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Tough economic times mean....

...getting tough and investing in yourself

By *Triche Guenin*



Q: What do best-in-class organizations in the service, manufacturing, healthcare, education, and nonprofit/government sectors have in common?

A: They commit themselves to excellence in performance and start/continue on their journey regardless of economic times.

For many, excellence in performance means concentrating their efforts in one area, their core competency, such as service delivery or customer service, etc. However, performance excellence is defined as taking an integrated approach to sustainability:

- ensuring delivery of ever-improving value to customers/stakeholders
- improving overall organizational effectiveness/capabilities
- focusing on organizational and personal learning.

Many use the Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence as a framework and an assessment tool to guide them in their journey.

During the upcoming Colorado Performance Excellence (CPEX) Forum, a number of these best-in-class organizations will share their stories, insights, and lessons learned. These organizations have been previously recognized at the national level via the Baldrige National Quality Award program and/or at the regional level via the CPEX Award program.

Although the two keynote speakers tend to have a healthcare bent, their sharing of best practices can be applied to any/all types and sizes of organizations:

- Dr Patricia Gabow, CEO, Denver Health, 2009 CPEX Timberline Recipient, will tout their nationally recognized success in "Delivering Results by using LEAN within a Baldrige Framework"
- Dr. Mike Sather, Albuquerque's Center Director, VA Cooperative Studies Program Clinical Research Pharmacy Coordinating Center, 2009 Baldrige Award Recipient, will share their journey via their program "The Code of the West - Ethics the Cowboy Way."

CPEX, Colorado's state quality program, fashioned after the national Baldrige Quality Award program, is celebrating its tenth year. The resulting successes by organizations and individuals that have participated in its many programs have recently grown to other states in the Rocky Mountain region. CEO Tom Mauro says, "CPEX has been approached by organizations in Wyoming and Montana to extend its services, which focus on Continuous Improvement and Best Practices, to those states. We are happy to our neighboring states that do not have a similar program."

CPEX provides many opportunities for organizations and individuals:

- For organizations, there are many training programs on the process as well as the criteria (e.g. Leadership, Strategic Planning, Customer Focus, Measurement/Analysis/Knowledge Management, Workforce, Process Management), discussions with others also on their respective journeys, shared lessons learned, benchmarking/best practices, etc.
- For individuals, there are obviously volunteer opportunities within the organization as well as training on tools/techniques/strategies and networking with others.

But the most popular venue and most valued service, for both individuals and employees alike, is the skill set developed and professional development earned while becoming a member of the Board of Examiners. This provides the ability to assess an organization's performance, by recognizing its strengths as well as its opportunities for improvement. This is done in a hands-on and collaborative manner that, in many cases, is more valuable than an MBA -- and can be applied in any organization, regardless of the economic situation.

Ed Powers, National Baldrige and CPEX Examiner, shares that "The Examiner experience is truly unique. I can think of no other venue in which people can delve so deeply into how organizations operate. Examiners learn best practices from fellow Examiners and best-in-class organizations, and it leaves them with great ideas they can apply in their own organizations."

So, whether

- beginning a journey towards performance excellence,
- seeking a better understanding of processes and their respective deployment, integration, and

alignment throughout an enterprise, or

- looking for sustained superior results in all areas of operations, discover a proven framework for performance that improves competitive, customer financial, and workplace results. Successful organizations, which are looking to weather the economy's downturn, have taken the leap of faith and jumped into and/or persevered in their goal of excellence in performance throughout their enterprise. Although perceived low risk in a robust economy, working on yourself in turbulent times shows courage.

The fact is when times are tough, successful organizations tighten their belt, toughen up, and invest in themselves to keep going....

The CPEX Quest for Excellence will be held on Nov 5, 2010 at the Marriott South (Park Meadows, Denver) from 7:30 AM-4:30 PM. To register, please visit the CPEX website at www.coloradoexcellence.org.

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