

Loyalty, Dedication, And Determination

An Interview with Stanley C. Middleman, Founder, President, and Chief Executive Officer, Freedom Mortgage Corp.

EDITORS' NOTE Stanley Middleman is Founder, President, and Chief Executive Officer of Freedom Mortgage Corp., one of the largest privately held financial companies in the United States. His story is told in the book *Seeing Around Corners: Achieving Success in Business and Life* by R. Christopher Whalen. Middleman has nearly five decades of business experience. He is a graduate of Temple University.



Stanley C. Middleman

COMPANY BRIEF Founded in 1990 and headquartered in Boca Raton, Florida, Freedom Mortgage (freedommortgage.com) is an independent mortgage company that provides mortgage loans through retail, wholesale, and correspondent channels. One of the nation's largest non-bank mortgage lenders and servicers, the company is licensed in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Freedom Mortgage is a top VA and FHA (government-insured) lender in the U.S. and is one of the mortgage industry's largest philanthropic supporters of the USO of Pennsylvania and New Jersey. The company is also renowned for its vibrant work environment, where all team members can thrive. Earlier this year, Freedom Mortgage was honored, for the fourth year in a row, as a Top Workplaces USA. Additionally, last year the company made it back on the Inc. 5000 Honor Roll, for the ninth time, as one of the fastest-growing private companies in the country. Freedom Mortgage's mission is to foster homeownership for all consumers across America.

How do you describe Freedom Mortgage's culture and values?

I'm proud and honored to have employees who have worked with me for more than 25 years. Freedom Mortgage's culture is based on loyalty, dedication, and determination. It's us here at Freedom against the world and we're all focused on the same goals and moving in the same direction.

What has made Freedom Mortgage an industry leader, and how do you define the Freedom Mortgage difference?

The mortgage industry is heavily dependent on interest rates, and we have been agile to seize opportunities and to contract as needed which has enabled Freedom Mortgage to grow and expand since 1990.

What do you see as Freedom Mortgage's responsibility to be engaged in the communities it serves and a force for good in society?

As a leader in VA and FHA loans – working with Veterans, active-duty military service members, individuals with low credit scores, and/or those who can't put down 20 percent – it's important for us at Freedom Mortgage to give back, especially to support our customers. We have a long partnership with and support many national and local nonprofits including USO, Salvation Army, Home For Our Troops, Feeding America, and Children's Hospital of Philadelphia to name a few. We encourage our employees to give back and provide opportunities throughout the year to volunteer or fundraise for a good cause.

What interested you in buying an ownership stake in the Philadelphia Phillies?

My fondest memories growing up are those of my dad taking me to a baseball game.

When I walk into the stadium and see the green diamond everything – worries, deadlines, etc. – seems to melt away. So, when the opportunity came to invest in my favorite team, I jumped at the chance.

The book, *Seeing Around Corners*, tells your life story. Will you highlight the book and the key messages conveyed in the book?

The book intertwines my personal and professional journey with my principles for business success. The central theme of the book – seeing around corners – means anticipating future challenges and opportunities based on past experiences. Business leaders need to use their insights to predict and strategize for the future. Other key messages include resilience and adaptability, and the importance of people-centric leadership.

What do you feel are the keys to effective leadership and how do you approach your management style?

It's important to have a shared vision and goals so everyone from the top down knows where we are headed and what we need to accomplish. Leaders take on responsibilities and make the time to mentor.

With all that you have accomplished in your career, are you able to enjoy the process and take moments to celebrate the wins?

Yes, but I don't celebrate for too long. It's important to move forward and set new goals and achieve something else. For me, it's important to continue to evolve and to take action. If you are not evolving, then you are dying.

What advice do you offer to young people beginning their careers?

Life is all about learning and growing, so learn from all your encounters, achievements, and struggles. Look at failures as lessons, don't ever let a misstep stop you. There is not much difference between the change in high school to college and the change you will experience going from college to starting your professional career. There is an increase in intensity, but it is nothing more than a transition. These life changes are usually accompanied by the anxiety of facing the unknown, yet you will quickly learn your way around the job and figure it out. You should accept, and try to enjoy, what you are going through and don't be overwhelmed – everything will work out – just wait, be patient, and be kind to yourself. Remember that life is all about learning and growing. ●

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