Tips from Mystery Consultants, Not Inc.

"We may or may not be the best, but are the most mysterious."

What is evidence?

> Dear Mystery Consultants
>
> Many of our feedback report comments say, "There is no evidence of" this or that. What is the problem? What is evidence? What are Examiners looking for? It is not evident to us what evidence is.

We love being out in the West Texas town of El Paso. By the way, did anyone ever solve that shooting at Rose's Cantina back in the 60's? How did it work out for Felina and "Bad Man" Jose?

Baldrige – Show Evidence.

You will not find the term "evidence" defined in the Baldrige Glossary. The term "evidence" is only used twice in the Criteria, and three more times anywhere in the Criteria booklet, but "evidence" appears 13 times in the Process Scoring Guidelines and six more times in the Results Scoring Guidelines. That is 40% of the description statements. That is significant.
By this reckoning, "evidence" is a key term that needs at least an operational definition.

Six Sigma – Create an Operational Definition.

Dr. Deming made a big deal out of having an operational definition when you gather evidence in his "Theory of Knowledge." This concept requires that folks gathering evidence have a way to know what evidence is when they see it. If the evidence is data, then an operational definition defines what data is to be collected and how and when it is to be collected. This ensures that different people collect the same data (as evidence) at different times in different places. The Six Sigma process requires this in its "Measure" Phase as part of a data gathering plan, and the Lean folks recommend "*genchi genbutsu*" as the first step in problem solving.

Lean - *Genchi genbutsu.*

Genchi genbutsu is interpreted within Toyota to mean going to the actual location ("genchi") to see the actual situation ("genbutsu") to acquire better understanding. "Go to the Gemba" is the first rule of Gemba Kaizen (Masaaki Imai)."

All of these processes are about gathering evidence.

So what is (or should be) considered "evidence" when providing or evaluating responses to the Baldrige Criteria?

Process

When anyone asks a Mystery Consultant any question about Baldrige, we always start with reviewing what the Criteria booklet says. We highly recommend this practice to all Criteria users. The traditional burning of incense and humming the secret mantra as you remove the Criteria booklet from its golden trivet on its alter is optional.

Since the term is relevant to the Scoring Guidelines, it is also highly relevant to the Scoring Dimensions. For Process Items, the Scoring Dimensions are Approach, Deployment, Learning, and Integration, known as ADLI, and for Results Items the Scoring Dimensions are Levels, Trends, Comparisons, and Integration, known as LeTCI.

As we will see shortly, different scoring dimensions require different types of evidence.

What would constitute evidence of an Approach? Let us *genchi genbutsu*. Let us turn to the Glossary for some guidance. (*"Hmmmm Shoo Bop Shoo Bop. Rama Lama Ding Dong. Hmmmm Do Wa Ditty Ditty Dum Ditty Do."*)

Approach

*"The term "approach" refers to the **methods** used by an organization **to address** the Baldrige Criteria Item **requirements**. Approach includes the **appropriateness** of the methods to the Item requirements and the **effectiveness** of their **use**."* [54]

NOTE: Numbers in brackets are page references to the 2008 Baldrige Business Criteria booklet from NIST.

This definition sets standards that we need evidence of "appropriateness to the requirements" and "effectiveness of use" to evaluate "methods" used to describe an approach. A search for evidence of whether or not a response to the requirement demonstrates an approach would seem to include looking for "methods," their "use," and "addressing the requirements."

Effective

*The term "effective" refers to how well **a process or a measure** addresses its intended purpose. Determining effectiveness requires (1) the evaluation of how well the process is **aligned with** the organization's **needs** and how well the process is **deployed** or (2) the evaluation of **the outcome** of the measure used. [55]*

Systematic

*The term "systematic" **refers to approaches** that are well ordered, are repeatable, and use data and information so learning is possible. In other words, approaches are systematic if they build in the opportunity for evaluation, improvement, and sharing, thereby permitting a gain in maturity.* [60]

Maturity

"An effective, systematic approach" is a big "first" step on improving organizational maturity, but having an effective, systematic approach—by itself --- will get you only so far. To achieve a level of maturity in above 30% the 'EFFECTIVE, SYSTEMATIC APPROACH" must show increasing **responsiveness** to the three levels of Baldrige requirements – basic, overall, and multiple.

0% - 5%	10% - 25%	30% - 45%	50% - 65%	70% - 85%	90% - 100%
No SYSTEMATIC APPROACH information is ANECDOTAL. (A)	**The beginning of** a SYSTEMATIC APPROACH	An **EFFECTIVE, SYSTEMATIC** APPROACH,	An EFFECTIVE, SYSTEMATIC APPROACH,	An EFFECTIVE, SYSTEMATIC APPROACH,	An EFFECTIVE, SYSTEMATIC APPROACH,
to Item requirements is evident;	to the **BASIC REQUIREMENTS** of the Item is evident. (A)	responsive to the BASIC REQUIREMENTS of the Item, is evident. (A)	responsive to the **OVERALL REQUIREMENTS** of the Item, is evident. (A)	responsive to the **MULTIPLE REQUIREMENTS** of the Item, is evident. (A)	**fully responsive** to the MULTIPLE REQUIREMENTS of the Item, is evident. (A)

How is responsiveness evaluated? Through evidence.

Site visits make it easy to gather evidence. You can ask questions. You can review documents. You can review data. You can observe processes. None of these are available to Examiners when they read an application in Stages 1 and 2. They only have whatever is within the "four corners" of the pages of the application provided to them.

So where do they get evidence? From what the applicant writes – and does not write.
This puts a heavy burden on the applicant to provide clear responses. A good way to be clear is choose words that are specific versus "fuzzy."

For example, stating that senior leaders meet to review measures is not evidence of analysis. Huh? How do Examiners know what "review" means? It sounds like a process, but what are the steps of this review process? Simple. Do the senior leaders follow an agenda during the review? Do they keep and publish minutes of the review?

On a site visit, such documents would provide evidence of a review process. However, application writers must carefully "translate" the evidence they see into words that convey what they see to Examiners. The best way to do this is to use much more specific words instead of using "fuzzy" words like "review" and expecting Examiners to "know" what the steps are. The point is – write with specifics so it is not unclear and no assumptions are needed.

What does the word "analyze" mean? Someone can "analyze" a spreadsheet or PowerPoint slide by merely staring and thinking. The use of more specific words that describe exactly what "analysis" means provides "evidence" to Examiners that the analysis process is systematic, appropriate, and effective. For example, words like "prioritize," "compare," "rank," or "Pareto" provide Examiners much more evidence of what "analysis" is taking place.

In our collective experience spanning over 40 years of Baldrige service, the root cause of application "fuzziness" is the lack of knowledge on the writer's part as to exactly what evidence they should have *genchi genbutsu*-ed. They were not at performance reviews, the data analysis or the strategic planning meeting, and thus, they do not know what the genbutsu (actual process) was. And, they did not genchi genbutsu, go see for themselves, or, go see the evidence of the approach they are describing.

Thus, it becomes incumbent upon application writers to *genchi genbutsu* – go to the actual place and see the actual things for themselves. In this case, go and see the agendas, handouts, outputs, minutes, and other documentation for performance review meetings, analyses, or the strategic planning process. Interview the participants who are listed on the agenda. In short. Application writers need to be the "eyes of the Examiners." The point is – write so that by reading the words in the application – the Examiners "know" what their eyes would see if they were there.

We know this is root cause because of the difficulty many applicants have preparing for a site visit. When asked for specific documents to be available to Examiners on site, they have problems "finding" them. One of us waited for three days to see "evidence" of analysis of customer satisfaction data (as stated in the application). On the 3rd day, the applicant produced a single pie chart. When asked how senior leaders use this analysis, the silence told the story.

There are "non evidence" words. Some application writers believe that the mere insertion of a Scoring Guideline term, such as "deploy," "evaluate," or "integrate," provides evidence of the term's use. **Repeating the words in the Criteria does not provide "evidence" that you are doing it.** It is a mere assertion. Examiners expect these words to be followed with specific "evidence" of what they mean in the context they are used. (See table below.)

The following table lists some examples of things most Examiners would consider as "evidence" of each scoring dimension. We are sure there are many others, but this "Baker's Dozen" for each Scoring Dimension may help demystify what "evidence" is.

APPROACH	DEPLOYMENT	LEARNING	INTEGRATION
1. A method(s)	1. Use across work units and location(s)	1. Measures	1. Common objectives
2. Plans	2. Use over time	2. Evaluations	2. Common measures
3. Procedures	3. More than a one-time test (as in the "D" in PDCA)	3. Analysis	3. Complimentary measures
4. Policies	4. Training of users	4. Reviews	4. Uses inputs from other processes
5. Flowchart	5. Data	5. Improved performance	5. Its outputs are used as inputs in other processes
6. Meeting Agendas	6. Outcomes	6. Improving Results data in Category 7	6. Analysis of outcomes against other outcomes
7. Meeting Minutes	7. Results data for the approach in Category 7	7. Corrective actions	7. Strategic objectives
8. Documentation (site visit)	8. You can observe it being done (site visit)	8. Improvement teams	8. Strategic planning process
9. Processes	9. Meeting minutes	9. Revised policies/ procedures	9. Key themes of activity described in multiple categories or approaches
10. Handbook	10. Cross-functional teams	10. Revisions in training programs	10. An approach that is strategically aligned or linked to another approach
11. Diagram(s), Schema(s), and Table(s) that explain or describe "HOW"	11. Action Plans	11. Changes in approaches	11. Segmentation of results measures data used to address areas of importance identified in your Organizational Profile and Process Items
12. Defined activity to accomplish an objective or address a specific or strategic need	12. Examples of sharing information across units and locations	12. Examples of new actions that are specifically linked or referenced to learning from old methods, processes, or approaches	12. Use of results with valid indicators of future performance
13. Defined or stated use of people and technology to accomplish an objective	13. Examples of engaging the workforce in specific activities or action plan steps	13. Defined or stated cycles of learning – info that describes and explains	13. Use of results across processes and work units to support organization-wide goals

Another form of fuzziness in applications is overuse of the "royal 'we'." It is very important to show deployment to score above that 30% "ceiling" that showing only "an effective, systematic approach" will earn (see table above). If you start every sentence with the name of your entire organization or the pronoun “we”, how are Examiners to know exactly who really does the activity described? This “bad habit” masks the ability to show deployment.

For example, let us assume you have a series of cascading performance reviews deployed to all levels and all locations within your organization. This could demonstrate full deployment. (That’s a good thing, Martha.) If you write how “Berwick’s Right Knee Medical Center” or “BRKMC” review or “we” analyze, etc., you have buried clear evidence of deployment. Using the exact names of the groups or departments that conduct the reviews and perform the analyses (along with more clarity of the terms “review” and “analyze”) would provide evidence of deployment and perhaps integration. (This is a really good thing, Martha.)

Providing evidence also internally validates the approaches, deployment, learning, and integration of processes. This should also lead to continuous improvements as you find areas that are undocumented or unsubstantiated.

Mystery Consultants is a group of experienced Baldrige Examiners that want to share some of their “secrets. ”Not every consultant sees things the way we do. Our motto is “*We may or may not be the best, but are the most mysterious.*”