



STUDIO/E

“What Exploratory Leadership has done for me, is not changed my style, but validated it and unleashed it in ways I wasn’t prepared for.”

- Bob Gardner
CEO, Gardner Builders

EXPLORATORY LEADERSHIP CASE STUDY:



Mindset & Purpose

BOB GARDNER, CEO, GARDNER BUILDERS

- **HEADQUARTERS:** Minneapolis, Duluth & Milwaukee
- **DESCRIPTION:** A hospitality company in the commercial construction business
- **WEBSITE:** gardner-builders.com

Bob Gardner loves people. As owner of Gardner Builders, a construction company that uniquely centers it’s work on hospitality, he says if his team doesn’t feel inspired, he’s not doing his job. So it is no surprise that the reason he gets out of bed every morning is to meet people, engage with them, learn and have fun along the way.

But it wasn’t always this way. For many years, Bob found himself stuck in a job that didn’t reflect his values. People weren’t valued, their strengths and energies were squandered. Amidst this struggle, Bob saw opportunity. On October 1, 2010, he left his job and launched Gardner Builders, shifting his Mindset to that of “a hospitality company, in the commercial construction business.”

Leveraging the Exploratory Leadership Principles of Purpose and Mindset was instrumental in developing the foundation for this business and continues to be essential to its growth, over a decade later.

Bob believed that Gardner Builders could exist for much more than just being a great technical builder. By grounding in purpose and exploring new ways of challenging the status quo, they could change the construction industry for the better.

Construction is notorious for negativity, poor planning and taking advantage of trade and design partners. How would they rise above this stigma? By valuing people, building trust and establishing relationships, starting with employees and partners. When they are valued, clients are valued. His staff is also clear on the company’s “why,” and the writing is on the wall (literally). In addition to being core to onboarding and training, in the meeting room of the company’s offices, the purpose statement is scrawled on the board – a reminder of why they do what they do every day.

This approach transformed Gardner Builders into a \$300 million company in its first 12 years in business.