

Survive and Thrive in 2009 Let the Baldrige Performance Excellence Criteria Show the Way



Craig A. Anderson
President, Global Performance Systems, Inc.

We are where we are. There is no point in trying to figure out which combination of forces—globalization, disruptive technologies, resource depletion, market failures, political failures—got us here. Our goal is to survive, and thrive. This requires intelligent, resolute action.

Baldrige can help. This is a crisis, and an opportunity. An opportunity to shed the baggage of past failures and bureaucratic inertia and rethink, and revise, how and why you do what you do. And in the process, get leaner, faster, smarter, and more resilient than the competition. A smart focus on Baldrige can make this period of turmoil work to your advantage.

Here are three Baldrige-based survival strategies that will not only position your organization to survive the current crisis, but will lay the foundation for sustainable excellence in the years ahead.

Survival Strategy 1: Smoke out non-value-added activities

It is likely that you have persistent, hidden waste buried across your organization. This waste often takes the form of work activities that are ill-designed, poorly executed, and lack relevance to internal and external customers. This waste may be a burden during good times, but is now a potential organization killer. Fortunately, the Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence give you a map to find and eliminate these activities. Put an internal team together to assess each activity against the specific, actionable criteria in Category 6, Process Management. Test each activity against the Criteria and it will soon become clear which processes are not creating meaningful value. The Criteria will ensure that your analysis is based on data and knowledge, and not unsupportable opinions.

Survival Strategy 2: Measure what matters and improve efficiency

Success factors change. Organizational strengths may become fatal weaknesses. Performance indicators and balanced scorecards become stale. It is important during this time of transition to revisit your entire performance analysis and measurement framework. We suggest that you bring together your key decision makers for a roll-up-the-sleeves workshop and work through each result area in the Baldrige Results Category. Our view is that any gap in this area is a potential game-changer—you cannot afford to have blind spots in your performance measurement system. Work with Category 7, Results, in a truly open, inquisitive process, and you will be much closer to where you need to be as a leadership team.

Survival Strategy 3: Build employee engagement

The third key survival strategy is evident: build true engagement among your employees. This is a critical theme that we have often addressed in these newsletters. Category 5, Workforce Focus, essentially codifies the leading edge of validated management practice in the area of workforce management, based on the open

source experience and feedback of a cast of thousands. As we said earlier, you are where you are, and there is no point in casting blame for the workforce problems that you are faced with. You just need to get better, fast. Get teams of your best people working together NOW to assess and analyze every aspect of your employee management practices and systems against the Category 5 Criteria. The results will speak for themselves and point the way toward a new start.