



A Baldrige Journey

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The quality revolution in the United States, and particularly the development of what is now called the Baldrige Excellence Framework, has had a profound impact on business, health care, education, and nonprofit organizations, as well as on my own professional evolution. It is a unique and powerful tool that makes organizations across the economy more effective and efficient, ultimately benefiting patients, students, shareholders, and customers.

As a PhD student at the University of Florida’s Warrington College of Business in the early 1970s, I focused on decision theory, statistics, and economics. I began teaching statistics and decision theory at the Carlson School of Management at the University of Minnesota in 1977. It was shortly thereafter that the quality revolution began sweeping across the world’s manufacturing sectors, led largely by the work, writings, and presence of W. Edwards Deming. His influence changed my view of business, and this radically changed my approach to teaching introductory business statistics.

Like nearly all statisticians, I had been teaching a series of statistical methods across the semester supported by business examples. The methods were primarily aimed at making inferences about populations of interest (e.g., customers, employees, or products). With the new approaches to quality management inspired by Deming, Juran, Ishikawa, and others, I refocused my courses on both populations and processes. But shortly thereafter I completely reframed the course by first teaching process management and then showing how the various statistical methods support the information and inference needs of process management.

With the development and launching of the Baldrige Criteria in the late 1980s, systems thinking—with which many business faculty were already familiar—was introduced to the business world. I again reframed my business statistics course by introducing systems thinking to motivate the entire content of the course including process management. And I brought systems thinking to life and made it practical for the students by introducing them to the Baldrige Criteria, the world’s premiere guide to practical systems thinking, then and now. Today, I use the recently developed Baldrige Excellence Builder in class rather than the full Baldrige Criteria. It is simpler for beginning systems thinkers to understand and use.

As the Baldrige Criteria expanded beyond business to the education, health care, and nonprofit sectors of the economy, my course evolved from its initial focus on business to its focus today on organizations of all kinds.

In 1993, I became the Dean of Rutgers Business School at Rutgers University and for the first time began to apply the Baldrige Criteria as an organizational

leader. Success at Rutgers led to the deanship at the Terry College of Business at the University of Georgia (1998-2007) and from there to the Presidency of the College of Charleston (2007-2014). During those leadership years I was recruited to seven corporate boards and am still a member of the boards of directors of three publicly traded companies: AGCO Corporation, Crawford & Company, and Primerica, Inc.

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As a director, I use the Baldrige Criteria and the Baldrige Cybersecurity Excellence Builder in three ways:

1. I use the Organizational Profile to guide my study and understanding of the company and the organizations that the company deals with (e.g., customers, suppliers, competitors, and takeover targets).
2. In studying the board book before each board meeting, I use the questions in the relevant criteria categories to help frame the questions I will ask in discussing board meeting topics with management and my fellow directors, and in suggesting related metrics for management to consider using.
3. I use the chains of related questions that flow from the Organizational Profile to the first six categories to the Results Category to develop deeper systems-level questions for management. I might use the exact chain of questions from the Criteria, or more typically, use those questions to develop or suggest my own versions.

My personal Baldrige journey has also included becoming a member of the Judge's Panel for the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (1987-1999), a member of and Chair of the Board of Overseers for the Baldrige Award (2005-2007), and then a member of the Board of the Foundation for the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (2007-present), where I have been the Board Chair since 2013. It has been a rewarding journey, full of personal growth, and I am pleased and proud to have been a Baldrige volunteer for over two decades.

