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*Minnesota Council for Quality Stakeholder Update*  
*May 2004*  
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1. A Message from the President: When Strength Becomes a Weakness

Every once in awhile, I have a professional epiphany – one of those insightful lessons that really sticks with me. I had one of those occurrences a few weeks ago, and thought it might resonate with you all.

We recently completed an assessment for an organization. During the “Improvement Planning Session” (a half-day session in which we deliver the Feedback Report to senior leaders), a theme continued to emerge. This particular organization was having trouble proactively managing parts of its business. Their planning process is near-term (only one year); they do not have mechanisms to predict the skills employees need in the future; and they do not have systems to determine customers’ future requirements and expectations. The theme was clear: their challenge is effectively focusing on the future.

But (and here’s the beginning of my insight) the reason also became obvious. This organization’s business model requires them to be adept at reacting to crisis. When there is a failure of some type, this organization very quickly mobilizes teams, analyzes problems to find root causes, and successfully restores service. But their key strength – maintaining reliable service by quickly reacting to problems – also appears to be a thematic weakness: their management system is mainly focused on the short-term. Once they understood this tendency, it may make it easier to build processes with a longer-range focus.

A few weeks later, a similar insight occurred at the end of another customer’s assessment. This institution, a health care organization, has three distinct business units, each

focusing on very different products and marketplaces. This focus has become a compelling strength: they are able to thoroughly understand customer needs within each unit and build products, services, and processes that satisfy those unique needs.

However, this fundamental strength has also become one of their fundamental challenges, in that they have consequently built independent and autonomous divisions (some organizations might call them “silos”) that are oftentimes not aligned, integrated, or coordinated. The result: they sometimes experience inefficiencies, communication challenges, lack of coordination, and an overall feeling of fragmentation. Now recognizing their “blind spot,” this organization is working to build an infrastructure – things like a measurement system, a common strategic plan, consistent human resource processes, and so forth – that ensures consistency across their strong independent units.

So, now the insight grows. Looking for a third example to test my theory, I hearkened back to my days when I was with a property-casualty insurer. This organization was expert at managing risk: they had some of the best underwriters in the country and consequently had an admirable “loss ratio” and a strong balance sheet. However, their propensity to manage risk meant that they didn’t take many: they were fairly reluctant to be early-to-market with new products, to embrace new technology, or to be early adopters with management tools. While risk aversion served them well in their core business, this tendency likely caused several lost opportunities.

So there’s my epiphany: organizations (like people, I suppose) sometimes leverage their overwhelming strengths to such an extent that they become their fundamental weaknesses.

The good news: if an organization can recognize their tendencies, it can address the issue by building processes and mechanisms that continue to maximize their strengths while reducing (or controlling) their weakness.

So what’s your organization’s compelling strength? And is it such a major strength that it is also becoming your organization’s inherent weakness?

Yours in Improvement,

Brian S. Lassiter  
President, Minnesota Council for Quality  
[www.councilforquality.org](http://www.councilforquality.org)

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2. 2003 Minnesota Quality Award Recipient Announced – Event 5/20

The Minnesota Council for Quality, Minneapolis, today announced the recipients of the 2003 Minnesota Quality Award. Three organizations received recognition at the Advancement Level: Micro-Tech Hearing Instruments, Plymouth; Tappe Construction,

Eagan; and Unisys Central Development Lab, Roseville. The United States Army Corps of Engineers, St. Paul District, received recognition at the Commitment Level.

“The four organizations receiving the 2003 Minnesota Quality Award represent the diversity of Minnesota’s economy – a manufacturer, two service organizations, and a public sector agency,” says Brian Lassiter, president of the Minnesota Council for Quality. “This demonstrates that – despite tough conditions the last few years – Minnesota organizations are once again focusing on systematic improvement and positioning themselves for the future.”

Founded in 1991, the primary objective of the Minnesota Quality Award is to help organizations improve their performance results. The Award also serves to recognize performance excellence throughout the state. The Minnesota Quality Award is given at four levels – Excellence (the top Award), Achievement, Advancement, and Commitment – and is the culmination of a rigorous assessment process that uses the Criteria for Performance Excellence of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award. Since 1991, 63 organizations have received recognition at various levels.

Organizations that participate in the process receive comprehensive feedback that outlines their strengths and improvement opportunities along several dimensions: leadership; strategic planning; customer and market focus; measurement, information, and knowledge management; human resource focus; process management; and results. This feedback is used for organizational learning, planning, and improvement.

“This process validated much of what we thought we knew about our business system,” says Mike Tappe, President and CEO of Tappe Construction in Eagan. “But receiving the feedback from an independent source helped to motivate our improvement efforts. The feedback also identified a few things that we hadn’t considered, so it provided a great deal of value for helping us continue our improvement journey.”

Larry Hagen, President and CEO of Micro-Tech states: “The Baldrige framework saved my business. Five or six years ago, we were struggling to break-even as a company and were on the brink of bankruptcy. We began using quality tools and the Baldrige Criteria in 1998 and have since seen remarkable results – revenue growth far exceeding the industry average, and improvements in profit, employee-related results, and operations. Though we have come a long way, we will use the feedback from the Minnesota Quality Award process to continue to improve key aspects of our business.”

With the support of Virchow Krause & Company, the Minnesota Quality Award public recognition event is next Thursday, May 20, at the International Market Square (275 Market Street, Minneapolis). Networking and hors d'ouvres will begin at 5:00 PM; the program is from 6:30-7:30 PM.

The four organizations will offer comments, and the event will also feature remarks by Dick Pettingill, President and CEO of Allina Hospitals & Clinics. Allina is using the

Minnesota Quality Award Criteria to improve its business and outcomes. Admission is \$30 for non-members of the Council (discounts available for members and volunteers).

The event is open to the public and will offer a fantastic learning and networking opportunity, so feel free to forward this invitation to those in your network who would benefit. For more information or to register, please visit our sponsor's website at <http://resourcecenter.virchowkrause.com/virchowresource/seminars++events/default.asp>. Or email the Council at [info@councilforquality.org](mailto:info@councilforquality.org).

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3. Join the 2004 Board of Evaluators; Summer Training Deadline Approaching

The Council will offer a summer Evaluator training session June 29-July 1 (in Rochester, using a K-12 education case study) and a fall session September 21-23 (in the Twin Cities, using a business case study). Applications for returning Evaluators are due June 25 for the summer session and September 17 for the fall session (and only require updates from your most recent application).

In addition to the full three-day training sessions above, new Evaluators are also required to attend a one-day orientation. New Evaluators can select one of three dates for summer orientation (June 2, June 3, or June 8) in Rochester; fall orientation dates include September 1, 2, or 8. Applications for new Evaluators are due May 28 for the summer session and August 20 for the fall session.

There are many benefits to becoming an Evaluator, including strengthening your ability to understand what factors drive organizational results, networking with peers across the state, forming deep relationships with evaluation team, reviewing performance of organizations throughout the state – possibly identifying best practices for your organization, and developing other professional skills such as analysis, consensus- and team-building, interpersonal, written communication, interviewing, and systems thinking. Many Evaluators consider the experience to be among the most valuable of their careers.

Furthermore, this summer is the first time that Evaluators can earn post-graduate credit for participating in training. For interested Evaluators, the University of Wisconsin-Stout will offer three hours of credit in partnership with the Minnesota Council for Quality. Details will be announced soon.

Finally, we expect the number of organizations applying for the Minnesota Quality Award to more than DOUBLE in 2004, so we are looking to grow significantly the Board of Evaluators. We hope that you would consider (re)joining the Board of Evaluators and/or encourage others to do so. For more information or for an application, please visit [www.councilforquality.org/assess.cfm](http://www.councilforquality.org/assess.cfm), email us at [kathryn.mackin@councilforquality.org](mailto:kathryn.mackin@councilforquality.org), or call 612-462-3577.

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#### 4. Creating Successful Change in Organizations: The Role of Leaders – PIN Discussion 6/3

Without great leadership nothing works. That's a bold statement, and yet it is true everywhere we try to improve quality and consistency in our work. Having support and commitment from leadership is essential to successful organizational change and sustainable organizational improvement.

The Minnesota Council for Quality is pleased to welcome Mr. Paul Batz, Executive Vice President and Principal with MDA Leadership Consulting, to the June 3 Performance Improvement Network (PIN) discussion. As an experienced executive coach working with leaders in middle market, Midwest growth companies, Paul will share stories and insights about what it takes to create sustainable change in organizations. He will share the essential components needed to ensure your change efforts are set up to succeed. And he will detail the leadership behaviors needed from leaders at every level in the organization to deliver consistent performance over time.

The presentation will include interactive discussion, exercises, and a walk-through of MDA's Organizational Performance model that mirrors the Baldrige Criteria, the topic of last month's discussion.

The discussion is from 8:00-9:00 a.m. on June 3 (networking and continental breakfast begin at 7:30 a.m.) at the University of St. Thomas in downtown Minneapolis, Murphy Hall Room 203. Admission is FREE for Council members; \$20 for the public. For more information or to register, visit [www.improvementnetwork.org](http://www.improvementnetwork.org) or email [brian.lassiter@councilforquality.org](mailto:brian.lassiter@councilforquality.org).

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#### 5. Council Staff Have New Email Addresses

To better serve our members, customers, volunteers, and other stakeholders, the Minnesota Council for Quality will be making some changes to our communications infrastructure in 2004. You will see improvements to our website and newsletter in the coming months. This month, you will see changes to our email structure.

Effective immediately, Council staff email addresses have changed to the following:

Debra Bultnick: [debra.bultnick@councilforquality.org](mailto:debra.bultnick@councilforquality.org)  
Brian Lassiter: [brianlassiter@councilforquality.org](mailto:brianlassiter@councilforquality.org)  
Kathryn Mackin: [kathryn.mackin@councilforquality.org](mailto:kathryn.mackin@councilforquality.org)  
Larry Shepherd: [larry.shepherd@councilforquality.org](mailto:larry.shepherd@councilforquality.org)

For general information and inquiries, please feel free to contact any one of the four above or submit an email to [info@councilforquality.org](mailto:info@councilforquality.org). Our main phone number will remain 612-462-3577 and our website [www.councilforquality.org](http://www.councilforquality.org).

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6. From Manager to Leader: What Does it Take? – MSLF Discussion 5/25

The Minnesota Strategic Leadership Forum (MSLF), a partner of the Minnesota Council for Quality, is pleased to announce that Ms. Cecile Burzinski, Vice President of LeaderSource, will speak at their May 25 discussion. She will explore what characteristics makes a good organizational leader, so this discussion is appropriate for those who are developing leaders in their organizations or for those who are moving into positions of increasing responsibility for managing people.

The event will be held at the Minneapolis campus of St. Thomas. Registration is at 7:00 a.m., buffet breakfast is at 7:30 a.m., the speaker begins at 7:45 a.m., and Q&A discussion is between 8:45 - 9:00 a.m. Cost is \$25 (\$15 partner rate for MN Council members). Space is limited. For more information or to register, please visit [www.slf-minnesota.org](http://www.slf-minnesota.org).

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7. A Journey Towards Performance Excellence – RAQC Session 6/2

Please join the Rochester Area Quality Council (RAQC), a partner of the Minnesota Council for Quality, for a very special half-day event on Wednesday, June 2, when they welcome Mark Hurlbert, Director of Business Excellence from Motorola Commercial, Government, and Industrial Solutions Sector (CGSS). Motorola CGSS is a recipient of the 2002 Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, indicating they are among the best performing organizations in the US.

Mr. Hurlbert will summarize the Baldrige Criteria and outline how Motorola CGSS has implemented processes consistent with the framework and will offer compelling results of their efforts. Mr. Hurlbert will demonstrate how CGSS manages their entire business using Baldrige, focusing on linkages, interdependencies, and alignment. He will discuss how Motorola CGSS got started on its improvement journey using the Baldrige framework (in 1999), and he will offer some best practices that have helped them achieve world class results.

This program will be held at the University Center Rochester, Coffman Building, Room CF206-208 from 7:30 to noon and includes breakfast. The cost prior to the early bird deadline of May 26th is \$79 (for members of RAQC or MCQ) and \$89 for non-members. After May 26th the cost is \$89 for members and \$99 for non-members. Please register today online at [www.raqc.com](http://www.raqc.com), by email to [kay.wiegert@roch.edu](mailto:kay.wiegert@roch.edu), or by phone at 507-285-7560.

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8. Understanding the Baldrige Criteria: A Management Framework for High Performing Organizations – 6/9-6/10

The Minnesota Council for Quality is pleased to announce that our partner, the Wisconsin Forward Award, will be hosting a two-day seminar on the Baldrige Criteria June 9-10 in Madison. The seminar will be conducted by Dr. Mark Blazey, who also facilitates Minnesota's Evaluator training (see Article #3 above).

This two-day seminar will help you to leverage the power of the Baldrige framework to make your organization better faster! National expert and author Mark Blazey, PhD, will facilitate a workshop for both newcomers and intermediate practitioners of performance excellence to develop a deeper understanding of the Criteria and their application. Many past and current Wisconsin applicants and Examiners have found value in attending Dr. Blazey's seminar more than once.

The cost is \$585 for both days. For more information or a registration form, please visit [http://www.forwardaward.org/materials/Flyer\\_Blazey6-04.pdf](http://www.forwardaward.org/materials/Flyer_Blazey6-04.pdf) or contact the Wisconsin program **608-663-5300**. Seminar space is limited with registration accepted on a first-come, first-served basis.

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9. U of M College of Continuing Education Spring Curriculum

The College of Continuing Education (CCE) at the University of Minnesota's spring curriculum is wrapping up. Upcoming organizational improvement-related courses include the following:

5/25: Executing a Strategic Measurement Framework, \$695

6/6-6/11: The Successful Manager's Leadership Handbook Program, \$2995

For more information about the courses or customized programs, please call 612-624-1228, email [business@cce.umn.edu](mailto:business@cce.umn.edu), or visit <http://www.cce.umn.edu/business>.

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10. Balanced Scorecard at the Master's Forum – June 23 and July 14

David Norton, one of the creators of the Balanced Scorecard and the "Strategy Map" concept, will be coming to Minneapolis on June 23rd to deliver a half-day presentation on Strategy Maps for the Masters Forum. Insightformation, a member of the Minnesota Council for Quality, is leading a "Masters Lab" the afternoon of June 23 that will include some discussion, some "hands-on" work with the scorecard, a demo of their award-winning scorecard automation software, and a 75-minute panel discussion/Q&A session by executives who have developed and deployed strategy maps and balanced scorecards in their organizations.

Normally, single half-day sessions of the Masters Forum events are \$375 and the afternoon lab would be an additional \$50. However, Insightformation is offering a special combined price of \$395 for BOTH events, and individuals who register by June 4 will also receive a copy of Norton & Kaplan's latest book "Strategy Maps." All

participants will receive a CD that contains the audio of Norton's presentation along with his slides and a multi-media presentation of InsightVision (the software package).

Then, on July 14th, there will be a repeat of the Masters Lab. Individuals who just want to attend the July 14th event (8:30 to 11:30), will be able to register for \$195, and they will also receive an audio copy of Norton's presentation, his slides on a CD, and a copy of "Strategy Maps." Visit [www.insightformation.com](http://www.insightformation.com) for more information or to register.

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