

# Winning the Long Game

With thoughtful decision-making and a knack for retaining customers and employees, Freedom Mortgage has earned a spot on the Inc. 5000 for six years running.

**FREEDOM MORTGAGE**

#2716

2018 INC. 5000 RANKING

6

NUMBER OF YEARS RUNNING ON THE INC. 5000 LIST

233

PERCENT

THREE-YEAR GROWTH

1,090,001

NUMBER OF CUSTOMERS AND COUNTING

224

BILLION DOLLARS

WORTH OF LOANS SERVICED

**ONE OF THE ONLY CONSTANTS** in the real estate finance market is change. After 30 years in the business, Stan Middleman, president and CEO of Freedom Mortgage, has gotten quite good at anticipating and planning for both headwinds and tailwinds. He emphasizes agility in his management style, and he works hard to teach his team “to embrace change, rather than be throttled by it.” This ability has been key to the top mortgage lender’s steady growth.

Another key to Freedom Mortgage’s success is consistency, which might sound at odds with flexibility at first, but when Middleman lays it out, it all makes sense. Since the beginning, the business has been dedicated to fostering home ownership in America. Middleman explains that home ownership is one of the few vehicles regular, working-class people have for building wealth. Freedom Mortgage helps customers find the best home loan possible, and take advantage of unique opportunities that come with home ownership, such as tapping into a home’s equity to get cash to consolidate high-interest debt or make big-ticket purchases.

This year marks Freedom Mortgage’s sixth consecutive year on the Inc. 5000 list, but Middleman describes the company’s journey as a slow and steady climb. “We have built our business one loan at a time, to the point where we now serve more than one million customers,” he says. Last year alone, Freedom Mortgage acquired nearly 400,000 new clients. But as important as growth is retention. The company is committed to continually meeting customers’ needs. Its goal isn’t just to find new customers—it is to keep them for life.

**DELIBERATE DECISION-MAKING**

Middleman also emphasizes retention in the workplace. Many team members have been there for 15, 20, or even 25 years. Middleman works hard to maintain an exciting company culture—one in which people see the benefits of longevity. At Freedom Mortgage, those benefits extend beyond compensation.



Tenured employees receive ample opportunities to learn more, advance their career, and give back by participating in any number of charitable events the company sponsors in the local community.

There’s something else Middleman tries to do consistently: treat people right. To do that, you have to start by thinking about them. Before making any decision, he considers how his actions will affect the people he serves—his customers and his employees. “If you are not thinking about someone, it is hard to do a good job at treating them right. Being conscientious is a big part of it,” he explains. “It is also important to recognize people’s work. I don’t think I have ever addressed a group of people in our business and not thanked them.”

Over the last three decades, the Freedom Mortgage team has proven its ability to succeed in all sorts of economic climates. It knows how to anticipate change and how to make smart decisions that reflect future market trends. Without this ability, it wouldn’t be one of the country’s top 10 mortgage lenders. But that is not the whole story. Middleman knows his comfort with change is complemented by his championing of consistency: consistent values, a consistent client base, and a consistent team. ■