

Performance reviews: Road map for employers and employees; keys to success

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MINNEAPOLIS (Dec. 1, 2025) — As a manager — or an employee — performance reviews are critical to your success. Essentially, they are road maps, letting you know where you are today and what you need to do to move forward. Performance reviews not only help employees by identifying their strengths and weaknesses, they help managers build winning teams.

There are several steps involved in conducting a performance review that will help you assess and critique employees and develop a plan to move forward. The first is to set aside a specific amount of time for that process. It's important that you let employees know what you will be discussing and that you give them enough time to prepare in advance of the meeting. That preparation will include asking them to assess their own performances.

Then have those employees deliver their self-assessments to you in advance of the meeting so you have time to learn where they see themselves now — and in the future. Ask them to examine their interactions with customers, coworkers, and other team members and to identify where they think they excel and where they can improve. Also, ask them if there are any roadblocks they are facing and how they would like your help in dealing with — or removing — them.

You, too, need to prepare by completing a performance assessment that will lead you to grade employees' actions and their levels of improvement in the past. This process involves reviewing employees' files and referring to notes you took during previous performance reviews that document previous performances, expectations met, and specific achievements or incidents — positive and negative. Some of the standards you should address include the employee's reliability, work habits, initiative, skills, job commitment, and attitude toward coworkers and customers.

Use that documentation to gauge the success of past goals while creating a plan for improved or continued performance. Provide your assessments to employees before the meeting so they will be familiar with the process and the questions you will be asking them. Follow up with employees in advance of the meeting by reminding them of its specific time and date.

Avoid distractions during the performance review. That includes turning off your cell phone and letting other employees and colleagues know that you are not to be interrupted for the next hour. This is important because it lets employees know that, during that time, they will be your focus and have your full attention.

Work with employees to create a plan and to get their buy-ins for implementing it. This step requires that you

have an open dialogue by asking employees for their input and on ways they can improve their performance. This includes asking employees to assess your performance and identify what you can do to improve your interaction and communication to help them improve and perform at their best.

Performance reviews are important and should be conducted on a regular basis. They let your employees know that you value them and want to do whatever you can to help them succeed. When your employees succeed, you will, too.

For more information on the Service Quality Institute, visit www.customer-service.com.

● About the Author

John Tschohl is the founder and president of the Service Quality Institute, a global leader in customer service with operations in more than 40 countries. He is considered one of the world's foremost authorities on all aspects of customer service and has developed 20 customer service training programs and written eight books on customer service and success — including his bestseller, "Achieving Excellence Through Customer Service" — that are used by companies throughout the world. His monthly strategic newsletter is available at no charge at www.customer-service.com. He can also be reached on Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter.

Innovative Warehouse Solutions inks deal with Amazon Shipping, New York fulfillment company partners with its biggest competitor

By Media team, info@invwhs.com
Innovative Warehouse Solutions

NEW YORK (Nov. 21, 2025) — Innovative Warehouse Solutions (IWS), a leading New York-based eCommerce fulfillment company, has officially signed a partnership deal with Amazon Shipping, Amazon's small parcel delivery network.

Historically focused solely on supporting Amazon's own eCommerce operations, Amazon Shipping now reaches 90 percent of the U.S. population with transit speeds that compete with UPS Ground and USPS Ground Advantage. In 2024 alone, the service delivered 5.7 billion packages, securing its position as the largest small parcel carrier in the U.S. by volume.

Addressing questions about the unusual nature of a fulfillment company partnering with its biggest competitor, Brian Gibbons, CEO of IWS, emphasized that Amazon is a net positive for the entire eCommerce ecosystem. Now in his early 40s, Gibbons recalled a time when online shopping felt risky, noting that Amazon transformed the industry by introducing safety, trust, and standards. This foundation enabled a generation of entrepreneurs to launch businesses — from Shopify stores to multi-channel operations — with Gibbons adding, "We're all kind of standing on Amazon's shoulders."

Gibbons confirmed that most brands supported by IWS also sell on Amazon, framing the platform as a core channel akin to Sears or Macy's in the 1990s, but not the sole revenue stream. "Smart brands diversify," he said, noting that IWS clients typically sell across Shopify, Amazon, Faire, Bloomingdale's, and other platforms. IWS's strength lies in its omni-channel fulfillment solution, which aggregates orders from all channels, leverages a centralized inventory pool, and tailors fulfillment to each channel's unique requirements — resulting in lower holding costs and greater efficiency for brands.

When asked what IWS offers that Amazon cannot,

Gibbons acknowledged Amazon's exceptional operational efficiency but highlighted customization as a key differentiator. Services like retail EDI, kitting, and channel-specific packaging are areas where third-party fulfillment providers like IWS deliver more value, as Amazon likely does not see sufficient ROI to prioritize these tailored offerings.

Gibbons cited multiple factors driving the partnership with Amazon Shipping, starting with the stagnation of the small parcel 3PL industry over the past 20 years. While USPS's Ground Advantage represented progress, legacy carriers continue to impose outdated surcharges — including residential delivery fees and fuel surcharges — even as residential deliveries have become standard. Amazon Shipping is disrupting this model by eliminating residential surcharges and offering deep discounts on fuel charges unless prices spike significantly, a change that Gibbons described as "huge for eCommerce brands."

Beyond cost, performance was a critical consideration. Gibbons noted that smaller carriers may offer attractive rates but often lack reach and speed, whereas Amazon Shipping provides 7-day-a-week delivery, faster windows for long-distance shipments, and employs uniformed drivers in branded trucks instead of gig workers. Additionally, the service includes delivery photo confirmation — a feature rarely offered at scale by other carriers.

The partnership aligns with IWS's mission to operate as an extension of its clients' businesses: while clients manage product, marketing, and conversion, IWS handles logistics. This requires staying ahead of industry trends and identifying opportunities to enhance cost-effectiveness, speed, and reliability — all areas where Amazon Shipping excels. "In many cases, we're giving our brands faster delivery at a lower cost," Gibbons said. "That's a no-brainer."

With this new partnership, IWS continues its commitment to providing flexible, tech-forward fulfillment solutions that empower growing eCommerce brands to thrive in an increasingly competitive market.

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