

WTC 'Building for Your Purpose' with Rory Rubin

[00:00:00] **Angela Gardner:** Welcome, Women Talk Construction family. I'm Angela Gardner, and I'm here with my co host, Christi Powell.

Christi Powell: Hello.

Angela Gardner: So, Christi, we just got finished with an amazing event for women called Women Confidence Builders. Tell us, like, what's going on now after that event?

[00:00:27] **Christi Powell:** So, it's always pretty exciting to be in a room full of 450 plus leaders which, were mostly women and there were so many students in the room and our biggest praise and most interaction of praise for that last event. And by the way, it was a, we, it wasn't a Christi, the connections we were hearing from these people that the connections they're making are so valuable to them personally and professionally.

And that's really where our vision and our mission was from. So, very, very excited to hear that our mission is on track. We still have some things to learn, but it's so, I never feel better than being in a room full of women who are lifting each other up. Oh yeah. So, if you're a woman who doesn't lift other women up, this is not the place for you.

But if you are, it is a magical place. It's better than Disney, in my opinion.

[00:01:17] **Angela Gardner:** Yeah. And, and you're not the only one that said that. I've heard it from many other women and men. Awesome.

[00:01:23] **Christi Powell:** Awesome. Well, we couldn't do it without everybody. It is not just me. It takes a village of people to make an event like that happen.

I'm just the, uh, the inspiration behind us doing something that's really important for our women and for the girls and giving those high school scholarships away are really, really near and dear to my heart.

[00:01:43] **Angela Gardner:** Oh yeah, and speaking of doing something really important for people, our next guest is really doing that.

And she's doing it in a very unique way. And that is Roy Rubin, and she is the CEO of SI Container Builds. And we actually, talking about connections, we actually were connected with her through Audrey. Yeah. And who is another amazing woman who has actually been on our show too. But I wanted to highlight a few things about her.

She saw a shortage of women in leadership and she's making that change. And, um, she's doing it so creatively through containers that are just. Littering our, I guess our shipping ports right now. And we've seen that occur probably for the last two decades. But the other really cool thing about her is she has grown up kind of in our world, or at least a lot of us around her with architects, designers, builders.

So why not go do it? Right. And so welcome Rory to our conversation. And we are so excited to have you here.

[00:02:49] **Rory Rubin:** Thank you. This is fun. And it's nice to be in good company with friends of Audrey. I mean, we all feel the same way about her and, uh, I just, it's wonderful to be around strong women in power in construction.

So I'm grateful to be here.

[00:03:05] **Christi Powell:** Thank you for being with us. We're so thankful that you took the time out to be able to. You know, just spread your words of wisdom with our audience.

[00:03:13] **Rory Rubin:** Oh, yeah. Thank you. Thank you. So, first

[00:03:15] **Christi Powell:** question I have for you is what on earth were you thinking when you decided to create SI Container Builds and focus on building sustainable dwellings?

We all know that there are some homeless, there are so many homeless people right now. So, I I love the fact that you not only took your passion and turned it into a knee, you know, turned it into a solution to a need, but using recycled shipping containers and green building materials is also another edgy thing that you are pulling into that whole container build.

And we'd love to know more about it. What, what made you think to do this? Like, was there an inspiration?

[00:03:56] **Rory Rubin:** Well, I'm laughing because I think the better question is, why did I decide in my late forties and early fifties, right? A company, because that was something you're supposed to do when you're in your twenties.

Yes,

[00:04:07] **Christi Powell:** I agree. I think

[00:04:09] **Rory Rubin:** ultimately I spent several decades as a leadership development coach and consultant and management consultant and my background, my first life is in social work. So. It's not so weird to want to figure out what you want to be when you grow up, when you start to talk around people and you look back at your life and say, well, what did I do?

Where's my purpose and what kind of legacy do I want to leave for my kids and go on? And my dad's an architect. I grew up around construction. As Angela pointed out and just understanding what it was like to be in that type of a household and realizing my parents were always ones to give back. So I really started to say, gosh, we're about to be empty nesters, want to be more sustainable, want to live a little bit smaller, maybe what does that look like?

And I was doing research and I'm like, Oh my gosh, there's this fantastic thing called a shipping container that there's 23 million of them littering, as you said, ports and such, because we don't send them back. It's too expensive. We get all of our goods and services overseas. We drop the goods and services.

We drop the shipping container. And we're like, this is ridiculous. And other countries have been doing this for decades. So what can we do? To take this wonderful, wonderful product that is already done for us, Corten steel and recycle and reuse it in a beautiful way. And so that's just the inspiration over the last few years.

Awesome.

[00:05:38] **Christi Powell:** I love that. I love that. You had a vision of this is a problem. Let's find a solution and then make it better for the world.

[00:05:46] **Rory Rubin:** That's, I mean, that sounds so magical and whimsical and, and I hope this is what we're, you know, really trying to do. You know, one of our mantras is building for your purpose and we are purpose driven.

And I think that there's a way to take something instead of. Recreating it from scratch, you know, why throw that baby out with the bath water concept. Use something that is really structurally sound. The integrity of a shipping container. It's 18,000 for these 40 ft containers that you're seeing on trucks driving all over the country and coming off the docks.

You know, that thing's not moving anywhere. This is something that should be used again. And, um, and that's what we have learned, especially over the last 18 months is how to do this with quality. So it's purpose, but it's also done correctly because you can make a lot of mistakes and we don't want to make those mistakes when we're turning something in.

Everybody deserves homes with integrity. If I was going to build something, I was going to live in it. So there's no way I was going to build something that I didn't feel was quality code driven product. And so that that's where we come from.

[00:07:04] **Christi Powell:** At Women Confidence Builders, our mission is to educate, mentor, disciple, and empower all people while building confidence and creating inclusivity. We want to grow a sustainable, healthy environment where women, men, and children feel the effects of the love and care. Our organization has for our communities, businesses growth and the economic impact we can make together supporting our next generation of leaders, in a way only intentionality will change.

[00:07:39] **Angela Gardner:** I love it. I love it. And another thing that Christine and I always love to ask is, can you share a success story? You know, that, that helps us see what impact and benefits your company's approach is, you know, doing in the built world with the low maintenance structures that you're putting out there.

[00:07:59] **Rory Rubin:** I have to talk about a project that's just so near and dear to us because it's turned into something it's growing as we speak. Taraji Henson's foundation, the Boris L. Henson Foundation, which was named after her father. And Kate Spade's foundation to build wellness pods on university campuses to support the HPC use the HPC use for young African American women and mental health.

And that's a mouthful to say, but really what it is, is that mental health awareness is, is that's just this country and what I've learned, especially in, in the African American communities and to support these young women. So our first set of wellness. Pods was launched at Alabama State University last April.

We have our next set that are just being talked about now that are going to Hampton University. We have others that are in the work. So really kudos to the Boris Henson Foundation and to Kate Spade because now they're strong women. I'm working with on teams to support using our product to really do a magnificent thing out there.

I

[00:09:06] **Angela Gardner:** love that. Was that on Instagram? The purple? Yes. Okay. All right. Cool.

[00:09:13] **Rory Rubin:** Second structure has this wonderful mural that a student did. That was for Alabama. There's a new mural that will come out from a student at Hampton university. So that's great. It reflects the university. It affects the African American young women group and it's, it's spectacular.

So it is

[00:09:30] **Christi Powell:** spectacular. Kudos to you. What an

[00:09:33] **Rory Rubin:** amazing,

[00:09:34] **Christi Powell:** what an amazing thing that you're doing and, and for a group that needs it. Well, and

[00:09:39] **Rory Rubin:** it's, it's, um, we're working with a team, Tracy Jenkins and her team at Boris Huntsman. They're phenomenal. You talk about wanting to work with powerful, fabulous women, don't you love it?

Yeah. It makes your whole life. It makes you getting up in the morning like you're excited to talk to my daughter and say, Ooh, I had this great call and, and just be really inspired and learn from them because it's always about learning, isn't it

[00:10:07] **Christi Powell:** so important? I truly believe that it's so important that us women all need to meet each other.

Especially if we're making a difference in the community. That's one of the reasons we started the podcast and we're in a non traditional career. It doesn't matter if we're in the same, we don't have to be in the same room with the same organization. Let's like diversify the people that were around. And when we do, it's so magical because all the diverse perspectives we come together with, and

then we create something as wonderful as housing for young females at universities.

So I love that. I can't emphasize that enough. I think we, as women. We work in silos a lot, and when we find our people and people that are doing the same things, which are just lifting up others, and no matter what industry we're in, if we learn how to collaborate, it just makes a magical experience all the way around.

And we can come up with some really intuitive things by putting all those heads together in different, uh, manufacturing, industrial, you know, business, whatever that is. So you just confirmed

[00:11:08] **Rory Rubin:** that there's no excuse not to do that. We have all the resources, and now we can talk like this and be, you know, online.

I can talk to people in India and in overseas in Australia and in Eastern Europe and, and really feel that closeness and learn from each other. So we don't have that excuse anymore.

[00:11:26] **Christi Powell:** Yeah. So, but with that being said, I want to, I want to hear a little bit about the container weighs 18, 000 pounds. So there's really not a lot of complications with, uh, being resilient to natural disasters.

However, there is, because it has to have a foundation. Right there has to be things involved that that are going to put the unit together and build a sustainable place to live. So, how do you ensure that your constructions are resilient and able to withstand natural disasters, such as fires and hurricanes, tornadoes, and maybe even pests?

Is there. Is there a way that you, you can tell our audience, you know, how, how do you build a lived in space where it's resilient to all the things that are happening to us every day?

[00:12:12] **Rory Rubin:** You know, I appreciate that question because I think about 90 percent of my job is around education. So we, we talk about the shipping container and the structural integrity of this 18 pound core 10 steel structure and that in itself is wonderful, but if it's not built out correctly, you're still going to have the same problems that you could have with any other build.

And so we take it really seriously. And how we do that is that we only use a one trip container, which means that it's only come overseas one time so that we

understand what it's come over and it would be Nike shoes versus hazardous waste. You know, those kinds of things. If you're going to live in something, you want to understand where it came from and what it was transporting.

And so that's our 1st step. So we only do that. The 2nd piece is, is that we build exactly how everybody should be building, which is to code. And so we use close cell spray foam so that we can make sure that there's that moisture barrier, you know, the containers of the. Decades of decades ago, people will say, Oh my gosh, there's moisture that can get in and mold and mildew.

And I said, we don't have that problem because of how we build and making sure that we're doing everything correctly. And so we've solved those problems. And so now you have this huge structure that is not going to blow over in a hurricane that is going to be fire resistant, that is also internally.

Designed and built correctly with the, our values with the, um, materials that we're using. And so that it makes, it makes a big difference. And listen, at the end of the day is to take more work and energy and a little bit more money for us to do it the right way. It does. And it has. We're supervised under NTA, which is owned by the ICC, which is really important to us and we're proud of that, but it does take time and it does take some extra expense.

But it's important for us to say that we can back this quality product that's going to last outlive our stick build homes,

[00:14:05] **Christi Powell:** right? Yeah. And that wouldn't be hard these days. These stick built homes. We were, we don't have the lumber or the resources that we had 50 to a hundred years ago, right? The pine is different.

They're growing. The trees are growing faster. They're cutting them down sooner. So it has changed the structure ability of the wood framed homes. And a lot of folks are moving to metal for that reason, but they can move to a container instead of metal studs. So

[00:14:32] **Rory Rubin:** I love that. We love that. And, you know, people will say, Oh my gosh, it's got to be so hot in the summer.

Oh my gosh, it's going to be so cold. When you're insulated correctly, it's just like any other home. When you walk into one of our containers, you wouldn't know you're walking into a shipping container. You think you're walking into your home. And so it's really, this is about the education fees. And, and so you don't know until you see it and people are like, wow.

But other countries have done this for years. We're it on

[00:15:05] **Angela Gardner:** YouTube so that people can see her product. Yes. Well, I, I want to ask the next question and I want to kind of jump ahead a little bit because I want to make sure we definitely get this one in. Christy and I are very passionate about giving back and, you know, of course we do that through this podcast and in other ways.

And that's what our hope is when we bring guests on too, that they're also lifting others up. And wouldn't you say, Christy? I mean, we're very.

[00:15:32] **Christi Powell:** We're intentional about bringing leaders on and even young people on that are giving back to either their peers or their colleagues, or they're involved in a nonprofit organization.

We, we really just want to make sure it's not about. Yeah, not about me. It's not about Angela. It's not about Rory. It's about, you know, us just making the environment a better place.

[00:15:56] **Angela Gardner:** And for sure you are doing that. And, and that, that comes to my next question is, can you share some examples of, um, positive differences you have made nationally through wonderfulness.

about it. So can you, can you elaborate more?

[00:16:14] **Rory Rubin:** Yeah, you know, it's, it's really about who you collab and partner with. And because we're very purpose driven, we are slowly moving into the area of providing service to places that are in most. greater needs. And that would be like a disaster relief situation would be something for a nonprofit that's supporting a cause.

We give discounts for these things because we think it's very powerful. Yes, I'm in a business. I am a for profit business in that sense. But I can run with the mindset of doing things that are of value and purposeful. So the clients that we take on the relationships that we have, I'll share another Quick project that we're working on right now.

And that is to support trafficked girls in the state of Illinois, where we're going to be building a group home with DCFS funding and shelter Inc and a nonprofit developer to support this. And these are the projects that we are passionate about that one day hope to only be taking on projects that truly make a difference because that's important to our mission.

Yeah, I

[00:17:24] **Christi Powell:** love it. That's wonderful. You're definitely in line with why, I mean, this is why we started the podcast, same reason just to get other people's voices out there and for others to know the great things that our guests are doing.

[00:17:45] **Angela Gardner:** Hill Electric was founded in 1954 in Anderson, South Carolina, rooted in the upstate of South Carolina. Hill Electric has garnered a reputation as the region's most innovative industrial electrical contractor. Revival. Machinery installations and facility power to countless companies in the area committed to quality, performance, valued service, and responsive schedule management.

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[00:18:31] **Rory Rubin:** It's nice to have that platform. I mean, it really is. You guys have. Taken something that you just thought was going to be fun and it's a big thing. I mean, I laugh when we talked just several months ago about when I could come on and mean you have wonderful guests on you are booked. You, you have a lot of people that are.

coming through your doors, which is awesome. This is a great

[00:18:55] **Christi Powell:** thing. Thank you. It's been overwhelming sometimes, but so thankful that our vision and our heart lined up with a lot of other women's vision and heart. And even the men, they love listening to our podcast because it helps them kind of relate to women and maybe be able to hire more and retain more.

By just understanding what we need and want in a workplace or, you know, uh, working for them as a general contractor or prime or whatever that happens to be. So talking about business, you are a profit business. You are for profit business. One of my favorite things to say right now, because inclusion is kind of getting worn out and people kind of turn you off and diversity is same word.

One of the things that I like to say is we're, we're figuring out a culture of collaboration and that's with all people. So you don't, you don't have to make that gender specific, but how has that collaboration for you seem to, it seems to be a key aspect of your business, the relationships that you have.

How do you engage and work with other business owners and developers and local resources to create successful projects? You hit on this a little bit, but As women are out there thinking about being their own entrepreneur, give us some ideas of what made that collaboration make you successful. What, what the collaboration did to make you

[00:20:15] **Rory Rubin:** successful.

I think we talked briefly, even before we jumped on the, on the podcast about living in a silo. I think that in my generation, being in my fifties, that we were not necessarily taught that we should be forming villages in a business relationship. I think women are very good at having friends and personal relationships.

But somehow we, we missed it and how to form these business relationships, but we're catching up. We are. And I have found that it has been the women, especially around me, not just in construction, but I have a wonderful women mentor. That woman mentor, who's just fantastic. I couldn't imagine living and breathing and working without these people.

I couldn't not just lifting up. It's providing expertise where I might not have, and there's always somebody out there that will lend support and it we're forced to be reckoned with. And, and I guess, you know, having a daughter, I want her to know that I have a son too. I want him to know that as well. And I have a wonderful supportive powerhouse husband around this, but it's about, we can't live in a silo.

We have to be able to work together, embrace our differences, find our similarities, enjoy the relationship for what it is. I mean, that's been my, my, my really, my passion is meeting all kinds of cool people that I might not have normally met. Yeah,

[00:21:38] **Christi Powell:** I agree. It just makes it your life more fulfilling, doesn't it?

I feel like when I go to bed at night, I have a smile on my face. And when I get up in the morning, I have a smile on my face because we're making a difference. We're, we're making changes that we didn't see in our ancestors. And it's just a cool place to be like, it's a wonderful day to be alive and be a woman in the construction industry.

I feel that way. Anyway, I'm sure Angela does too. Oh yeah.

[00:22:03] **Rory Rubin:** It is. And you know, there's the normal pitfalls. It's still a male dominance. But that doesn't mean there are people out there, men that aren't extremely supportive as well as there's more and more women that are wanting to be a part of this and, and wanting to grow in the business.

And it's just, it's been fun. You know, it's as easy as it is to start a business. I don't recommend it for everybody. It's a lot of fun too. You really do walk away with a, like you said, a smile on your face. Yeah. You light up

[00:22:37] **Angela Gardner:** when you talk about it. So it, I mean, passionate about it. Yes. Yeah. Thank you.

[00:22:42] **Christi Powell:** Well, we are, believe it or not, we are almost out of time.

Is there anything else that you want to share with the audience? Maybe, maybe give this next generation. We want to have our podcast in schools one day. We think it's very important that these kids know boys and girls, all genders. That these kids know that they have options and that they don't have to do the traditional role of, of whatever it is their parents did, or just something they've seen, what kind of advice would you give the next generation?

Just thinking about it, a career that's,

[00:23:17] **Rory Rubin:** you know, working in the trades now understanding that a four year education, a traditional education is not for everybody. And we're so depleted in the trades, find something that you really enjoy and go for it. The thing that I also try to always make time for is people can call me, people can text me, people can have conversations I've had.

Many young students, women students, call me now and ask, how'd you start? Why'd you do it? Would you do it again? How can I do it? You know, make time for the younger generation. It's really important because they're, you know, it's a fear factor to even call up somebody who is older. So it's nice that you're available to them to answer these questions and support them as I've been supported and have my mentors in that way.

Well,

[00:24:02] **Christi Powell:** on that note, how would a young person or somebody new to this podcast, who's been in accounting, maybe like I was for 10 years and really does want to see what options are available for them. How

do they get ahold of you if they want to reach out to you and just learn more about what you're doing and starting to be an entrepreneur or just being in the trades or learn more about containers, or maybe they want to buy one of your container homes.

How do we get ahold of you?

[00:24:31] **Rory Rubin:** Absolutely. It's easy. So it's my first name. R O R Y at the company, which is S I C B S. com. So Rory at S I C B S. com. And our website is just S I C B S. com as well. So please do reach out. You will hear from me. I will not be blowing off anybody. Well,

[00:24:52] **Christi Powell:** and SI Containers has a footprint on all the social media channels, correct?

[00:24:59] **Rory Rubin:** Yes. Yes. And I should let you know that the SI of SI Container Bill stands for Sustainable Imprints. Oh, I love that. That's where from. Yeah.

[00:25:07] **Christi Powell:** I should have asked that question. I don't know. I'm so used

[00:25:11] **Rory Rubin:** to calling it SI Container Builds now.

[00:25:13] **Christi Powell:** Yeah. Well, you got to shorten it so you don't have to type it.

That's awesome. And you have a website too?

[00:25:21] **Rory Rubin:** Yes. So it would be either SIContainerBuilds. com or SICBS. com. Okay.

[00:25:27] **Christi Powell:** Awesome. Thank you so much for spending your time and resources with us today. We are so excited about getting your podcast in the ears of all the students and folks that just have never heard about a container before.

And I think it's very unique and interesting and obviously you're the way you give back is going to be very inspiring to a lot of folks. I appreciate

[00:25:48] **Rory Rubin:** you. Thank you both. Thank you. Thank you.

Well, that's all for this episode. Thank you so much for listening to the Women Talk

[00:25:59] **Christi Powell:** Construction Podcast with your hosts,

[00:26:01] **Rory Rubin:** Christy Powell and Angela

[00:26:02] **Christi Powell:** Gardner. See you next time. Transcribed by <https://>

[00:26:04] **Rory Rubin:** otter. ai