

# WORK HORSES AND SHOW HORSES

## WHAT'S IN YOUR HERD?



Every company has two types of horses: work horses and show horses. Work horses are focused on getting the job done, while show horses are more concerned with looking good and playing a part.

Work horses are committed to understanding the rules and following them. They show up every day, ready to “run the race.” They know what needs to be done, and they do it. They’re proud of their accomplishments, work well with others, and are dedicated to being the best they can be. They set goals, seek constructive feedback, and continue to learn.

Show horses, on the other hand, focus on how they are perceived. They dress well, and they’re charming. They are often schmoozers who ingratiate themselves with their superiors, often taking credit for work they didn’t do. They strut – or rather, they prance – around the company, acting as though they are more important than other members of their team. They show up, but they don’t produce. They might have great personalities, but they don’t have great performance.

Work horses justifiably, dislike the show horses. The show horses, however, are often so narcissistic that they aren’t aware of how others see them. They operate in their own minds, giving no thought to how their actions impact others.

If you are a supervisor or manager, you would do well to identify the kind of horses you have in your herd. Focus on your work horses by taking the following steps:

- **Encourage them to be creative.** Encourage them to think outside the box. Listen to them, and ask them for their ideas. By doing this, you are showing them that you respect them and that you value their input and their skills.
- **Communicate with them.** Set concrete goals and deadlines and ask them to identify roadblocks preventing them from doing their best. Then ask them what you can do to eliminate those roadblocks.
- **Motivate them.** Money might motivate an employee for a time, but it won’t last long, and it won’t create loyalty. What will motivate employees is praising them in public – in front of your other employees and in front of your customers – and it won’t cost you a dime. When you praise employees, they will work harder for you and your company. Recognition influences self-esteem, and self-esteem influences performance. Public praise also motivates others to perform at high levels and earn similar praise.
- **Nurture them.** Coach your employees and give them the tools they need to do their jobs. Ask about their goals – then do whatever you can to help them achieve them. When employees feel that you are invested in their future, they will be committed to performing at their highest level.

Take a good, hard look at your herd. Identify the work horses and the show horses. Focus on your work horses, because they will drive your business to great heights. Turn them loose and let them run with full energy and creativity.

Then set your show horses free – let them go strut in other arenas. **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).*

