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Most Admired CEOs

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Most Admired CEOs: Warren Smith III, Avison Young

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Warren Smith III is the managing director for Avison Young's Tennessee offices in Nashville, Memphis and Knoxville, which employ more than 100 associates. Avison Young provides commercial real estate services, including leasing, advisory services, property and project management, investment sales and capital markets.



NATHAN MORGAN | NASHVILLE BUSINESS JOURNAL

Warren Smith of Avison Young's Tennessee office

What is the first thing you do in the morning to prepare for the day, and what is the last thing you do before going to bed? I have been pouring through the Psalms each morning, and I am continually amazed at the applicability of the verses. Before I collapse at night, I make sure I have coffee for me and Diet Mountain Dew for my wife.

What one college course best prepares someone for the role of CEO? It is difficult to pinpoint a specific course, but I took linear algebra as a sophomore at Sewanee in my quest to be a math major. The class was anything but linear; it rocked my GPA, but importantly, it has kept me humble throughout my life. Thank you Dr. Puckett!

Who would play you in a movie about your life, and what would the movie be called? Richard Gere, "BLL."

If you had to run another company, which would you choose and why? Our Nashville office recently volunteered for the Salvation Army. Whereas they certainly do not need me, it would be an incredible experience to run an organization that has such positive impacts on communities and families.

Describe a tough lesson you had to learn as a CEO. By nature, I am a consensus builder, and I struggle with failures of consensus. Any person in a role of leadership encounters situations which cannot have 100 percent buy-in. The tough lesson, which I still need to learn, is to accept the role and understand that there will be times of loneliness when agreements cannot be reached.

If you could have a theme song play when you entered a room, which song would you choose, and why? U2's "Beautiful Day" would be an excellent theme song and especially appropriate for a commercial real estate firm. In the ups and downs of a commission-based business, we must adhere to a positive outlook every day. The verses about "no space to rent in this town" and "the traffic is stuck" should also resonate with Nashvillians!

What do you most admire about this year's Lifetime Achievement winner, Cordia Harrington? I do not have the pleasure of knowing Cordia, but I certainly admire her firm's focus on her associates and I hope we are deliberate about replicating such appropriate objectives.