Title: USING THE MALCOLM BALDRIGE CRITERIA: A VIABLE TOOL FOR ASSESSING ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

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Using the Malcolm Baldrige Criteria: A Viable Tool for Assessing Organizational Change

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Abstract

How does understanding and using the Malcolm Baldrige criteria impact library organizational change? In September 1997, the Los Alamos National Laboratory Research Library used the criteria to apply for a Quality New Mexico Award (QNMA). This paper will provide a fundamental background on the Malcolm Baldrige criteria and outline the Library project to apply for the award. The Research Library learned from the project and feedback, and has started implementing steps to increase its effectiveness providing viable products and services to its customers. This has been a step forward to strengthen our competitive edge to assure our future prosperity within the Laboratory.

Introduction

The Los Alamos National Laboratory Research Library is responsible for providing science and technology research information in support of the Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) mission. Today’s LANL’s mission is the reduction of the global nuclear danger, which requires great science. LANL has a firmly established reputation as one of the premier research and development institutions in the world.

The Research Library is a mid-sized science library, with a budget of $8.0 million. Our mission states: “In partnership with library customers we facilitate access to and enhance the usability of information that contributes to our mutual success.” The Research Library has five product and services lines to support scientific research: books, journals, electronic databases, technical reports and customer services. The library currently supports a high level of product usage each month including:

- 325,500 World Wide Web hits
- 129,000 electronic transactions
- 43,000 user sessions
- 25,000 paper transactions
- 4,500 service transactions

In 1991, the Research Library set the framework to focus on a formal Strategic Business Management (SBM) system by training staff in formal quality principles. Our approach to setting operational and strategic direction across the Library to support the organization mission and vision has evolved during the past three years. The Library’s
SBM system incorporates four areas that build on each other: customer and process data, performance assessment, business plan, actions and results.

The Malcolm Baldrige Award Criteria Background

The Malcolm Baldrige Award was initiated in 1987 by the Department of Commerce and the National Institute of Standards and Technology to promote Total Quality Management as an important approach for making products and services in the United States among the best in the world. Criteria are specified, and organizations completing a self assessment are expected to provide information and data on key processes and results. The criteria focus on seven categories:

1. **Leadership**: the leadership system and senior leader’s personal leadership.
2. **Strategic planning**: how the organization sets strategic directions, and how it develops the critical strategies and action plans to support the directions.
3. **Customer and market focus**: how the organization determines requirements, expectations, and preferences of customers and markets.
4. **Information and analysis**: the selection, management and effectiveness of use of information and data to support key company processes and action plans.
5. **Human resources**: how the organization enables employees to develop and utilize their full potential, aligned with the company’s objectives.
6. **Process management**: the key aspects of process management, including customer-focused design, product and service delivery, support, and supplier and partnering processes.

7. **Business results**: the organization’s performance and improvement in key business areas—customer satisfaction, financial and marketplace performance, human resource results, supplier and partner performance and operational performance.

**Quality New Mexico Award Application Project**

In 1997, the Research Library Leadership decided to use the Baldrige criteria to complete a self assessment. In addition, we used the assessment to apply for a Quality New Mexico Quality Award. Quality New Mexico annually recognizes organizations for excellence based on the Baldrige National Quality Award criteria. A formal Board of Examiners assesses the application, and conducts a site visit to clarify and review the application. Quality New Mexico provides a written feedback report highlighting strengths and areas for improvements. Successful applicants are also recognized at the New Mexico State Legislature, and receive awards during the annual Conference of the New Mexico Quality Awards.

A team of seven staff was formed in September 1997 to write the Research Library application. The team mission was to complete the best possible Quality New Mexico application process for the LANL Research Library which:

- Accelerates groupwide focus on quality;
- Improves our ability to analyze Research Library quality processes in a Baldrige context, identifying strengths and areas for improvement; and
- Strengthens our competitive edge to assure our future prosperity within the Laboratory.

**Process to Complete the Application and Accelerate Groupwide Focus on Quality**

Each QNMA team member was to coordinate a category. Research Library staff contributed data and information to further develop the concepts outlined by the team. Team members updated the document daily based on the comments and suggestions of all team members. A central database contained the most recent version of the document so that it was accessible to all. Data charts were coordinated to support the process points in the application. The final document was edited by a Laboratory editing and compositing team, who worked on site in the Research Library with the project team. The collaboration and daily feedback improved the final 50 page document which was sent to Quality New Mexico in early October 1997.

Once the application was completed and sent to Quality New Mexico, the team then focused on sharing the document with the Research Library Group. A qualified LANL Baldrige examiner provided training to all Research Library staff to learn how to evaluate a Baldrige criteria application, and each Library team provided an evaluation of strengths
and areas for improvement for one application category. The LANL Baldrige examiner also completed a “practice” site visit, and met with Library staff to clarify the Research Library processes and way of doing business. This allowed Library staff to discuss what they are doing at the team level, and prepared them for the Quality New Mexico Board of Examiners site visit in January 1998.

Research Library Feedback—Strengths and Areas for Improvement

The Official Feedback Report identified Research Library strengths and areas for improvement.

Strengths

- The Research Library has integrated a strong customer focus with visionary planning and uses a well-defined process, Strategic Business Management, for managing its business.

Areas for Improvement

The Research Library needs to

- strengthen ties between the vision and the business plan.
- Increase data for suppliers
- Increase comparative data and market data
- Integrate employee satisfaction data into business planning

What we gained from Quality New Mexico Application process

The QNMA Application team was coordinated to produce a specific product in a short deadline. The team effectively collaborated to complete the 50 page application with a three week deadline. Although there was deadline pressure, the team members felt that the experience was valuable, and the Application was done professionally.

The Research Library also focused on using the QNMA application as a basis to focus on implementing quality principles. Each Research Library team assessed a category of the application, and presented their findings to all staff. Several of the presentations were creatively done, and each team focused on how to look analytically at the Application. The Research Library staff also participated in the Board of Examiner site visit, attended the Winners day at the New Mexico State Legislature, and participated in the Quality New Mexico annual conference.

The feedback and lessons learned from completing the QNMA application provided a valuable basis to determine strengths and areas for improvement. This analysis allowed
the Library Leaders to focus the plans for improvement and change for the next year. Press releases from Quality New Mexico and the Research Library provided visibility for the Research Library nationwide. The Laboratory also received recognition for its quality efforts based on the Research Library award. A longer term positive impact for the Research library is the potential collaboration with other organizations for benchmarking and comparative data.

Results from the Application

The purpose of going using the formal Baldrige Assessment criteria was to use a standard set of criteria to learn. We will continue to focus on our strengths and to prioritize our areas of improvement so the Research Library systematically improve. The following actions have been started to focus on our areas for improvement:

- The leaders have identified a plan to focus on improving the ties between the Research Library annual business plan and vision. This strategic plan will tie the current plan with the vision which looks ahead 5-10 years.

- The Research Library has assigned an employee to act as Supplier Manager. This employee will focus on improve supplier communication and processes. She will also develop collaborative relationships and partnerships with the major Research Library suppliers.

- The Research Library has assigned an employee to act as Quality Coordinator. This employee will support the Library Leaders, product/service owners and process teams by providing quality expertise, planning, training and facilitation in the implementation of PDCA change for all processes.

- A plan to integrate employee satisfaction data into Library processes has been proposed. The method to determine the level of employee satisfaction will be consistent with the Research Library efforts to collect and analyze customer satisfaction. Research Library planning will incorporate this data when making priority and change decisions.

- The current Research Library business plan includes a strategy to increase comparative data gathering skills, utilization and implementation throughout the LANL Research Library. The Research Library Customer Manager will lead this strategy to assess methodology, train staff, identify key processes to analyze with other analogous organizations. During the next year, the Research Library will begin working with other similar organizations to determine best practices and assess how we can improve our processes by collaborating and learning from other organizations.

Conclusion
The Research Library has been on a journey to improve our way of doing business and move into the twenty first century. We have maintained our strong customer focus, and our customers have been supportive of our efforts to improve Library products and services. We have also focused on a strategic direction to bring Library products to the Researchers’ desktops and effectively increase their productivity. We have also formalized how we work as an organization to support our operational and strategic directions.

The Quality New Mexico Award Application, and Baldrige criteria analysis is a step to help us continue to focus on the path that will move us effectively into the 21st century. The award and public recognition have been gratifying to the staff who have worked hard to move the Research Library forward. The real value lies in the future when we take what we have learned from the application, apply it to our future organization and continue to provide viable products and services to the Research Library customers.