

MEET FIVE WHOSE BEHIND-THE-SCENES LEADERSHIP MAKES THEIR COMPANIES TICK

UNSUNG HEROES

SOUTHWEST FLORIDA is brimming with successful business owners and CEOs—people who are the public faces of their companies and driving forces in the community. But any good CEO will tell you that his or her success hinges on the efforts of others. Here, then, are profiles of a few of Southwest Florida's "unsung heroes," people who've helped to propel their companies or the business community at large and who don't always make it into the spotlight.

by **JENNIFER REED** photography by **ERIK KELLAR**

Talk about furthering your company's (and country's) reputation.

Dan Forgey, the production manager for Norman Love Confections, was recently named the U.S. Chocolate Master at a competition hosted by Cacao Barry, a French brand of chocolate and cocoa products. He'll represent the

United States at the Cacao Barry World Chocolate Master competition this fall in Paris, squaring off against chocolatiers from 19 countries.

The win was an affirmation for Forgey—who'd once had reservations about switching from his first love, pastries, into chocolates. But Forgey knows he's not doing this for himself alone. "Competing with [Love's] name... you can't hope for the best, you have to be the best," Forgey, 37, says.

World competitions are pretty high-profile stuff. Even so, Forgey's biggest influence is felt not in the limelight, but in his daily work at the South Fort Myers factory. He oversees a 12-person crew that produces as many as 40,000 to 45,000 pieces of chocolate a day, manages inventory, sources products and determines daily output, among other things—including concocting the recipes

behind the famous chocolates.

Forgey develops all of the fillings and the ganaches for the 36 pieces in the standard line plus invents 20 new pieces every year for holidays like Christmas and Valentine's Day.

"The biggest thing I have to focus on when I make a ganache is when you bite into it, you have to know what it is," Forgey explains. "If it's strawberry and cheesecake, it has to taste like strawberry and cheesecake."

He once remade an apricot piece 25 times before it tasted like the fresh fruit. Another time, he worked for three months perfecting marshmallows for a s'mores piece. He recently spent five days at a workshop on caramels because he wanted to understand the chemistry of the sticky treat. "You can follow a recipe but if you don't know how things work, you can't troubleshoot," he says.

Love had pursued Forgey some eight years ago when Forgey was working as a pastry chef at the Waldorf Astoria in Naples (now the Naples Grande Beach Resort).

"His commitment to creating excellence and brand integrity is a big reason for our success and international recognition," Love says.

Forgey is simply glad he's landed in a place that strives to innovate even when it sits at the top of the chocolate-making world.

"If you're not innovating, people are going to catch up to you," he says.

FOR THE LOVE OF
CHOCOLATE
DAN FORGEY

