

# CHRONICLES

TALES OF GREATNESS IN THE MAKING FROM AWARD WINNING INSPECTORS

## ROBERT GOULD

PRESIDENT'S CLUB AWARD



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- Robert Gould St. Charles, MO

One day in 2000, Robert Gould left for his job in the tool and design industry, just like he had for 22 years. But that day was different. After arriving at work, Robert packed up his desk and said good-bye to his \$80,000-a-year career.

“My wife, Heather, who was pregnant at home with twins, heard the garage door go up and asked, ‘What are you doing home?’ I said, ‘I’ve had enough.’” At the time, Robert had two other children and a new 3,000-square-foot house in St. Louis, Mo. He’d been living the good life but – with long hours and little control – it wasn’t the kind of life he’d wanted.

As his family lived on savings, Robert began to develop future business plans. “I asked myself, ‘What’s the best way to make money?’ I knew it had to be in the home inspection industry. St. Charles County is the fourth fastest-growing county in the U.S., with an average of 200 new home starts a month in the summer.”

He decided on a National Property Inspections franchise because he thinks the company is a class act. “It’s idiotic to buy another franchise. Roland’s (President Roland Bates) philosophy is that we’ll get you to work, whatever it takes. NPI is one step ahead of everyone else. None of my competitors are as happy as me.”

Since Heather had worked in real estate advertising, Robert had the advantage of contacts to help him get his venture off the ground. Beyond that, he grew his business by word of mouth. Early on, he made presentations at Realtor meetings and always asked potential customers what they didn’t like about the inspection company

they were using. “Most said that they took too long to get the report and that the inspector didn’t tell the clients everything they needed to know about their house.” So Robert concentrated on providing timely and comprehensive service.

He’s also found that cheesecake is the secret to his referral providers’ hearts. “After I get that first referral, I drop off a cheesecake. Sometimes I leave one at an office with a note that says: ‘this is for all your future referrals.’” Robert and Heather are happy that the risk they took is paying off. Heather is now helping Robert with marketing, and the couple has had two more children – a family of six. Robert’s brother, George, has signed up to assist in the business.

Robert’s theory on success is simple – listen to what your customers want and give it to them. And work on communication. “I tell homebuyers that just about anything in a house can be fixed. That makes them, and the Realtor, very happy.”