

FROM INVESTING IN REAL ESTATE... TO MAKING A REAL DIFFERENCE

Richard Cupelli and GoSection8.com:
Transforming the affordable housing industry for good.

As with many entrepreneurs who later become advocates for social change, Richard Cupelli combined a great idea... *with an even greater passion and cause...* to help as many people as possible find affordable housing.

While still in college, Rich enrolled in night school to earn his real estate license. He wanted to become a real estate entrepreneur so he could pay for his own college and simultaneously, help his Italian immigrant parents. Rich was motivated to provide financial and physical security for his parents and develop his own financial freedom.

He learned the value of hard work at an early age and knew he had to make his own breaks in life to be successful.

Once he obtained his real estate license at the age of 20, he borrowed money from his parents, and less than a year later, purchased his first investment property.

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"We made over \$30,000 flipping our first home and I gave all of the profit to my parents. I recall they went to Italy (their homeland) and that gave me a great sense of accomplishment and pride,"
said Cupelli.

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During the next five years, Rich started his own real estate investment and brokerage business, employing over 20 agents. He was buying an average of two to three investment homes a month, and had become a mortgage broker, title examiner, a stakeholder in a real estate appraisal firm, and real estate consultant.

In that time, Rich created multiple real estate development and rehabilitation companies, with a focus on affordable housing and community redevelopment. Within those five years, he acquired, developed, and sold over \$25 million of real estate assets, oversaw and trained numerous real estate agents and acted as a consultant to many local real estate investors and equity lenders.

With his business expanding rapidly, Rich built his own "Home Buyers Network," – an end-to-end solution where he would buy the house, remodel or renovate it, sell it, and then assist with financing, the appraisal and the closing.



"It made the home-buying process for first-time buyers SUPER EASY. I held their hand through various government backed mortgage programs and became an expert on rules and regulations for most first-time buyer programs."



In a little over ten years, he had acquired over 200 homes and was a landlord to many Section 8 tenants. During this time, Rich worked closely with local housing agencies to learn everything he could about the Section 8 program.

It was at this juncture that he learned first-hand about the tragic stories and struggles of so many people who could not find affordable or adequate housing, or even understand the process. That is when Rich shifted his focus, purpose, and passion.



"Honestly, I was around 35 years old and had done everything I had set out to do. But something was missing. I started asking myself, 'what gives me the most joy?' It was not flipping homes or brokering million-dollar deals or even getting in on the next big real estate deal. It was bringing Christmas presents every year to my Section 8 tenants. By visiting my tenants, I saw and learned things that changed my perspective and motivation forever."



Rich's new mission and vision were not going to be easily achieved. The challenges were significant.

Section 8 housing was an entirely different industry and few people truly understood how to navigate the complicated process of participating in the Section 8 program.

Plus, there was negative bias and a false perception of government subsidized housing, including the tenants associated with those programs.

Rich was determined to change that.

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"It was shocking to discover that even people who figured out how to apply for Section 8 assistance, would often have to wait for more than seven years for an opportunity just to be eligible."

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The system was broken, but Rich had an idea of how to fix it ...*one piece at a time.*

With his own investment capital, Rich founded GoSection8.com in 2003. At first, the purpose was to improve the way families searched for affordable housing; but that was just the beginning.

He quickly realized that there was not sufficient government support to help low-income families and, to make real change, he needed to create an "Affordable Housing Network" that would simplify and streamline the process.

The agencies, landlords and tenants needed a common and familiar system where they could work together in a much easier and more efficient way. It was a logical concept, but not an easy task to conquer.

There are over 2000 agencies with differing policies and eligibility requirements and millions of landlords and tenants across the country who had no idea what these were.

So, just as Rich had done in college, on his own initiative, he took the time to learn everything he could about Section 8 and the "affordable housing" industry.

He met with landlords, tenants, consultants and housing agency directors to understand the challenges that each faced.

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"I started knocking on doors – a lot of doors. I went to the Delray Beach Housing Authority first (with doughnuts in hand) and got them to buy into the GoSection8.com vision. I went to all of the siloed housing agencies in South Florida and all of them registered for GoSection8.com for FREE and started to create an Affordable Housing Network."

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Together, under Rich's leadership as the CEO/Founder, along with his friend since high school, Frank Gualtieri (*who joined the company in 2008 as an owner and COO*) and John McKay (*President of Nan McKay and Associates*), the three impassioned change agents led the design and system implementation of the GoSection8.com platform that is now used by over 600+ housing agencies, representing thousands of cities across the nation.

Over the past 17 years, GoSection8.com has evolved into the largest affordable housing listing network and rent reasonableness (rent comparability) service in the country.

The GoSection8.com affordable housing database is accessed by tens of millions of visitors, who perform hundreds of millions of searches each year. The proprietary rent reasonable reports have saved taxpayers more than \$3+ billion dollars.

In fact, when HUD developed the 2007 rent reasonableness handbook, the GoSection8 team provided valuable input and helped establish an official definition of "rent reasonableness."



One of the most fundamental aspects of Rich's mission is that there is no charge to families for the web-based service, and both landlords and housing authorities can post listings for free.

By monetizing their service through ads and optional premium subscriptions from agencies and landlords, GoSection8.com has been able to serve millions of families for FREE every year.



Today, GoSection8 partners with countless government housing agencies directly to host local listings for their areas and its affordable housing database serves families, both with and without vouchers.

For those who know Rich, or for those who meet him for the first time, his passion, mission and vision become clear within seconds of speaking with him:

To transform the affordable housing system, for good.

GoSection8.com's dedicated team includes over 60 devoted individuals who strive to make affordable housing accessible to the tens of millions of Americans who need reliable and efficient options when seeking an affordable place to call home.

Rich's mission and core values are reflected with each new software and service offering... and the most revolutionary and exciting affordable housing solutions are yet to come.



To connect with Rich Cupelli on LinkedIn, [click here](#)



To reach Rich via email:
Rcupelli@GoSection8.com

For more information on GoSection8.com, or to schedule an interview with Rich, please contact
rjames@gosection8.com

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