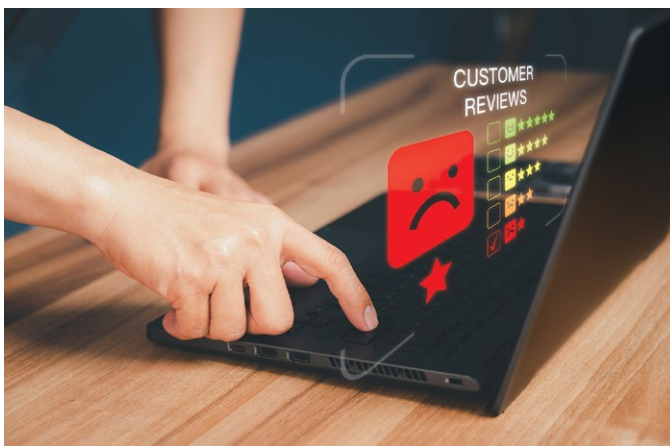


## THIN THE HERD— FIRE NON-PERFORMING EMPLOYEES



There's a term ranchers use when they're removing weak animals – it's called "thinning the herd." It could also be used in the workforce in relation to terminating non-performing employees, something most organizations don't do nearly as often as they should.

Retaining employees who perform poorly is expensive both financially and emotionally. It costs a lot of money to repair the damage they do – including the time it takes to correct their mistakes and deal with customer complaints, sagging morale, and ongoing friction and infighting.

The negative impacts on morale are bound to result in increased employee turnover. The high achievers – the employees who show up on time, work hard, and do more than is expected – won't want to stay. They won't respect you, and they'll soon be heading out the door to work for someone who won't tolerate bad employees.

They'll notice when you give the poor-performing employees a pass, and they'll start to question your ability to lead and make good decisions. They'll also resent you for expecting them to pick up the slack. You should do everything in your power to keep your high-achieving employees.

Keeping substandard employees will impact you personally and professionally. Bad employees can take you down with them. When your superiors realize what you're costing the company by not firing

the misfits, you could very well be overlooked for promotion or get fired yourself.

How do you go about letting those employees go? First, you must realize that you can't save them from themselves – you can't change them. They simply don't care about their performance, you, or your company. Cut them loose.

Good managers can identify the negative traits of an employee within the first 30 days. That includes spotting poor job knowledge, job fit, and performance. At year one, you should have a clear record of performance reviews. Take notes, document problems, and track corrective actions. Make sure your employees understand what's expected of them, and why.

If you expect an employee to improve, both of you should understand what the improvement should look like. Schedule time to review the expectations and benchmarks. If they haven't been met, it's termination time.

Firing someone can seem heartless, but continuing to employ people who routinely fail is a disservice to both them and your organization. On the positive side, it might serve as a wakeup call that spurs those employees to improve their skills, their attitude, and their performance.

It can take time to rebuild your team spirit after terminating a bad employee. It can leave you feeling empty and exhausted – but you can turn things around by quickly getting back on track and doing whatever it takes to build a strong, cohesive team of employees who'll respect you for "thinning the herd."

Visit [www.customer-service.com](http://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](http://www.customer-service.com).*

