

# Most people-focused CEO of the year

**Joint winner**  
**Martin Bennett,**  
**CEO, HomeServe**

**Joint winner**  
**David Done,**  
**CEO, RHP Group**



“As the incoming CEO of HomeServe’s UK business, after having worked across the group for more than a decade, I knew two things: the business I was about to take control of was in need of a forward-looking strategy to enable it to properly move on from its recent difficult past, and if this strategy were to be successful it needed, more than anything, to engage and inspire the people of the business and empower them to bring it to life,” says Martin Bennett.

Home repairs and insurance firm HomeServe had been through torrid times, but Bennett’s leadership has helped it back onto an even keel. He became group CEO in January

2014 and his direction has seen engagement rise from 56% to 84%, customer retention rates rise to 83%, and profits to £56.4 million. An impressive 94% of employees agree they understand what HomeServe is trying to achieve as a business.

Bennett is a great believer in open conversation. Every new starter meets him and he holds monthly ‘Big Conversations’ with randomly selected groups from across the business. He also broadcasts live to all employees every two weeks from the on-brand Big Red Sofa.

All this has led to an impressive 97% approval rating on Glassdoor from HomeServe’s employee base, past and present, making him the fourth-highest-rated UK CEO in 2015/16. And it impressed our panel of HR director judges too. “[Bennett] has driven root and branch change through people,” said one. Another praised Bennett’s “impressive turnaround in both business results and the engagement of his people... in a difficult and largely unloved sector”, adding: “He took time out to plan and then execute his unique strategy.”

When one of our HR director judges says “I want to work here” about your submission, you know you must be doing something right. And the words of housing association RHP’s Investors in People assessor (RHP won IIP Gold Employer of the Year) attest to the organisation, and CEO David Done’s, people focus: “You have created such a warm, embracing culture at RHP... you have created a culture that is creative, fun, innovative and totally supportive.”

Done knows the importance of surrounding himself with similarly great people. “Big egos don’t lead the organisation, real people do. I’m ruthless in ensuring I have the right people working with me who will help me cultivate and protect our culture and who are curious and humble,” he says. He truly gets the importance of people in delivering a successful strategy, saying: “[Culture] is our gold dust and our people are the most potent ingredient to making a difference. By investing in our people, we are investing in our future success.”

A positive ‘can do’ approach to work is king at the housing association and is evidenced by its



impressive results – in the past five years its operating surplus has increased from £13 million to £18.6 million, it has had a 24% reduction in complaints and its service was rated the friendliest in the UK by the Customer Service Institute. This last one is particularly impressive when you consider RHP is being compared to retailers such as John Lewis.

Our judges praised Done’s authenticity. “He comes over as someone who truly believes what he says,” commented one.

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## Finalists

**Mark Constantine**  
 chairman, Lush

**David Dyson**  
 CEO, Three

**Martin Hellawell**  
 CEO, Softcat

**Andrew Kluge**  
 CEO, Cosatto

**Andrew Lawson**  
 senior vice-president North Europe, Middle East and Africa, UK&I managing director, Salesforce

**Paul Pomroy**  
 CEO, McDonald’s

**Jonathan Raggett**  
 managing director, Red Carnation Hotels

**Jason Stockwood**  
 CEO, Simply Business