

Posted: September 16, 2014

A focus on performance excellence

A differentiator for health care leaders

Triche Guenin



Question: What do six of the 100 Most Influential People in (US) Health care have in common?

Answer: Direct connections to the Baldrige Performance Excellence Program

The 2014 annual list from *Modern Healthcare** recognizes two Baldrige Executive Fellows and four leaders of health care organizations that are recent recipients of the Baldrige Award. Another *Modern Healthcare* article, "Quality Leaders Grow in Influence," points out that these (and other) leaders focus on patient-safety and quality-improvement:

- Deborah Bowen, President/CEO of the American College of Healthcare Executives (2012 Baldrige Executive Fellow)
- Susan DeVore, president/CEO of Premier Inc. of San Diego, CA (2006 Healthcare Baldrige recipient)
- Dr. Peter Pronovost, director, Johns Hopkins Medicine's Armstrong Institute for Patient Safety and Quality (2013 Baldrige Executive Fellow)
- Nancy Schlichting, CEO of Henry Ford Health System of Detroit, MI (2011 Healthcare Baldrige recipient)
- James Skogsbergh, president/CEO of Advocate Health Care, the parent organization of Advocate Good Samaritan Hospital of Downers Grove, IL (2010 Healthcare Baldrige recipient)
- Rulon Stacey, former president/CEO of Poudre Valley Health System of Fort Collins (2008 Healthcare Baldrige recipient)

The Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award is the nation's highest recognition for organizational performance excellence. The program was established via an act of Congress in 1987 to help jumpstart the economy and give the country a much-needed boost in recognizing those organizations that were doing well in their respective industries. To date, there have been 101 recipients of the award.

Organizations applying at the national level must first participate in their respective state/regional performance excellence programs. Colorado's program, in its 13th year, includes Wyoming and Montana and is called the RMPEx (Rocky Mountain Performance Excellence) program. If your organization is interested in either beginning its performance excellence journey or sending employees to become examiners, visit www.rmpex.org.

The annual Performance Excellence program consists of a formal process of evaluation by a team of objective examiners against a set of criteria; this is conducted first via a written application, then if warranted an on-site visit. More than 1,000 hours of review will be provided to each applicant receiving a site visit. A final deliverable for all applicants is a formal summary report detailing the organization's strengths and opportunities for improvement. The standard criteria are comprised of questions that fall into six categories: Leadership, Strategy, Customer/Competition, Measurement/Analysis/Knowledge Management, Workforce, and Operations. In addition to providing answers regarding these topics, the applicant must show trending data to prove that their achievement is sustainable within each of these areas.

The Baldrige Healthcare Criteria for Performance Excellence are non-prescriptive, adaptable, and focused on results. While recognizing that the missions of healthcare organizations may differ, they stress delivery of quality healthcare service. Patients are viewed as key customers but there is also acknowledgement of other stakeholders (e.g. families, referring physician, insurer, and third-party payers). The criteria address health care's complex leadership structure (e.g. administrative/operational personnel, providers) but also recognize the multiple roles that providers may perform (e.g. staff, supplier, customer).

Since the Baldrige National Performance Excellence program started the health care category in 2000, 18 health care organizations have been recipients. For the 2014 season, 12 health care organizations have applied. The judges have selected six to move forward into the site visit phase, which will occur within the next two months. Recipients of the award will be notified by the end of the year and are usually presented the award at a ceremony in Washington by the President of the United States (at the beginning of the following year).

Trends in health care point towards hospitals adopting integrated strategies for safety, quality and cost reduction. General predictions indicate most hospitals will become part of a health system or ACO that will apply a holistic quality approach to its clinical and non-clinical operations. Many will incorporate quality tools/approaches (e.g. Lean, Six Sigma, ISO 9000) as well as use the Baldrige criteria as a foundation for performance improvement initiatives or as an internal evaluation tool.

* Two other CO based leaders that made the list include Kent Thirty – Chairman/CEO of DaVita Healthcare Partners, Denver, CO and Kevin Lofton – CEO of Catholic Health Initiatives, Englewood, CO.

Triche Guenin, President of Partners Through Change, Inc., a process improvement consulting firm, is one of the initiators of CPEX and a 5th year Baldrige examiner. She can be reached at tguenin@partnersthroughchange.com

Triche Guenin is President of Partners Through Change, Inc., a process improvement firm that helps organizations become more efficient/effective in their day-to-day operations. She can be reached at 303-777-9680 or www.partnersthroughchange.com.
