

AND THE MOST VALUABLE PLAYER IS... **YOU!**

During March Madness, basketball is a hotbed of excitement in the U.S., as 68 men's college teams compete for the national championship. When this year's teams had been whittled down to the Final Four, all of them were underdogs that had overtaken top-seeded teams in historic upsets.

As an employee, you can learn a lot from athletes by studying how they train and perform. One of the most important lessons is that no matter where you come from, or how strongly the odds are stacked against you, you can rise to the top. What matters is the depth and firmness of your commitment to do whatever it takes to succeed.

What drives athletes? What steps do they take to achieve their goals? How can you achieve similar success? Moving up in a career, whether on the basketball court or at work, takes dedication, focus, and skill.

If you want to be your company's most valuable player, take these steps:

- **Don't be afraid to fail.** You'll learn more from your failures than your successes. But learning from your failures requires that you analyze your shortcomings, so you can address them and move forward. Self-imposed limitations are the biggest barriers to success. If a football kicker misses three out of five kicks in a game, he analyzes what he did wrong and practices until he gets better.
- **Conduct a self-assessment.** Examine yourself and your skills. Take an honest look at your attitude, your work ethic, and your talents and know-how. A self-assessment will allow you to measure your progress so far and start moving forward. It will also help you become more proactive with your career and set yourself apart from the other employees.
- **Seek constructive feedback.** In sports, coaches give their players constant feedback during practices and games. The players may not ask for it, but they get it. As an employee who wants to improve your performance, it's critical to ask for feedback from your superiors and co-workers. Ask them what you're doing well and what you need to do better. Use the feedback to develop a plan of action.
- **Believe in yourself.** Success begins in your mind. Nothing will happen until you make it happen. Realize that you can do anything

you set your mind to. Praise yourself to yourself. Positive personal affirmations will help you develop strong beliefs that will eventually become second nature. Pat yourself on the back when you take a step forward, then take the next step.

- **Set goals.** Strongly visualize what you want to achieve and become. Your goals should be realistic, specific, and measurable. They should include a timeframe to keep you focused. There's a saying, "If you can dream it, you can do it." Create a blueprint for your life and your career, and set benchmarks to track your progress toward your goals.
- **Focus.** Don't let life distract you from your aspirations. Your job affects everything you do, including your personal life, so it's critical to be good at it and succeed.
- **Be positive and passionate.** Don't give up. If you do, you'll stagnate, and you'll stop moving ahead. Being positive and passionate includes being a good team member, doing whatever you can to ensure the success of each player.
- **Never stop learning.** If you fail to learn, you'll fail to grow. Learning might mean taking an online class, reading at least one book on personal development every month, attending seminars and lectures in your field, and taking advantage of tuition reimbursement opportunities.
- **Become indispensable.** Make a difference. Do more than what's expected of you. Think outside the box. Execute your dreams. Hard work and creative drive separate extraordinary employees from mediocre ones. Create value for your company, and you'll become a most valuable player.

Please visit www.customer-service.com for more information on John Tschohl and the Service Quality Institute. **RO**

John Tschohl is the founder and president of Service Quality Institute, a global leader in customer service. He is considered one of the world's foremost authorities on all aspects of customer service, and is the author of several books including Moving Up: A Step-by-Step Guide to Creating Your Success. His monthly strategic newsletter is available online at no cost at www.customer-service.com.

