williams:** it. And this generation is very comfortable doing videos. There's no one who can sit there. Mm-hmm.

[00:12:00] **Angela Gardner:** Ever. Can teach me a little bit, but, but

[00:12:04] **Christi Powell:** yeah, they're not, they're not necessarily comfortable with human interaction though.

[00:12:09] **Keith Williams:** Yeah. You're, you're right about that. They're probably more comfortable making videos, but I mean, my daughter's 12 and she makes videos all the time, you know, but I, I don't know, I don't think she'd Aly interview for a job. Well, yeah, she's very comfortable doing videos and. That's no different from any other young person in her age group.

[00:12:30] Yeah. And older. And

[00:12:32] **Christi Powell:** we do need to be reaching that age group. Yes, we

[00:12:35] **Keith Williams:** do. Yeah. Yeah, we do. And they, that age group is very engaged online. So like I said, the videos are on YouTube. And I think also, again, I think if you, most people when they do research, they don't want to go to 10 different places. Mm-hmm.

[00:12:51] Update new information, give 'em the information they wanna know. Like, so I, I tell 'em, you know, when I interview people tell me the salary they're gonna get when they're just getting started. Don't tell me about now you've done it 10 years. Nobody's gonna, they're not gonna relate to that because you worked.

[00:13:03] Yeah. Tell me what you got when you just got started. Tell me what they can expect today when they go through the program, day one, what are they gonna make? Oh, they're gonna make da da. And I always, yeah. And here's the

thing, when I interview people, I tell 'em, here's your target audience. Here's who we're trying to help.

[00:13:20] So now you know why I'm asking these questions. It also helps me to determine whether this person, I, I, I wanna say it matters. Do they get it? I always have the thing. You get it right? Yeah. Yeah. And, and, and to me, we're, you know, this interview, what we're doing with the podcast, We're, we're trying to help this younger generation.

[00:13:38] Mm-hmm. And just

[00:13:39] **Christi Powell:** give 'em some guidance. Right. Got it. So, and know that they have

[00:13:43] **Keith Williams:** options based on that. Yes.

[00:13:45] **Christi Powell:** Yes. Yeah, I love that. So one of the things that I have to ask you is make sure you put your information on breaking Barriers forum.com. Do. We would love for all of our listeners to be able to go there, find the information that you're talking about today, because it sounds like it's something the m e p world really, really needs right now.

[00:14:06] Mm-hmm. So make sure and put it on that form so that ev all of our listeners know how to get to you and how to find the app.

[00:14:12] **Keith Williams:** I will

[00:14:12] **Angela Gardner:** do that for sure. Oh, yeah,

[00:14:13] **Keith Williams:** yeah.

[00:14:19] **Christi Powell:** Brian Knox with Bocks Photography. Brian's a commercial photographer based in Greenville. He specializes in photographing people hard at work, particularly in skilled trades like construction, auto mechanics, and tree care. Brian's mission is to take photos that demonstrate the dignity of hard work. His favorite things to photograph are construction projects, heavy equipment, and everyday heroes doing their job in.

[00:14:42] Work boots and hard hats. Thank you. Bocks Photography for supporting women. Taught construction, women in construction, and for supporting women confidence builders at our events.

[00:15:04] **Angela Gardner:** This is a great segue into my next question. We love to ask our guests, Leah, what are the long-term benefits of building a more diverse and inclusive workforce in. The world of construction, how do you see that playing out with your platform you've created?

[00:15:25] **Keith Williams:** That's a great question. Good question. Good question. I, I'll tell you, when I first started, I didn't even understand anything about inclusivity and diversity until I started talk, cuz I'm an outsider coming in. And I started, I knew that if I started talking about that right away, just looking at the people I was seeing, I knew there would be pushback.

[00:15:47] I was having a hard enough time just getting people to inter, you know, to, to be on guests on my podcast or to do day life interviews because I'm an outsider. Mm-hmm. As I started interviewing more people and establishing myself. And learning from women and minorities that hey, the playing field is not level.

[00:16:08] Cause they're telling me their real world experiences. Mm-hmm. I said, let's talk about that now I'm gonna start pushing for that. I've established myself now, so I also know that that's part of my value. So if you're not gonna deal with me cuz that then I already know where you stand and right now. Yeah.

[00:16:22] So to me, and, and as I get old, you know, when you're doing right. I don't care if it, if it offends people when I'm doing something. That's right. Mm-hmm.

[00:16:31] **Angela Gardner:** Do what?

[00:16:31] **Keith Williams:** Right. Yeah. And, and it's very hard for somebody to sit there and say, no, we shouldn't have women in this profession. No, we shouldn't have minority.

[00:16:38] How do you stand on that in 2023?

[00:16:40] **Christi Powell:** Yeah, I know. Very. That's a little old school, right?

[00:16:44] **Keith Williams:** Yeah. You really, you're really don't have much of a, a leg to stand on. And I remember I made a post and I was talking about, I think I was interviewing a woman. Who told me, and I found that the older women were more upfront about telling me the challenges.

[00:16:58] Mm-hmm. Yes. Because they weren't as afraid of the blowback and the repercussions. Cause some of the young women I spoke to would tell me offline. Right. Podcast like they were afraid. They're afraid. And I always respected what people wanted to say. So, I didn't wanna put them in in an uncomfortable situation, but the stories I was hearing, sometimes I was like, wow, if I could, if I could voice that, they're like, no, don't say that.

[00:17:21] I know I always, I always told people, whatever you don't want to say, don't say it. Like so that, so I say that we can edit stuff out, but don't say stuff.

Right? Because sometimes I might live when we're doing a podcast interview and so. I saw the, the importance of having exclusive diversity and inclusion is that we have a shortage in the skill trades we do.

[00:17:46] The older generation is going away. Mm-hmm. Right? Yeah. You don't have enough people going in. Right. You're gonna Women make up a over 50% of 51% Yeah. Population. You're gonna rule out an entire group that, that's, that's ludicrous. It makes no sense. Even if you, even if you're ignorant, you're like, I don't want women.

[00:18:05] In construction or in these traditional male roles, you're only shooting yourself in a foot. Like common sense is if there's a shortage, let's grab people who are qualified and, and what I would do sometimes on social, and I could tell where there's, I, I think I had done a, I did a post once and I was talking about like, how do we get more women and minorities into the trades?

[00:18:24] And this guy was like, well, we can't just give him the job. I said, I understand that. Right. So it's, you gotta learn how to engage people. Yeah. Obviously qualified, right. And then silence. So whenever you. Whenever you push back, and I can tell that there's still pushback. People go, some people go quiet there.

[00:18:40] People feel like, okay, we're giving. Mm-hmm. You know?

[00:18:43] **Angela Gardner:** No, it's not about giving.

[00:18:45] **Keith Williams:** They're qualified. Exactly. You're qualified. Right. So, and, and furthermore, I've interviewed enough people, I've interviewed enough guys who've said, you know what? Women are more attentive to detail. Yes. Yeah.

[00:18:56] **Christi Powell:** We're here. We hear a lot of that nowadays

[00:18:58] **Keith Williams:** words.

[00:18:59] I'm like, you'd again, you'd be foolish not to take somebody who's doing a great job, who qualified. Because they're a woman or they're a minority. Right. You know, so whenever you start putting that out, then people get quiet. Right? Yeah. So learn how to stand up and not attack

[00:19:14] **Christi Powell:** them. I just, no, no. Say it gently, right.

[00:19:17] And

[00:19:18] **Keith Williams:** respected silence. Cuz he knew at that point I got him. Yeah, because I said obviously qualified cuz he was saying, well you're

giving it to them in the comments. I said No, and I responded to 'em. I went out, I said, no qualify. Now what's, what's the problem if they're qualified? Yeah, no response cuz he knew I was right.

[00:19:42] I love it. Unfortunate there are people who think that way. Yeah. And people who automatically think because, and I said at the end of the day, they make up less than 10%. So what's fear you?

[00:19:51] **Angela Gardner:** Yeah. Don't fear, we

[00:19:52] **Christi Powell:** need everybody for sure. Go

[00:19:54] **Keith Williams:** to 20%. We still are the majority. Yes. Hey, silence. Once you start counting out data and facts.

[00:20:00] Yeah. People get Yeah. Yeah. Data and facts. Object to it. I'm not saying everybody, I'm just saying the people who might object to it.

[00:20:08] **Christi Powell:** A lot of people, well, the perspective is changing because of the need. So that's really good. It's been a positive thing. Yes, Keith. We really love what you're doing every day to help the skilled trades.

[00:20:18] We love all the. The organizations what they do and how they help our tradespeople. We really appreciate you. Thanks for being on today. Before we get off, we please let our listeners know how to find you Sure how to look for your information. And of course, on Breaking Barriers forum.com

[00:20:35] **Keith Williams:** will do so.

[00:20:35] They can find me@skillstadium.com. Www dot skill stadium, S K I L L S T A D I U M. Dot com. All of my social media is on that website, so if you just click on that, you can go to my YouTube. I also have a podcast, or if you do Skill Stadium podcast, it'll come up, and that's the best way to connect with me also.

[00:20:56] Oh, you're

[00:20:56] **Christi Powell:** everywhere.

[00:21:00] **Angela Gardner:** Thank you so much. Yes, thank you Keith, joining us

[00:21:03] **Christi Powell:** today. We really appreciate getting to know you. Definitely.

[00:21:09] Well, that's all for this episode. Thank you so much for listening to the Women Talk Construction podcast with your host, Christy Powell and Angela

Gardner. See you next time.