
Minnesota Council for Quality Stakeholder Update
April 2006

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1. A Message from the President: When Educators Become the Student

As a country, our education system is in shambles. While we continue to try to leave no child behind, other countries are making incredible strides in their systems and are beginning to leave us as a nation behind.

I recently read a panel discussion in a local newspaper that outlined the significance of the issue. Consider some of these facts (provided in the Star Tribune by the Minnesota Private College Foundation):

In 1991, the United States ranked second in college participation; in 2001, that ranking dropped to 15th.

In 1975, the US boasted 59% of the world's doctorate degrees; by 2001, that percentage had dropped to 41%.

At 74%, the US ranks 17th in the world in high school graduation rate.

In tests assessing basic knowledge and skills, US students rank 15th in reading, 19th in science, 24th in math, and 24th in problem solving.

The societal impact of this deterioration in our education system is probably obvious (increased crime rates, increased family issues, and so forth). But -- as we begin to lose ground to other countries -- the impact on our national economy may be astounding. And this impact will only be exacerbated by the imminent Baby Boomer retirement bubble that is staring us in the face. Never before have we seen the loss of educated human capital than what we anticipate losing in the next five to 10 years. As our most educated knowledge workers and leaders begin to leave the workforce, we will suffer an incredible deterioration of our collective intellectual assets. Given the

decline in our education system, we simply will not have the ability to replace these workers with equally educated resources.

The prospects in Minnesota may not be quite as bad as other parts of the country, as we've started from a stronger educational base. After all, Minnesota is among the best states in many education metrics, such as standardized test scores, graduation rates, and percent of graduates going to college. But two things come to mind. First, we may have more to lose in Minnesota than in other states. Of our 19 Fortune 500 companies based in this state, most are here not because they are tied to natural resources, but because they are tied to highly educated resources (and a strong political climate, and livable cities, and other reasons, of course). The relative decline in our educated workforce, however, makes Minnesota a less attractive place to do business.

And second, if the US is losing its worldwide ranking in education, then Minnesota may be winning the "consolation bracket" in this global competition for skilled workers. The source of the problem, according to David Laird (president of the Minnesota Private College Council) is that we are "...not recognizing who our real competition is." We shouldn't be comparing ourselves to schools in Iowa or New York, but the education systems in Norway, Singapore, and China.

As a side note, I recall having a discussion with an administrator in a large, successful Minnesota school district not long ago. This district was performing very well on most indicators of student learning, student and stakeholder satisfaction, financial and budget results, and faculty/staff results. But they are comparing themselves to other districts in Minnesota. Not that that is a bad place to start, but they may have wrong frame of reference.

So what do we do about this growing issue? There are many things our elected officials and community leaders can -- and probably should -- do (such as focusing on early childhood education reform, improving access and quality of higher education, increasing funding for instruction and appropriate programs, changing curriculum requirements to reflect emerging business and societal needs, increasing community involvement in education delivery, and so forth). However, this column is not intended to be an essay on society's role in solving the problem (perhaps another day). Instead, I want to focus on what individual school districts can do -- despite the challenges of funding, state and federal mandates, possibly archaic accreditation standards, and other challenges.

There is a consortium of 12 districts in Southeast Minnesota that all belong to the Rochester Area Math and Science Partnership (RAMSP). Founded in 1991 and supported by funding from the Mayo Clinic, IBM-Rochester, State Farm Insurance, and the districts themselves, RAMSP's mission is to "support continuous improvement dedicated to all students achieving world-class standards in math, science, and technology." (Given RAMSP's long track record of success, this mission is something that should make Governor Pawlenty and President Bush pleased.)

RAMSP's goal is to enhance: high student achievement; leadership and support for continuous improvement; and collaboration among K-12 districts, business, and higher education. In the fall of 1999, the RAMSP Board approved a recommendation to use the Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence (a collection of world-class best practices in education) as the criteria for self-assessment and the framework for continuous improvement within Partnership districts. The RAMSP Board also accepted a recommendation that each district assess its performance against these Criteria every three years. This assessment process is designed to help district leaders systematically identify and prioritize opportunities for improvement, such that they improve overall organizational effectiveness and capabilities, increase organizational and personal learning, and deliver ever-improving value to students and stakeholders.

So here's where the educator becomes the student. These districts are using the Baldrige framework -- a model that grew out of business -- to improve their operations, increase their student achievement, optimize their resources, and achieve higher levels of excellence. And, not

only are they using a proven framework for continuous improvement to do so, but they also have a common language for sharing, learning, and benchmarking with each other.

The irony cannot be lost on this: they are using a business framework to become more effective learning organizations so that they are more effective at teaching.

Is it working? You bet. I was hoping to list some of the results that the 12 districts are achieving, but alas I am out of space. But you shouldn't take my word for it anyway. Come hear three of the 12 district's stories at our fifteenth annual Minnesota Quality Award event Tuesday evening, May 9 (see the story below). And if you are interested in learning more about the Rochester Area Math and Science Partnership -- a model that I think would have tremendous impact if replicated across Minnesota, and indeed across the country -- please visit www.ramsp.org.

Yours in Improvement,

Brian S. Lassiter
President, Minnesota Council for Quality
www.councilforquality.org

2. 2005 Minnesota Quality Award Event May 9; Register Today!

The Minnesota Council for Quality is pleased to host our 15th annual 2005 Minnesota Quality Award recognition event on Tuesday, May 9. The event will feature 10 organizations receiving the 2005 Award (actual Award levels will be announced at event):

Allina Hospitals & Clinics (Minneapolis),
Benedictine Health System (Duluth),
Central Minnesota Jobs and Training Services (Monticello),
Immanuel St. Joseph (Mankato),
Kasson-Mantorville Schools (Kasson),
Mate Precision Tooling (Anoka),
Mayo Health System (Rochester),
Rochester Catholic Schools (Rochester),
Rochester Public Schools (Rochester), and
Winona Health (Winona).

The event will also feature remarks by Mr. Mike Luker, President of Sunny Fresh Foods (Cargill). Sunny Fresh is a two-time Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award recipient, and one of seven Minnesota organizations to have achieved this high level of performance excellence.

Governor Tim Pawlenty has been invited to present the Awards.

The 2.5 hour event (which includes heavy hors d'oeuvres and a cash bar) is intended to recognize these organizations' accomplishments, to thank our Board of Evaluators and other key volunteers, and to promote networking within our growing community. We expect at least 250 leaders and professionals to attend.

The event is open to the public and is made possible by the generous contributions of our Silver Sponsors (Lutheran Board of Pensions, Mortensen Construction, Northland Community and Technical College, Sunny Fresh Foods, and Unisys) and Bronze Sponsors (Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota, Cargill Business Excellence, DuFresne Manufacturing, Minnesota Healthcare Quality Professionals, Pemstar, Ronning Leadership Seminars, Sheraton Bloomington, and Studer Group).

Date: Tuesday, May 9, 2006

Time: 5:00 PM to 7:30 PM (program from 6:15-7:30 PM)

Location: Sheraton Bloomington, Grand Ballroom, 7800 Normandale Blvd (494 and Hwy 100), Bloomington 55439

Cost: Free for employees of 2005 Award recipients and 2005 Evaluators; \$20 for Council members and Award recipient guests; \$30 for Council partners; \$40 for the public; \$140 for a group of 8 registering together.

Who Should Attend: Anyone interested in learning more about organizational improvement (and networking with a community interested in the same), current, past, and prospective Award recipients; current, past, and prospective Evaluators; current and prospective Council members.

Save the date and spread the word within your organization!

For more information on the event or the Minnesota Quality Award, visit our website at www.councilforquality.org or call the Council at 612-462-3577. To register, please email brian.lassiter@councilforquality.org with your name, organizational affiliation, and preferred method of payment.

3. Join the 2006 Board of Evaluators; Summer Training Approaching

Are you interested in learning more about what makes organizations successful? Are you interested in helping other organizations -- such as schools, hospitals, non-profits, and businesses -- around the state improve their performance? Would you be interested in networking, learning, and sharing with others who feel the same way?

The Minnesota Council for Quality is seeking candidates for the 2006 Minnesota Quality Award Board of Evaluators. There are many benefits to becoming an Evaluator, such as:

- * strengthening your ability to understand what factors drive organizational results,
- * networking with peers across the state,
- * forming deep relationships with professionals and leaders interested in organizational improvement,
- * reviewing performance of organizations throughout the state (and 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, Evaluators can earn post-graduate credit for participating in training. For interested Evaluators, the University of Wisconsin-Stout will offer three (3) hours of credit in partnership with the Minnesota Council for Quality.

If you are interested in joining the 2006 Board of Evaluators, the summer training session will be June 27-29 (in Rochester). In addition to the full three-day training session, new Evaluators are also required to attend a one-day orientation (either 6/1, 6/8, or 6/9).

Applications for new Evaluators are due 5/26. Applications for returning Evaluators (which only require updates from your most recent application) are due 6/16.

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, email us at kathryn.mackin@councilforquality.org, or call 612-462-3577.

4. Recognizing First Quarter Council Members

The Council would like to recognize 55 organizations and individuals who joined or renewed their membership in the first quarter. Special recognition goes to Fairview Health Services for renewing as Sponsoring Members.

“Fairview is committed to successful clinical outcomes and high quality patient care,” says Brian Lassiter, president of the Council. “Not only will the Council continued to work with them on their own improvement efforts, but their contribution helps support more affordable memberships for individuals and smaller organizations. We thank them for their continued support.”

In addition to Fairview, these individuals and organizations became members last quarter (asterisks indicate renewal members):

Biasca & Associates Inc, Highlands Ranch, CO*
AgStar Financial Services, Rochester, MN*
Bank of Elk River, Elk River, MN*
Capitol View Consulting, St. Paul, MN*
Bob Christenson, Brooklyn Center, MN*
Construction Partnership, Don DeKeyrel, Rochester, MN*
cPMT, Rochester, MN*
The Dahlen Company, Verona, WI*
Dairy Strategies, LLC, Madison, WI*
ELCA Board of Pensions, Minneapolis, MN
Fairview Health Services, Minneapolis, MN*
Elicia Gardner, Eagan, MN
Gauthier Industries, Rochester, MN
Hampton Inn Rochester, Rochester, MN*
Hearth and Home Technologies, Inc., Lakeville, MN*
Hennepin County Change Agents, Minneapolis, MN*
Steve Hoisington, Greenfield, WI*
Human Strategies LLC, Albuquerque, NM*
Institute for Clinical Systems Improvement (ICSI), Bloomington, MN*
Robert Jones, Robert, MD
Kasson-Mantorville Schools, Kasson, MN
Chris Kuhn, Rochester, MN*
Mark Lanz, Edina, MN*
Lextera Group, Minneapolis, MN
Merilee Light, Minneapolis, MN
Dave Lindblom, Apple Valley, MN*
Malt-O-Meal, Northfield, MN*
Mate Precision Tooling, Anoka, MN*
McNeilus Steel, Dodge Center, MN*
Medica, Minnetonka, MN*
MN Healthcare Quality Professionals
Tina Moore
Murphy Warehouse Co., Minneapolis, MN*
Normandale Community College, Dept of Customized Training & Continuing Education,
Bloomington, MN

Northland Community and Technical College, Center for Outreach and Innovation, Thief River Falls, MN*
Olmsted County Medical Center, Rochester, MN*
PEMSTAR, Rochester, MN*
Progressive Tool & Machining, Pine Island, MN*
ProMation Systems, Inc., Blaine, MN*
Proventric Solutions, Mendota Heights, MN
Remmele Engineering, New Brighton, MN*
Rochester Community and Technical College, Rochester, MN*
Rockwood Capital Management, Arden Hills, MN*
Rosemount Flow Division, Eden Prairie, MN
Satisfaction Management Systems, Inc., Minnetonka, MN*
Sedgwick CMS, Eden Prairie, MN
Solutia Consulting, Stillwater, MN*
Strategy Management, Edina, MN*
Thorndyke Consulting
University of Minnesota, Facilities Management, Minneapolis, MN
University of Wisconsin-Stout, Menomonie, WI*
US Bank, Client Services Group, St. Paul, MN*
Verified Credentials, Lakeville, MN
Workforce Development, Inc., Rochester, MN*
Brian Zmolek, Rochester, MN*

We thank all members for their support. As of March 31, the Council represents a growing community of over 250 members representing over 160,000 employees. A complete list of members is available at <http://www.councilforquality.org/member.cfm>.

Why should you or your organization consider membership? There are many reasons. Your or your organization receives:

- * recognition (in this newsletter, in press releases, on the website, and with a certificate/letter);
- * discounts to Council services (Evaluator training, organization assessments);
- * access to Council services (Clearinghouse, Consultant Referral Network, and free admission to Performance Improvement Network discussions); and
- * discounts to our partners' services (other improvement-related non-profits, universities/colleges, and professional/trade associations).

Individual memberships begin at \$100 and organization memberships begin at \$250. For more information on the benefits of becoming a member, please visit www.councilforquality.org/member.cfm or email the Council at info@councilforquality.org.

5. Bridging the Gap Between Strategy & Execution -- PIN Discussion 5/4

How often have your organization's key initiatives stalled or been shelved completely due to failure of execution? Ecolab, together with Collaboract Consulting -- a strategic execution company -- demonstrated that accelerating execution collaboratively isn't merely a matter of luck. The first step to bridging the gap between strategy and execution is a systematic process that can be engineered to work over and over again.

The Minnesota Council for Quality is pleased to welcome Linda Saggau, CEO of Collaboract Consulting, and Chris Vitek, Vice President of Global Business Processes at Ecolab, to the May 4 Performance Improvement Network (PIN) discussion. Their talk, "Bridging the Gap Between

Strategy and Execution,” will focus on bridging the “knowing-doing gap” that is so prevalent in business. To do this, they will provide useful diagnostic tools that give organizations clearer, objective views of an initiative based on the perceptions of stakeholders. They will also outline Ecolab’s highly successful process use of these tools when planning their Circle the Customer initiative.

The discussion is from 8:00-9:00 a.m. on May 4 (networking and continental breakfast begin at 7:30 a.m.) at the Minneapolis Community and Technical College (MCTC), 1501 Hennepin (15th and Hennepin), downtown Minneapolis, Room L3000 (Wheelock-Whitney Library). Parking is available at their ramp across Hennepin (for \$5). Admission to PIN is FREE for Council members; \$10 for partner organizations; \$20 for the public. Space is limited so register today by emailing brian.lassiter@councilforquality.org. For more information, visit www.councilforquality.org/performance.cfm.

6. Continue Getting this Newsletter: Make Sure We Have your Email!

If you find value in receiving this monthly newsletter, then we would like to keep you on the list! But we know that people occasionally change jobs, move, or just change their email address. So please let us know any time that your email will change, and we'll make sure that you continue to receive our newsletters. (You can also download back issues of the newsletter at http://www.councilforquality.org/about_newsletter.cfm.)

We would also like to inform our stakeholders of the growing concern we have with Spam filters. We all get junk email, and we all appreciate spam blockers that reduce the number of unnecessary emails we do get. But as a non-profit corporation that helps organizations, individuals, and communities improve their performance, the Council’s mission is to get information to our constituents. Unfortunately, many spam filters are no longer letting legitimate emails get through to all of our stakeholders.

Therefore, we would appreciate your asking your IT department (or ISP) to add the Council to their “white list” (or “safe list”). This will ensure that our emails continue to arrive in a timely fashion.

We promise to keep emails to a minimum, focusing only on information important to organizational improvement and performance excellence. And we appreciate your willingness to keep our (hopefully valuable) information flowing.

7. Improvements Made to Consultant Referral Network

The Minnesota Council for Quality -- in cooperation with the Kansas Center for Performance Excellence, the Michigan Quality Council, the Ohio Partnership for Excellence, the Washington State Quality Award, and the Wisconsin Forward Award -- is pleased to announce significant refinements to their Consultant Referral Network®.

Located at www.consultantreferralnetwork.org, the Consultant Referral Network is a dynamic, web-enabled search tool that connects organizational improvement experts to client organizations seeking them. This service allows clients to outline their needs in terms of subject matter expertise sought, type of assistance desired (consulting, training, coaching, speaking, or facilitating), sector/industry expertise required, size of consulting firm desired, desired location of consulting firm, and years of experience preferred. The client can also weight the relative importance of each variable. The tool will then identify up to five consultants or firms that best match the client’s needs.

Refinements recently made to the tool now allow clients to also conduct directory searches. These searches will allow clients to see all consultants with a specific subject matter expertise, all consultants with particular sector experience, and all consultants domiciled in a specific state, for example. There is no charge for client searches.

"Use of the Consultant Referral Network continues to grow," says Brian Lassiter, president of the Minnesota Council for Quality. "With about 100 consultants listed in the service, the tool's value to clients continues to increase. And with the additional functionality of the tool, clients have the choice of how they search for consultants."

The Consultant Referral Network was officially launched March 1, 2005, by the state quality award programs in Minnesota, Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin. Since then, Kansas and Washington have joined in the partnership of programs offering the service. The Network now averages about 1200 independent visits a month and has about 20-30 client searches a month.

"Our goal is to increase the awareness and use of this tool," continues Lassiter. "These enhancements will make the tool more robust for clients who seek assistance in improving aspects of their organization. And as the number of clients using the tool increases, the tool becomes more valuable for consultants as a source of possible leads."

8. Disney Institute Presents Team Creativity Disney Style -- RAQC 5/5

Please join the Rochester Area Quality Council (RAQC), a partner of the Minnesota Council for Quality, for a special event on May 5: "Disney Institute Presents Team Creativity Disney Style: Unleashing Creativity and Maximizing Team Performance." This full-day event will feature Disney's keys to unleashing creativity and maximizing team performance.

The morning program is "Unleashing Creativity," which includes:

- * Nurturing a Collaborative Culture--Discuss the key components to nurturing culture where new ideas and problem solving options are openly expressed, acted on, & "plussed up" to create maximum value.

- * Understanding Organizational Identity--Discover the value of aligning new ideas to the organization's brand identity in making sound judgments and taking creative risks.

- * Building Effective Structural Systems--Hear how organization structure and systems at the Walt Disney World Resort support creative process and increase productivity.

The afternoon program is "Maximizing Team Performance," which includes:

- * Building High-performance Teams--Examine common building blocks of high-performance--strong individual and team knowledge base; effective communication and decision-making processes; ability to plan for contingencies; continuous improvement focus; system of recognition and celebration.

- * Exploring Unified Goals--Explore how a unified goal can maximize team creativity and performance.

- * Increasing Team Collaboration and Partnering--Utilizing exercises you can conduct with your team develop strategies and tools you can take back to improve the skill level of your teams in these critical areas.

Registration and breakfast is 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m. Programs are from 8AM – 4PM. Lunch is included. Cost is \$259 member (RAQC, MN Council for Quality, ASQ, and Rochester Chamber) Early Bird Special; \$279 Non-Member Early Bird Special. After April 16th, the cost is \$279 Member and \$299 Non-Member.

For more information or to register, visit www.raqc.com.

9. Innovation at Cargill: From the Inside Out -- MN Strategic Leadership Forum 4/25

The Minnesota Strategic Leadership Forum (MSLF), an alliance partner of the Minnesota Council for Quality, is pleased to announce their April 25 discussion "Innovation at Cargill: From the Inside Out." The discussion will be facilitated by Anne Mollerus, Product Manager at Cargill.

This presentation will focus on how Cargill is building a culture of Innovation. Ms. Mollerus will share what building blocks the corporation has put in place to nurture innovation. She will discuss how Cargill defines it, how to embed it in a company's culture and what tools employees need to make innovation happen. How does one choose the right ideas? How to handle failure? What kind of metrics do you need to measure if innovation is taking place and delivering value to customers? Anne will look at all these questions, and more. She will also present several case studies on how Cargill is tackling innovation successfully, from the inside out.

Anne Mollerus has been with Cargill for 17 years and served in a variety of roles, including sales, marketing, innovation and business development. In her current position as New Products Project Manager, Ms. Mollerus is responsible for developing "new to the world" sweetener ingredients and solutions that meet the needs of Cargill's customers and consumers. She works in the Cargill Sweetness Solutions, New Product Development area located at Cargill's Minneapolis headquarters.

The discussion will be held Wednesday, April 25. Registration, networking, and breakfast is at 7:00 AM; the program is from 7:45-9:00 AM. The meeting location is the University of St. Thomas, 1000 LaSalle Ave in Minneapolis, Opus Hall 202. Cost is \$35 to the public or \$25 for members of Council (free for MSLF Premium members). For more information or to register, visit <http://www.slf-minnesota.org/calendar.htm>.

10. Learn from the Best: "Quest for Excellence" XVIII Conference -- 4/23-4/26

Do you want to improve your organization's performance results, increase organizational innovation to gain and sustain competitive advantages, create an environment that fosters social responsibility and ethical behavior, and increase organizational sustainability? Learn about the tool used by business, education and health care leaders to evaluate and focus their efforts on performance results, leadership effectiveness, customer and employee satisfaction, and process management. Meet the 2005 Baldrige Award recipients at The Quest for Excellence XVIII Conference April 23-26 at the Hilton in Washington DC., where they will share their exceptional performance practices, their journey to performance excellence, and their lessons learned. This conference is designed to maximize learning and networking opportunities.

The 2005 Award recipients of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award are: Sunny Fresh Foods (Cargill), DynMcDermott Petroleum Operations, Park Place Lexus, Jenks Public Schools, Richland College, and Bronson Methodist Hospital. These winning organizations demonstrate role model excellence in several key areas, including leadership, strategic planning, and performance results. Meet the 2005 recipients of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award to learn about their best practices and how they achieve exceptional performance results; also, hear from other recent Award recipients.

Early bird registration (until April 3) is \$1100; regular registration is \$1250. Other discounts are available. Visit [http://www.baldrige.org/Quest for Excellence.htm](http://www.baldrige.org/Quest_for_Excellence.htm) for complete information on QE and online registration, or call ExpoExchange at 866-229-2386 to register by phone. Early

registration discounts available until April 3, 2006. Hotel accommodations should be made directly with the Hilton.

11. Office and Plant Kaizen Teams -- Manufacturers' Alliance 5/11

How do others apply Kaizen, a proven process improvement approach, in diverse circumstances? Rapid improvement teams have proven to work in the factory and now they are being used in the office as well. Compare the approaches of two different manufacturing companies (Johnson Screens and Reviva Company) and the differing views of the team members. What is similar and what is different? Let's learn from the presenter's experience.

The Manufacturers' Alliance, an alliance partner of the Minnesota Council for Quality, is pleased to announce their Monthly Educational Program on May 11, from 7:30 - 9:30 AM at Hennepin Technical College in Brooklyn Park.

Cost is \$30 for non-members of Manufacturers Alliance. Council members (from manufacturing companies) are entitled to one free pass per monthly educational program; visit www.mfrall.com/free_pass.htm to print a free pass. For more information or to register, visit www.mfrall.com.

12. The Fun and Fundamentals of Facilitation -- MN Facilitators Network 4/20

The Minnesota Facilitators Network (MFN), a partner of the Minnesota Council for Quality, is pleased to announce their April 20 session, "The Fun and Fundamentals of Facilitation."

This month's meeting will feature a panel of presenters, who are members of the 2006 cohort of ICA's MTOP program (Mastering the Technology of Participation): Howard Bode, Pamela Schafer, Sue Daniels, Debra Leigh, and Carrie Jo Short, with Linda Alton & Marilyn Oyler. They come from Fargo to Faribault, from Green Bay to St. Cloud, from Phoenix to Minneapolis! A dancer, a university professor, a seed salesman, an agricultural activist, a math teacher, a process consultant. Sharing the FUN and FUNDAMENTALS of FACILITATION. They will share their journeys, the HOW and WHY of facilitation making a difference in their "trades." You will leave with new facilitation tools, new relationships.

The session will be April 20 from 5:30-8:30 PM (program from 6-8PM). A light dinner will be served. The location is Salem Lutheran Church: 610 W 28th Street (corner of 28th and Lyndale Ave S. in Minneapolis). Cost is \$15 for members and \$20 for non-members.

For more information or to register, visit <http://www.mnfacilitators.org/> or contact Paula at paulaanderson5@msn.com.

13. Organizational Effectiveness through a Social Constructionist Lens -- MNODN 5/2

The MN OD Network, an alliance partner of the Council, is pleased to announce their May 2 discussion: "Organizational Effectiveness through a Social Constructionist Lens: Beyond Appreciative Inquiry." Linda Houden will lead participants in a dialogue on the practice of organization development through a social constructionist lens.

In order to more clearly understand the social constructionist perspective, it is helpful to remember that it emerges from the traditional modernist frame where the predominant presumptions include: individual rationality, empirical (data-driven) knowledge, and cognitive assumptions and biases. Social constructionism proposes that the social realities in which we live and work are woven out of our daily interactions with others, through the vehicle of language

(Barner and Higgins, 2005). For OD consultants, being aware of the frame that you hold, and the frame your client holds, is critical to being successful and adding value.

Many of the most recent developments in OD (including Appreciative Inquiry) are based on social constructionist assumptions, the most compelling and useful of which is the central role of re-storying in OD practice. Narrative is powerful and often we are unaware of how influential our stories are on our perceptions and actions (Barner and Higgins, 2005). Linda, as a prominent practitioner of Appreciative Inquiry, is in a unique position to help us understand this basic premise and take it beyond AI.

Participants can expect to:

- * Have an understanding of the modernist frame of organizational science
- * Have an understanding of the main tenets of the social constructionist perspective
- * Dialogue about, and learn from, the practices of participants as viewed through the social constructionist lens.

The discussion will be held May 2 from 3:30-5:30 (networking at 3:00) at the University of St. Thomas Minneapolis Campus, Opus Hall Room 201. Cost is \$10 for members of MNODN or the Council and \$20 for non-members. For more information, visit <http://www.mnodn.org> or contact AI VanArsdal at 952-210-7676 or vanarscon@aol.com.

14. Creating a Culture of Excellence: Baptist Healthcare Leadership Institute 6/6-6/7

Baptist Health Care, a recipient of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, will visit Minneapolis this June 6-7 at the Sheraton Bloomington to present "Creating a Culture of Excellence."

A healthy culture is one that embraces openness, empowerment, accountability, reward and ownership. But how do you achieve this? How do you improve customer service? What is the best way to revitalize your workforce? How do you empower and engage your staff? The answers to these questions and the action steps to make it all happen will have great impact on the success of your organization. The "Creating a Culture of Excellence" conference will provide you with the information you need to safeguard your success.

During the conference, you will hear the Baptist Health Care story firsthand from presenters:

- * How we increased patient satisfaction scores from the 18th percentile to the 99th in just a few short years
- * How we earned national recognition as one of the best hospitals to work for in America
- * How we continue to drive results today and every day

The conference will arm you with the knowledge needed to achieve service and operational excellence in pivotal areas throughout your organization.

Early Registration (ends 5/16/2006) is \$1,200 per attendee; late Registration is \$1,400 per attendee. For discounted rates of 5 or more attendees, please call 850-469-7084.

For more information or to register, visit

<http://www.baptistleadershipinstitute.com/Conferences/CreatingACulture/>.

15. Securing Quality of Life in Later Years: Connecting Self Interest with the Common Good -- MN Gerontological Society's Annual Conference 4/21

The Minnesota Gerontological Society invites you to their 30th Anniversary Gala and Annual Conference held this year at the Earle Brown Heritage Center in Brooklyn Center, MN. A formal Gala celebration will occur on Thursday, April 20 at 6:00 PM, with dinner, dancing, and an address by public affairs consultant, Tom Horner. The conference continues on April 21 with a full slate of presentations challenging attendees to recognize how wise choices made throughout life help to achieve wellness and health can vastly improve chances to live a healthy and meaningful life in old age while benefiting society at large by decreasing health care costs. James Fries, M.D., Professor of Medicine at Stanford University School of Medicine will give the keynote address on the conference theme topic, and endnote speaker Rick Moody from AARP will assist attendees in connecting what they have learned during the day to their own personal situations.

For more information or to register, call 952-829-5937 x3, email mngs2@aol.com, or visit <http://www.hsr.umn.edu/coa/index.html>.

16. South Central College Announces Spring Courses; Council Members Get 10% Discount

South Central College, Faribault and Mankato campuses, is pleased to announce their spring quality and performance improvement curriculum. Council members are entitled to a 10% discount.

The following courses will be held at the Faribault campus (prices before member discount):

Project Management , 4/18/06, \$235
Microsoft Project 2003, 4/19/06, \$235
Understanding & Implementing ISO 9001:2000, 5/3/06, \$235
Internal Auditor Skills, 5/4/06, \$235

The following Certification Review courses also will be held at the Faribault campus (prices before member discount):

Certified Quality Auditor (CQA) Review, 5/4-6/1/06, \$250

The following courses will be held at the Mankato campus (prices before member discount):

Project Management , 4/25/06, \$235
Microsoft Project 2003, 4/26/06, \$235
Problem Solving Tools & Methods, 5/16/06, \$235

For more information, please contact Laura Hardy at 507-332-5802 or at laura.hardy@southcentral.edu or contact Brian Knutson at 507-332-5874 (brian.knutson@southcentral.edu). You can also find more information on the Council's Clearinghouse at www.councilforquality.org/improve_events.cfm.

17. University of St. Thomas Announces Spring Courses

The Center for Business Excellence at the University of St. Thomas Minneapolis Campus, an alliance partner of the Council, is pleased to announce their winter improvement curriculum. Council members are entitled to a 15% discount for the following courses:

4/18 Lean Office; \$995
4/20 Six Sigma Green Belt Certificate; \$3995
4/25 Conflict Resolution Skills; \$345
4/26 Leading from the Middle; \$3500

4/26 Efficient Time Management; \$345
4/26 Handling Difficult People; \$345
4/6 Project Risk Management; \$375
4/27 Maximizing Employee Performance; \$345
5/3 Marketing for Non-Marketing Executives; \$2500
5/3 Mini MBA® Program; \$1895
5/5 Corporate Sponsorships for Nonprofits; \$85
5/5 Negotiation Skills for Project Managers; \$375
5/8 Business Math Essentials (Module II); \$695
5/10 Project Initiation; \$375
5/16 Winning Strategies for Growing Retail Sales; \$2500
5/23 Business Grammar Update; \$295
5/24 Project Requirements; \$375
6/2 Grant Writing Essentials for Nonprofits; \$145
6/5 Mini Master of Volunteer Management; \$650
6/6 Clear Writing that Drives Successful Projects; \$345
6/8 Project Decision Making and Prioritization; \$375

For more information on any of these courses or to register, visit the Center for Business Excellence's website at www.stthomas.edu/cbe or call 651-962-4600.

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