

Minnesota Council for Quality helps organizations thrive

Editor's Note: *The Business Journal's* Networking page features a Twin Cities organization every week that offers networking opportunities. To participate, contact April Wallace at awallace@bizjournals.com.

Describe the mission of the Minnesota Council for Quality.



The Minnesota Council for Quality is a nonprofit organization that helps organizations improve performance, results and/or competitiveness. It offers comprehensive organizational assessment that identifies strengths and improvement opportunities while serving as the foundation of the Minnesota Quality Award.

Describe the council's biggest recent success.

We are in the middle of a turnaround. In the 1990s, the council was financially sound with a large number of members and volunteers and an organizational assessment process that was considered a national role model. However, it lost its funding in 1998, forcing the council to behave more like a business by finding ways to create value for customers and members. Members are now offered benefits such as recognition of their support, access to services, discounts on the council's and partners' services. Members now claim to receive two to three times the value of their annual contribution, and membership has seen tremendous growth.

What opportunities does the council have for involvement?

The council's primary volunteers conduct assessments in the Minnesota Quality Award process. The council offers many other volunteer roles, such as the board of directors and teams that guide programs and services.

Is the Minnesota Council for Quality locally based or national with a local chapter?

We are locally based. However, the council is one of 45 state and local quality award programs in the United States that uses the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award's Criteria for Performance Excellence.

Describe the makeup of your membership.

Approximately 60 percent of the members are organizations. Of those organizations, approximately two-thirds are businesses (with an even split between manufacturing and service) and one-third represent non-businesses.

Describe what kind of people who would be interested in the council.

Those interested in organizational improvement. The most involved members and volunteers include senior leaders, quality professionals, consultants and middle levels of

management. We also have many professionals who attend our meetings and use our services.

List a few members who are well-known in the Twin Cities business community.

The council's largest and most generous members include Allina Hospitals & Clinics, Hutchinson Technology Inc., Medtronic Inc., and Xcel Energy Inc. Support also comes from organizations such as the Hazelden Foundation, Hearth and Home Technologies, Lifetouch Publishing, Mayo Clinic and MnSCU.

How frequently do you have meetings?

One of the council's services is the Performance Improvement Network, a monthly breakfast at which a mid- or senior-level leader from a Minnesota organization speaks about organizational improvement. Recent topics include Six Sigma, Baldrige, Balanced Scorecard, leadership development and ethics. Meetings are the first Thursday of every month at the University of St. Thomas in Minneapolis.

Why do people attend the council's meetings/events?

To learn more about organizational improvement, to network and to belong to a community interested in organizational improvement.

How many events does the council host each year besides regular meetings?

The council hosts an annual Minnesota Quality Award event that showcases organizations that have received recognition in the previous year's Minnesota Quality Award. This year's event will be held in late spring in the Twin Cities. Details will be posted at www.councilforquality.org.

-- Survey completed by **Brian Lassiter**

MORE...

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President: Brian Lassiter

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Chairman of the board: Craig Robinson

Number of members: 140 members

Annual membership fee: Individuals pay \$100; sponsorships up to \$10,000



www.councilforquality.org