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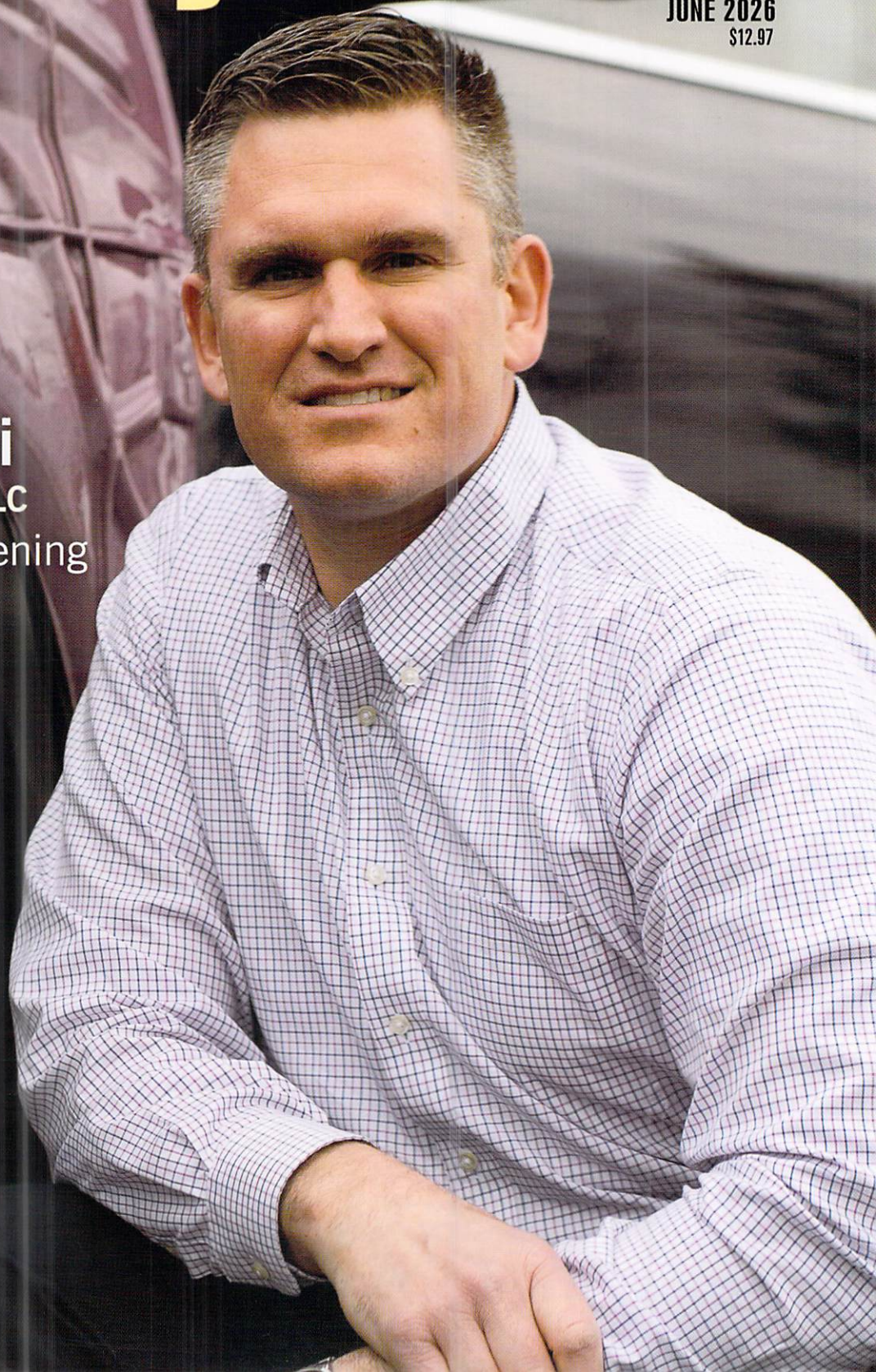
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Performance Reviews

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Performance Reviews: A Road Map for You and Your Employees

BY JOHN TSCHOHL

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 em-



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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-in 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.

MANA welcomes your comments on this article. Write to us at mana@manaonline.org.



John Tschohl is the founder and president of Service Quality Institute — the 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 17 customer service training programs, including his book and training program *Coaching for Success*. His monthly strategic newsletter is available online at no charge at www.customer-service.com. He can also be reached on Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter.