

The Basic Baldrige Metric – The Cost of Doing Nothing (CODN)

Barry Johnson
www.ebaldrige.com

“Common sense.” “Easy.” “Fun.” That’s what almost all students said recently after they completed a ten-hour training program I taught on how to conduct a Baldrige self-assessment.

How can this be?

Within the last year, several people published survey results that provided strikingly contradictory opinions. When asked why they are not using the Criteria, the respondents to these surveys said “It’s too difficult.” “too hard to understand, ” “takes too much time, ” “no role models for our business”, “we’re unique.”

How can this be?

Occam’s Razor¹ says always accept the simplest explanation for a phenomena before looking for a more complex explanation. The simplest distinction is the first group did something and the other group thought of reasons to do nothing. One of the great separators in life between success and failure is actually doing something. Woody Allen was right: when he said eight percent of success is just showing up. It is much easier to explain why you are doing nothing rather than doing something.

Perhaps the bright, well-paid people who prefer to do nothing are right. They are avoiding the cost of using Baldrige to assess their organization. After all, it will take time, effort, and expense. We can avoid all that by doing nothing.

The Criteria Booklet costs \$5.00 from ASQ. (Note: The first copy is free from NIST, 301-975-2036 and free from Quality Texas, 214-565-8550)

It takes up to a day or so to read all 72 pages. That’s almost three chapters in a romance novel or seven chapters in a diet book, which are the other two most popular reading materials for “do nothing” folks.

Then, there is the cost of meetings. A ten-person Leadership Team makes at least \$1,000,000 per year plus G&A. One hour of their time deciding to do nothing costs \$500. Throw in a PowerPoint or two and we have \$1,000 of wasted time deciding to do nothing. Think of all the money saved. We didn’t do Baldrige. We did nothing. In fact, we also did not do Six Sigma (“too hard, too much statistics, etc.”), Lean (“too much moving stuff around and all those Japanese words, what is a gemba and why would I want to go there anyway?”), or ISO (“too much writing” “Is this just payback for inflicting Jerry Lewis on the French?”).

Could there also be a cost of doing nothing?

There is significant cost to getting the same old inconsistent, mediocre results that we have to talk about each leadership team meeting each week or month. Ka Ching! And there are the teams we form to investigate why we are getting the inconsistent, mediocre results. Oh God, teams. Ka Ching!

And the consultants. Oh no! Not the consultants! Ka Ching, Ka Ching, Ka Ching!

And the Power Points we have to prepare for the next meeting to explain how the inconsistent, mediocre results we are getting are caused by the economy, industry changes, the competition, the Republicans, etc. In fact the results are caused by everyone but us. Perfect. See. I told you we were doing a good job. It isn't us. It's them.

It's true. It had to be caused by everyone but us. We didn't do anything. We did nothing. Remember. That was our leadership decision. We chose to do nothing. There will be no systematic process. We did nothing. There will be no improved results. We did nothing.

What shall we do? I have an idea. Why doesn't one of us go down there and fix it? After all we're the leadership team. Cool! Go down there and fix it and tell us what you did next meeting. What's next on the agenda? Let's see. What color shall we paint the parking lot stripes to show our new company "can do" vision?

All kidding aside, using the Criteria to improve an organization isn't rocket science. It isn't complicated, difficult, or costly. The Criteria applies to all organizations and represents commonsense business management. It is, as those students said - "Common sense." "Easy." "Fun."

¹*Pluralitas non est ponenda sine neccesitate* or "plurality should not be posited without necessity." The words are those of the medieval English philosopher and Franciscan monk William of Ockham (ca. 1285-1349).