As the popularity of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award continues to grow, the healthcare industry has become increasingly interested in its benefits. The Malcolm Baldrige Model for Performance Excellence has now been widely emulated at local, national and international levels as a result of its success in creating strategic and operational performance improvement over the past 16 years. All these emulative models continue to have the Baldrige criteria as the common theme and use similar methods for conducting organizational assessment.

Organizations of all types, from small entrepreneurial organizations to large hospitals to government agencies, can successfully apply the criteria. When done well, self-assessments can be used as a catalyst for change, and when combined with a focused improvement effort can result in impressive performance levels. Companies using self-assessment have had higher levels of annual sales turnover, market share and return on sales than those not using it.

The success of three recent Baldrige recipients in healthcare—SSM Health Care of St. Louis in 2002 and Saint Luke’s Hospital of Kansas City, MO, and Baptist Hospital of Pensacola, FL, in 2003—further demonstrates the high level of performance attainable even within today’s healthcare constraints. Twenty-two organizations have applied for the Baldrige award in the healthcare category in 2004—the most for any of the five Baldrige categories.

However, with the Baldrige criteria still relatively new to healthcare, a set of tools is needed to help organizations easily assess themselves against the criteria and further understand the criteria’s application to healthcare.

In 50 Words Or Less
• A self-assessment matrix and opportunity for improvement (OFI) worksheets can be used to introduce the Baldrige criteria, conduct self-assessments, identify OFIs and strengths, and prioritize and plan for improvement.

• The two tools can also be used to educate leadership on the value of assessment and improvement.
We developed the Malcolm Baldrige healthcare self-assessment matrix (Table 1, p. 39), the simplified matrix (Figure 1) and opportunity for improvement (OFI) worksheets (Figures 2 and 3, p. 38) to help introduce the Baldrige criteria, conduct a Baldrige based self-assessment, identify OFIs and strengths, and then strategically prioritize and plan for improvement.

**Baldrige Benefits**

The Baldrige performance excellence framework is results focused and presented in a systems theory approach that highlights such crucial issues as the:

- Importance of leadership.
- Need to consider all elements of an organization.
- Strategic importance of scanning and analyzing the business environment.
- Value of creating focus on customers and employees.
- Need to use measures, indicators and organizational knowledge to identify and monitor key performance indicators.

This perspective provides the basis for conducting a companywide self-assessment, establishing current and target performance measures, coordinating and implementing continual improvement and aiding benchmarking.

Self-assessment can provide a simple method of independent and flexible assessment that can have powerful results. However, only by systematically assessing your organization with specific values and using key links within and among the criteria can the full systems perspective be appreciated.

**Self-Assessment Matrix**

We developed the matrix (see Table 1) to reduce the perception that conducting self-assessments is costly, time consuming and intimidating. Our goal is to ensure the key elements, framework and core values are included while creating a summary sheet and providing an accessible yet adequate explanation of assessment criteria. Figure 1 is a smaller, simplified depiction of how to work through the matrix.

Our efforts reduce the documentation required for assessment and provide speed and simplicity. These tools are not intended to replace the valuable in-depth, group self-assessment workshops, full application documents or submissions to a local, state or national award program. The aim is instead to provide simple and inexpensive tools as a method for introducing the Baldrige criteria and conducting initial self-assessment.

The key elements included in the self-assessment matrix are:

- Seven criteria categories.
- Items from the organizational profile.
- Eleven core values.
- Performance outcomes.
- Point values of each criteria.
- Strengths and opportunities for improvement.

### Figure 1  Simplified Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Leadership</th>
<th>Strategic Planning</th>
<th>Patient and Market Focus</th>
<th>Measurement and Knowledge Management</th>
<th>Staff Focus</th>
<th>Process Management</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1. Start here</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Repeat</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>8.5</td>
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<td>9.0</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>55.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>75</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

/1000 Grand total
• Scoring guidelines evaluating approach, deployment, learning, integration and results.7

The 11 core values for the criteria are:
1. Visionary leadership.
2. Patient focused excellence.
3. Organizational and personal learning.
4. Valuing staff and partners.
5. Agility.
6. Focus on the future.
7. Managing for innovation.
8. Management by fact.
10. Focus on results and value creation.
11. Systems perspective.8

The seven columns of the matrix contain the criteria summaries, and the rows show score increments of one through 10. Scoring is done by starting at the left side of the matrix, category one (leadership), and working toward category seven (organizational performance results).

The performance criteria described in the first box of the first column is assessed against the performance within your own organization. If the organization does not meet the description within the box (performance criteria), a score of one is applied to that criterion.

If you meet all the performance criteria, you can move down to row two and assess yourself against the description in row two, category one. If you do not meet all of the row two, column one descriptors, then move back up to row one where there is a “best fit” and receive a score of one for that category.

The goal is to find the row in which you are able to meet all of the performance criteria that are being evaluated. Keep in mind this scoring system is progressive, so the lower score performance criteria must be met in order to fit into the next higher scoring row.

Continue this process until each of the seven categories is completed. The score for each category is noted at the bottom of each column and then multiplied by the factor or weighting the Baldrige program gives to each of the criterion.9 When completed, the seven category scores are totaled to create a grand score. This is the overall score for the organization out of a total possible score of 1,000.

**Get Leadership on Board**

The matrix can be used as a tool to engage organizational leaders to assess a department or entire organization using the Baldrige framework. The matrix is best used as part of an entire process of self-assessment, gap analysis and planning. Both the tool and the criteria are applicable to a business unit, department or entire organization with slight translation in the wording.

A typical introduction and full self-assessment process using the matrix and OFI worksheets can be completed in a half-day session. Introducing the self-assessment process to senior management usually includes a brief overview of self-assessment, the potential impact on the demands of investors, customers and employees and how to address priorities identified as a result of the self-assessment.

Current business objectives can be presented to senior management with quantitative data to show how quality may improve the bottom line aided by self-assessment.10 By presenting the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) stock investment studies, which compare the Standard &
Poor’s 500 to Baldrige award winners, diagrams of the Baldrige performance excellence framework and success stories of past winners, the workshop leader makes all key elements of the criteria such as approach, deployment, learning and integration become visible for the workshop participant.

Active participation of senior management in a quality improvement effort is essential for its success. To create this involvement you need to move beyond a presentation of content to experiential learning. Typically, the best way to understand the scoring guidelines and the other elements of the self-assessment tool is to apply them in a group exercise.

It is here the matrix provides a concise yet powerful method of communication. In the second part of the session, distribute the matrix to the managers and conduct a mock high level evaluation of the organization. Briefly review the criteria and matrix. In addition, review the scoring of the matrix and provide time to score the matrix individually. Strengths and OFI tools also are used to help score. When individuals have completed this exercise, discuss the scores and create a consensus score.

A common understanding of the scoring and buy-in to the process is a key point of learning, so spend time describing categories and placement of the business within a category. The discussion about differences in perception of score, along with the strengths and OFIs, is critical and should not be discounted.

The implication of variation in the scores of different management and staff in attendance should be of great interest. Wide swings in scoring among management levels raises questions about communication, deployment, focus and application of crucial elements, such as organizational policies, mission and practices. This can be a perfect note on which to transition to the session’s next part, ensuring senior management will want to further consider these discrepancies within the organization.

Tools To Focus Efforts

While becoming familiar with the concept of Baldrige and the process of self-assessment is valuable, the results from assessing strengths and OFIs provide data that will lead to true progress at an early stage.

The strengths and OFI worksheet (Figure 2, p. 37) should be used after the concepts of Baldrige are introduced during the individual scoring process to help improve objectivity and accuracy. On a larger scale, if organizations are reviewing entire Baldrige categories for self-assessment, the tool can also be used to document relative strengths and opportunities for improvement.

When an OFI planning worksheet (Figure 3) has been completed for each category, the OFIs can be consolidated and prioritized. Next to each OFI, make notes about the planned strategies, methods and resource requirements.

This structure manages the approach by which each OFI will be addressed. When all the categories have been completed, identify the top three to five OFIs for action planning. Selection of priorities should be linked to an organization’s strategic plan.

Implementing Improvements

The identified OFIs and subsequent improvement plan are the real benefits of the
### Leadership

**Organizational planning:** Focus on a broad focus.

**Senior leaders:** Focus on ethical and legal strategies and planning are identified for future goals.

**Operational effectiveness:** Key performance metrics and targets are established.

**Measurement and reporting:** Goals are set and tracked.

**Staff focus:** Processes are fact-based.

**Process management:** Staff is engaged and committed.

**Organizational performance results:** Strong leadership is evidenced.

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### Table 1: Self-Assessment Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Leadership</th>
<th>Strategic planning</th>
<th>Focus on patients, other customers and markets</th>
<th>Measurement, analysis and knowledge management</th>
<th>Staff focus</th>
<th>Process management</th>
<th>Organizational performance results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Note:**

1. "There are effective systematic approaches to high-level decision making. There is an effective, systematic approach to high-level decision making. There is an effective, systematic approach to high-level decision making. There is an effective, systematic approach to high-level decision making."  
2. "Senior leaders are beginning to systematically increase budget for high-priority needs. Senior leaders are beginning to systematically increase budget for high-priority needs. Senior leaders are beginning to systematically increase budget for high-priority needs. Senior leaders are beginning to systematically increase budget for high-priority needs."  
3. "There is an effective, systematic approach to high-level decision making. There is an effective, systematic approach to high-level decision making. There is an effective, systematic approach to high-level decision making. There is an effective, systematic approach to high-level decision making."  
4. "There is an effective, systematic approach to high-level decision making. There is an effective, systematic approach to high-level decision making. There is an effective, systematic approach to high-level decision making. There is an effective, systematic approach to high-level decision making."
### TABLE 1  
Self-Assessment Matrix (continued)

<p>| Score | Leadership sets direction, communicates and deploys values and performance expectations in a systematic manner throughout the organization. Responsibilities to the public are managed proactively, and the organization practices good citizenship with patients, stakeholders, customers and suppliers. Leadership strategies are aligned with organizational needs. Process ensures good relationships. There is a culture for empowerment, agility and staff learning. | Leadership planning | Strategic planning | Focus on patients, other customers and markets | Measurement, analysis and knowledge management | Staff focus | Process management | Organizational performance results | Score |
|-------|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------------------|-------|
| 5     | Approaches are systematic and deployed although variegated in some areas. Fact based systematic evaluation and improvement processes are in place and well deployed throughout. Some gaps may remain. Patient/customer satisfaction trends are reaching target levels. A systematic data-driven improvement process is used once opportunities are identified. Listening methods are continuously improved on. | Approaches are systematic and deployed although variegated in some areas. Fact based systematic evaluation and improvement processes are in place and well deployed throughout. Some gaps may remain. Patient/customer satisfaction trends are reaching target levels. A systematic data-driven improvement process is used once opportunities are identified. Listening methods are continuously improved on. | Approaches are systemic, effective and fully responsive to organizational needs. There is organizational sharing and learning from process evaluation and refinement. Staff works to implement best practices and to be best practice site. All team members’ work revolves around achieving patient customer targets. Their role in this effort is understood. | A system of approach is well deployed and mature and integrated with organizational needs. Benchmarking is against the best in class, with the focus on key improvement indicators. There is clear evidence of refinement and improvement of work systems and staff motivation. The work environment for employees is safe, secure and ergonomically healthy. Emergency disaster drills are completed to ensure a smooth flow of patient care. | Benchmarks reflect high staff satisfaction and support processes are systematic and well deployed. Maturity with process refinement, system evaluation and organization level sharing exists. Healthcare process requirements are clearly defined for all processes. Technology and organizational knowledge are designed into processes. Cross functional teams are used. | Effective processes are in place to ensure new designs for processes meet key patient and customer requirements. Key value creation and support processes are aligned with needs of the organization. Some minor gaps may exist in value creation and business processes in some parts of the organization. Fact based systematic evaluation occurs. Process improvement tools are used and integrated into work. | All areas of importance (example, patient satisfaction, safety, service, finance, access) report good performance levels. There are no negative performance trends on any important performance measure. Patterns, trends and levels of performance are available over longer periods of time. Some performance data are evaluated against relevant benchmarks or comparators. | 5     |
| 6     | Approaches are well deployed and individualized to employee culture and diversity. Approaches and resources are aligned with the strategic plan. The climate is based on improving health and safety. Changes that adversely affect employees are jointly considered. Health, safety and security of employees are considered, measured and improved on. | Approaches are well deployed and individualized to employee culture and diversity. Approaches and resources are aligned with the strategic plan. The climate is based on improving health and safety. Changes that adversely affect employees are jointly considered. Health, safety and security of employees are considered, measured and improved on. | Approaches are tailored to the strategic plan. Processes for identifying, assessing and evaluating new technologies are well defined. Processes and their impact are evident. There is systematic evaluation of continued improvement and organizational learning. Data are collected and tracked on at least three of these organizational performance indicators: customer satisfaction, finance, marketing, HR, operations and social responsibility. | All processes have been evaluated on continuous improvement and organizational learning, with minimal gaps. Process is improved to achieve better performance. Leadership and management activities ensure process and services are delivered effectively. Processes are designed to meet all key process and customer requirements and aligned with strategic plan. | Effective processes are in place to ensure new designs for processes meet key patient and customer requirements. Key value creation and support processes are aligned with needs of the organization. Some minor gaps may exist in value creation and business processes in some parts of the organization. Fact based systematic evaluation occurs. Process improvement tools are used and integrated into work. | All areas of importance (example, patient satisfaction, safety, service, finance, access) report good performance levels. There are no negative performance trends on any important performance measure. Patterns, trends and levels of performance are available over longer periods of time. Some performance data are evaluated against relevant benchmarks or comparators. | At least 75% of targets are achieved, with excellent performance trends over four to six years. Performance is good to excellent in many critical areas. Most improvement trends are sustained. Many benchmarks show very good relative performance level. Results monitored includes most key customers, markets, competitors and processes. | 6     |
| 7     | A nature approach to developing and deploying of action plans exists based on strategic objectives. Modification of strategies and policies is proactive. Organizational level analysis and evaluation, and sharing of results are present. Clear evidence of a refinement and improved integration system for planning is evident. | A nature approach to developing and deploying of action plans exists based on strategic objectives. Modification of strategies and policies is proactive. Organizational level analysis and evaluation, and sharing of results are present. Clear evidence of a refinement and improved integration system for planning is evident. | Approaches to key process and support processes are systematic and well deployed. Maturity with process refinement, system evaluation and organization level sharing exists. Healthcare process requirements are clearly defined for all processes. Technology and organizational knowledge are designed into processes. Cross functional teams are used. | A system of approach is well deployed and mature and integrated with organizational needs. Benchmarking is against the best in class, with the focus on key improvement indicators. There is clear evidence of refinement and improvement of work systems and staff motivation. The work environment for employees is safe, secure and ergonomically healthy. Emergency disaster drills are completed to ensure a smooth flow of patient care. | Approaches to key process and support processes are systematic and well deployed. Maturity with process refinement, system evaluation and organization level sharing exists. Healthcare process requirements are clearly defined for all processes. Technology and organizational knowledge are designed into processes. Cross functional teams are used. | Approaches to key process and support processes are systematic and well deployed. Maturity with process refinement, system evaluation and organization level sharing exists. Healthcare process requirements are clearly defined for all processes. Technology and organizational knowledge are designed into processes. Cross functional teams are used. | All targets have been met. There are excellent and sustained improvement trends. World class leadership is evident in many areas. Results cover all customer, markets, strategic action plans and processes. Reported trends are evaluated against comparisons or benchmarks and show very good performance. | 7     |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Leadership</th>
<th>Strategic Planning</th>
<th>Focus on patients, other customers and markets</th>
<th>Measurement, analysis and knowledge management</th>
<th>Staff focus</th>
<th>Process management</th>
<th>Organizational performance results</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Approaches to leadership strategies are fully developed and deployed with no gaps. A systematic process to evaluate leadership performance and learning opportunities is evident. Strategies to ensure ethical behavior are fully deployed. Sharing of effective practices within the organization is evident. Excellent integration of leadership systems with cycles of improvement is visible within the strategic planning process.</td>
<td>Senior leaders develop and deploy action plans understood by all stakeholders. Leadership champions the vision and mission. Critical factors such as patient/customer satisfaction are reviewed at all levels. Action plans are fully deployed with no gaps. All business needs are considered and addressed. Resources to achieve action plans are fully allocated. Evaluation and improvement cycles take place with organizational learning as a management tool.</td>
<td>The organization enjoys 70% of customer targets. Approaches are systematic and fully deployed. The organization is an industry leader in some areas and is often benchmarked. The organization regularly reviews patient service programs and processes and conducts formal evaluations to improve value to both the customer and the organization. The organization builds the business with innovation, differentiation of services and alignment of market and key stakeholder process action plans with results.</td>
<td>Focus on innovation and continual improvement is well deployed with no major gaps. All current organizational needs are considered. Action has been taken to achieve strategic objectives and resource allocations. The organization is a benchmark for many organizations. Some sharing of improvement ideas occurs within the organization.</td>
<td>The organization provides employees with clear feedback regarding performance and two-way to customer focus and business goals. Staff members demonstrate a sense of value for their contribution to the organization. Most staff focused goals are met and well deployed. All current organizational needs are considered. There are strong links between learning and the ability to apply and practice skills among employees.</td>
<td>An effective systematic approach is well deployed with no gaps. Performance has strong links to patient and customer needs and satisfaction. Targets have been met in many cases. Day-to-day operations of these processes meet key customer and process requirements. Lessons learned and analyses of these processes are consistently shared across the business. There is evidence of integration of tools of innovation into processes.</td>
<td>All targets have been met. Results are consistently positive and organization is an industry leader. Current performance is excellent in most critical areas. Excellent and sustained improvement trends cover seven to 10 years. There is evidence of world-class leadership in many areas. Results cover all customer, market competitor, new entrants and processes. The organization uses data to drive improvement. Strategy and results are clearly visible within the data.</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Leaders effectively share internal best practices within the organization. The strategic plan is well deployed to all areas. Strategic measures exist. All current and future business needs are considered and projected. Leaders actively promote and demonstrate involvement in quality. Recognition for empowerment is evident, and 70% of impact on society issues have been met and exceeded. Evidence of visionary leadership exists. Succession planning is strategic.</td>
<td>There is a process to analyze healthcare service competitors’ strategy and maintain competitive advantage. Current needs are considered in addition to future needs. Projection and scenario planning for future needs are integral parts of the strategic planning process.</td>
<td>Patient, family and other customer satisfaction levels have been achieved. High levels of stakeholder patient and customer loyalty and trust have been achieved. The organization is highly regarded in the community and in the healthcare field. Best in class benchmarks have been reached. Current and future business needs are always considered. There is a focus on improving future customer groups and service delivery opportunities.</td>
<td>All current and future organizational needs have been considered. Data are used to determine trends to create projections, scenario planning and to aid in identifying potential future needs and outcomes for the healthcare services market.</td>
<td>The organization provides multiple services and is an industry leader in many process delivery areas and security are ensured. Lessons learned and analyses of these processes are consistently shared across the business. There is evidence of integration of tools of innovation into processes.</td>
<td>The organization has become a longstanding performance leader within the healthcare field. All performance data result are reported, with trends and comparisons. Results are excellent or at benchmark for most areas. Trending data of performance is 10 plus years.</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>All leaders proactively focus on providing exceptional value added services to the customer. Approaches are systematic, fully deployed and tied to the organization’s needs and culture. There is a very strong fact based continuous evaluation and improvement process. Extensive organizational learning and innovation focus exist. The organization is proactive regarding environmental impacts, public citizenship and relevant responsibilities. Leadership empowerment decision making at the point of care. Leaders are reviewed to enhance organizational effectiveness.</td>
<td>Strategies have been advanced. A responsive systematic approach is considering multiple issues and is fully deployed with no weakness. Very strong fact based evaluation and improvement processes exist. Innovation and sharing of improvement are promoted. Extensive organizational learning exists with strong refinement and integration across the organization.</td>
<td>All patient satisfaction targets are exceeded. Systematic approaches are deployed with no gaps and are fully responsive to changing customer needs. There are very strong fact based processes for evaluation and improvement. Organizational learning is strong and there is sustained improvement in patient satisfaction. Patient focused excellence is at the center of daily work. Improvement is driven by patient customer and market knowledge.</td>
<td>All resources are aligned with strategies. The focus is on innovation. Systematic, effective, responsive approaches are in place to select, collect, align and integrate data. Changing customer needs are fully integrated into processes and fully deployed with no weakness. A very strong fact based evaluation and improvement process exists. Extensive staff and organizational learning and innovation practices exist across the organization.</td>
<td>The staffing approach is responsive to current and future changing healthcare needs and is fully deployed with no weaknesses. A very strong fact based evaluation and improvement process exists. Satisfaction levels exceed world-class benchmarks. Improvement trends have been sustained over time. Integration exists across the organization. Effective feedback is given to all employees regarding performance.</td>
<td>The organization has a process to analyze healthcare service competitors’ strategy and maintain competitive advantage. Current needs are considered in addition to future needs. Projection and scenario planning for future needs are integral parts of the strategic planning process.</td>
<td>All targets have been met. Results are consistently positive and organization is an industry leader. Current performance is excellent in most critical areas. Excellent and sustained improvement trends cover seven to 10 years. There is evidence of world-class leadership in many areas. Results cover all customer, market competitor, new entrants and processes. The organization uses data to drive improvement. Strategy and results are clearly visible within the data.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Score**

- **Factor**: 12
- **Factor Score**: 8.5
- **Total Score**: 9

Grand score = 9/1000
process. The tools, used in conjunction with the matrix, help avoid the resting on your laurels or freezing that often occurs when self-assessment is completed.

The number of OFIs can be overwhelming and may result in the OFIs being sidelined with no action plan put into place. This is a good time to remind everyone that even Baldrige award recipients receive OFIs.

After a self-assessment, teams need to be formed to plan improvement strategies for the criteria to be addressed. These teams need to work together to avoid duplication on linked criteria and maximize learning. Timelines, resources and milestones need to be identified. The resulting improvements or best practices can then be shared across the organization.

By using these methods, the organization can sustain momentum beyond the initial self-assessment and ensure the OFIs are addressed and results incorporated into the next self-assessment.

**Value Added Benefits**

Completing a self-assessment has obvious benefit, but there are also other advantages. The team based interactive process drives home the key pillars of award models and criteria such as:

- Developing the ability to introduce and conduct self-assessments.
- Understanding the holistic systems approach to organizations.
- Recognizing the importance of strategy and leadership to successful management.
- Focusing on internal and external customers.
- Identifying areas for improvement.
- Gathering key information and using it to direct the strategy.
- Creating consistent approaches and effective deployment strategies for specific impacts.
- Knowing the value and means of conducting ongoing and focused monitoring and measurement.
- Knowing the coordination of all organizational efforts.
- Recognizing the necessity of sharing information.

Participation in self-assessment exposes staff to experiences that provide a wide range of practical and transferable skills such as facilitating effective meetings, working on teams, and developing and recognizing leadership skills.

The experiences can create a new quality mind-set focused on the customer and continuous improvement. The process also highlights the need for making information quickly and easily available, which is a core element of knowledge management. In this regard, those participating in self-assessments become knowledge assets because they have developed expertise and can transfer that knowledge to others with whom they work.

**Examples**

The matrix and OFI tools have already been applied in a variety of settings for various levels of evaluations. The matrix and OFI tools are flexible enough for evaluation and strategic planning assessment of entire large or small organizations or of work groups or departments.

The matrix was first used in a two-hour workshop with company management in a 100-employee consulting and engineering company. The aim was to introduce the Baldrige criteria and the key aspects involved in self-assessment. The group quickly learned about Baldrige and self-assessment, and most of the discussion focused on opportunities for improvement.

The matrix was also used with an engineering company with 150 employees. The concepts were introduced, and self-assessment was used to evaluate multidisciplinary teams within the entire organization.

Feedback from each of these teams was discussed, and a consensus score and OFIs and strengths were determined. There was a consistency of scoring across each team and little discussion on a consensus score. Most of the discussion focused on the terms used and the evidence provided to support OFIs or strengths, which had been the aim of the approach. The introduction of Baldrige criteria and self-assessment was successful, and the group wanted to expand the process and training of staff throughout the company.

This first session was followed up with a detailed companywide Baldrige survey and an in-depth 10-hour Baldrige assessment workshop. The scores from these sessions reflected the scoring and themes that emerged from the matrix assessment. This is not to say the matrix by itself is enough but
merely that it is a rigorous method in its own right. It provides an excellent introductory tool and an effective method of assessment, especially for those organizations with limited resources.

The strengths and OFIs from the workshop and survey were used to establish the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis during the annual strategic development process, which fully integrated Baldrige self-assessment into the corporate strategic planning process.

The matrix has also been adopted as a benchmarking tool during annual strategic review at one plant of a large international manufacturing organization. During a day of annual strategic planning, the management team used the matrix to evaluate how well the organization matched past goals and to aid in allocating resources for the next year.

The management team found this helped not only to benchmark improvement but also to promote discussion among the team members and to raise questions or issues not normally covered in their strategic planning.

We carried out these efforts to test and validate the matrix as a tool before adapting it for use in the healthcare industry. The adapted matrix and OFI tools were then presented during a multiorganization healthcare workshop. A case study was provided for assessment.

After an introduction to the concepts, participants worked individually on scoring and then held small group discussions for consensus scoring. Scoring and OFIs were resolved smoothly, and the ensuing discussions revolved around the processes for self-assessment.

The case study and the matrix planning tools proved engaging and beneficial to participants as an introduction to Baldrige criteria and self-assessments. Feedback revealed these tools provided easy access to Baldrige compared to many other complex, resource laden and time consuming materials participants had been exposed to in the past that seemed overwhelming in detail or required unavailable resources.

Healthcare Example

The matrix was then introduced in two sessions to a support service department at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, MN, as a part of a large improvement project. Two Baldrige category processes were selected for analysis. Baldrige category three, focus on the patient, other customers and markets, and category six, process management, were selected for assessment due to the relationship of the categories to the department’s service line and process improvement effort.

The first session consisted of a brief introduction to the Baldrige criteria, matrix and scoring parameters. Individual scoring was completed independently by each appropriate line supervisor for his or her respective process. The group reconvened in a second session to gain consensus on a group score for each process being assessed. The department director and administrator scored both processes.

The scores were then discussed at the second session to gain a consensus score. These processes will be rescored within one year after process and service improvements are made. These scores are part of a balanced set of improvement measures for the service line that will be reviewed over time.

Feedback from participants was positive. Although time constraints required the workshop to be broken into two sessions, this presented the opportunity to meet with individuals in between the sessions to help them through the individual scoring and ensure understanding of the criteria.

Another clinic at Mayo adapted the matrix to assess a specific organizational strategy. For example, category five, staff focus, could be selected to assess work systems for processes to promote cooperation, initiative, empowerment, innovation and capitalizing on the diverse ideas of staff.

Select individuals from each department can be taken through the criteria of the category and the
matrix scoring. Once individuals’ scores are determined, strengths and OFIs can be identified and planning for improvement begun using the worksheets.

**Response**

The application of the tool and the response from participants have been positive. Comments from participants indicate the tool has helped them identify where they will need to focus their efforts. Feedback has also helped improve the terminology used within the tool. Once participants understand the criteria, scoring appears to occur quickly.

Understanding the criteria and understanding of the progressive nature of the scoring of the matrix is essential to avoid extremes. Time taken within workshops as well as individually with participants has been very positively received. A facilitator comfortable with the Baldrige criteria is helpful in assisting the group to come to consensus after individual scoring.

Successful use of the matrix requires it be used initially as an introductory tool providing an education about the Baldrige criteria and self-assessment before actually using the matrix to assess and score an organization. There must also be enough time to complete the assessment and identify OFIs to ensure the group involved has a sense of completing a successful assessment.

**REFERENCES**

8. Ibid.

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