

MOST ADMIRED CEO

DAN FORSMAN, BERKSHIRE HATHAWAY HOMESERVICES GEORGIA PROPERTIES

Dan Forsman believes in servant leadership, staying humble and hungry

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Dan Forsman, 57, credits his resiliency and passion for real estate as the driving forces that have helped him and his company, Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Georgia Properties, survive some of the industry's toughest economic times. Those characteristics have guided him through three company makeovers that ended with Prudential Georgia Realty becoming BHHS in 2013. A 1982 graduate of the University of Georgia, he held a variety of positions with Prudential before being named president and CEO in 1999, a title he's carried into the BHHS transition.

Q&A **What does leadership and being a leader mean to you?** Leadership is about a few things. It's about having the vision and using your influence to motivate and challenge people to be the best they can be. Being the leader means you've got to have your eyes on the horizon, have a plan to execute and have support for your team. I believe in servant leadership, in staying humble and hungry. No job is beneath me. I like to think my mission statement is helping someone achieve goals at a much higher level than they would in my absence. I also aim to influence what they do in their careers so they achieve better financial, emotional, physical and philosophical goals. A lot of my job is motivation because many times they don't realize how good they can be.

What factor(s) most helped you get ahead in your career and contributed to your success? Candidly, I'm generally on the clock early. I believe in having a cadence of accountability in your life. I have a plan every day, and I work what I need to get done early in the day, then I respond to activities and return phone calls. What's helped me get ahead is being persistent, showing up, being in the right place when an opportunity came up, putting my hand up and saying I want to play. I bought into the company with a vision to make it great, and people chose to invest in it. It's also important to have good discipline and a good attitude, the humble servant attitude, a we-can, we-care spirit, and to be decisive. If you can't make a decision, you'll never get ahead; decide and move on. And I wouldn't be here without some level of divine intervention. I'm very grateful and thankful.

Please give some details about something you have achieved in the past year that you are most proud of. This was our



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second full year being Berkshire Hathaway. Beginning in 2014, we had to convert the company from Prudential and create an image. The thing I'm most proud of is we've now created a culture in our organization that's in alignment with the vision an image that Berkshire Hathaway has nationally and internationally as one of the most admired companies. We rolled out a luxury campaign and we've stayed true to it with a high end, Coco Chanel feel and look. I'm very proud that the consumers have responded, and we've had a massive increase in our high-end market share. At the same time, we haven't forgotten why we are here: to service our clients and customer. When we were Prudential, we were the first-time,

move-up company. Now we're expanding into that high end market with great success while creating a culture in line with who Berkshire Hathaway is without losing who we were in the first place. I'm very proud of my team.

How do you drive innovation at your company or organization? For me personally, I always believe there's a better way. World class doesn't happen by accident. The steps you need to get better are all around us. Just look for them. I'm always on the lookout. I like to be an expert novice; I look at really complicated things and try to reduce them to a simple thought process that gives the greatest leverage. Those who know why beat those who know how.

How do you inspire your colleagues and employees? I believe we should be very responsible. I try to return my email and voicemail every day. I always try to give an answer or get back to you. I believe in transparency and mutual trust. I always ask

people what they think. A thank-you and I'm sorry go a long way. Public and private acknowledgment of everyday activities is what people need. I can offer encouragement, with a positive coaching mentality.

How do you make tough decisions? Our vision statement is called the Right Choice. It's a complicated decision, making the right choice. The good Lord gave me the ability to step way back and figure out what the right choice is without being politically indebted or politically correct. I put clients and customers first, and everything else takes care of itself. I don't have to win every day, but if I do the right thing and am honest, it will work out in the end.

Describe your vision for your company or organization. My vision is to continue to grow our market share while not forgetting who we are. What others promise, we deliver. We're a fully diversified real estate company. Consumers can finance, buy, close and get a warranty on their home. I want my company to be the most admired, to get the best marks for customer service and rentals and to be known as the place to go for new home sales and marketing because we get extraordinary results for our clients.

How do you plan for the future of your company or organization? Every year we do an annual business plan. I personally have a 3-year outlook on the horizon. I want more agents to do more deals than anyone else in the market. I want them to do more direct sales, to provide home services from lending to warranty.

What piece of advice would you share with other CEOs? Never quit. Always have a vision. Good enough never is. CEOs are a unique group of people. They've come through many layers of life to get to the pinnacle of the organization. My advice is stay true to who you are, and keep a great attitude. Many times it's darkest before the dawn. Stay in touch with your organization. Have a plan and work it. Love what you do. Know how to say thank-you and I'm sorry. I assure you people who aspired to this level are in their spirit humble and always looking for how to be better. It doesn't happen by accident. Remember it's not a sprint; it's a marathon. Find a way to recharge your batteries—through prayer, meditation, taking time to read and study. Keep a brain full of positive ideas that flow into the workplace. Be thankful; be grateful. When bad things happen, and they will, don't let the sun set on your wrath. With a great attitude, you can be a survivor.