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***Minnesota Council for Quality Stakeholder Update***  
***May 2006***  
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In This Issue:

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1. A Message from the President: The Power of Consensus

**Council News & Events**

2. Join the 2006 Board of Evaluators; Summer Training Approaching
3. 2005 Minnesota Quality Award Recipients Announced; Recognition Event Drew 250
4. Four Elected to the 2006 MN Quality Award Panel of Judges
5. Using Baldrige to Improve the MN Army National Guard -- PIN Discussion 6/1
6. Continue Getting this Newsletter: Make Sure We Have your Email!

**Partner News & Events**

7. Council and MNISPI Agree to Alliance; MNISPI Announces May 20 Workshop
8. Creating a Culture of Excellence: Baptist Health Care Leadership Institute 6/6-6/7
9. How Allina Ensures Corporate Responsibility -- RAQC 6/6
10. New Frontiers in Loyalty Rewards and Payment Systems -- MN Strategic Leadership Forum 5/23
11. What's Right in Health Care -- Studer Group Conference 6/15-6/16
12. Finding and Keeping Skilled Employees -- Manufacturers' Alliance 6/8
13. Conversation Cafe -- MN Facilitators Network 5/18
14. The Kiev Practicum: International OD Experience in the Ukraine -- MNODN 6/6
15. ASTD Regional Conference -- Call for Papers due May 26
16. University of St. Thomas Announces Spring Courses; Announces New Systems Engineering Program

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1. A Message from the President: The Power of Consensus

Last week, the Council hosted its fifteenth annual recognition event to celebrate the 10 recipients of the 2005 Minnesota Quality Award (see article at right). With nearly 250 in attendance, the evening offered good networking, celebration, and learning. In thanking our 120-member volunteer Board of Evaluators, I referenced an interesting article in the March 11 NY Times. The article focused on the power of consensus; I think the concept has broad implications. (Read on...you're invited to participate in an experiment.)

The article talks about a professor from Columbia Business School who -- since 1993 -- has been predicting the winners of the Academy Awards. Every year, he asks his students to vote for winners in 12 categories -- not just the biggies, but some relatively obscure ones like best film editing and best art direction. He then tabulates the results versus the students' predictions.

This year, the pick that got the most votes -- the “consensus pick,” he calls it -- turned out to be right in 9 of the 12 categories, including best film editing and best art direction. And yet -- this is the amazing part -- only 1 of the 47 participating students matched the accuracy of the consensus. None did better; most did much worse. In fact, the average correct for an individual student this year was 4.1 out of 12 -- less than half of the consensus prediction.

“It has never failed,” professor (and Wall Street strategist) Michael Mauboussin states in the article. “The consensus invariably does much better than the average student.”

The point of his experiment is to illustrate the power of consensus. The phenomenon is commonly called a “prediction market...in which groups of people guess or bet on something, with the results aggregated into a consensus. Prediction markets, while not perfect, are surprisingly accurate -- certainly more accurate than individual experts or polls, research has found.” Typically, prediction markets involve stakes: like the stock market, the participant wagers (or risks) an investment behind his/her prediction.

Think about it. Have you ever wondered how the stock market “corrects” itself on news within seconds or minutes? It’s certainly not because every investor in America is acutely tuned in to breaking news, but rather the collective intelligence of those who DO know cause stock prices to move quickly into a new equilibrium. Or have you ever wondered how sports lines move in Las Vegas to numbers that so often reflect the actual outcome of a game (not always, but it’s spooky how close they sometimes are). Or have you ever wondered how some election predictions (like the University of Iowa’s Iowa Electronic Market, founded in 1988) consistently predicts elections better than polls? In the last presidential election, this prediction market predicted a Bush victory and came within 1.1% of the actual result. Amazing.

The point of my sharing this article during our Award recognition event was to thank our Minnesota Quality Award volunteer Evaluators and to illustrate how important their collective consensus opinion was in helping Minnesota organizations improve (a typical assessment involves 600-1000 hours of collective evaluation). Indeed, no one expert can offer the same insight as a team of diverse professionals, each bringing their own expertise and wisdom to a collective understanding.

But the article and this concept of consensus certainly has broader implications.

We all know that employee input is important in any organization. Employees bring different skills, perspectives, and insights that -- when combined -- offer tremendous opportunities for innovation. In fact, some of the more mature, higher performing organizations have created systematic ways to solicit employee ideas; perhaps systematic prediction markets are a way to harness the insights of employees.

A great example of this comes from the highly-innovative Google Corporation. Google has created internal prediction markets for their employees, in which management asks

practical questions such as “when will a product launch?” or “how much will a particular feature be used by customers?” or “how many full-time employees will accept jobs at Google in the next quarter?” Google’s theory is that a broad base of employees will have a better combined perspective on questions like these than a small group of experts. From published reports, so far their theory appears to be correct.

And Google isn’t the only company doing this. Several companies are using internal prediction markets to aide in decision making, including Eli Lilly, Microsoft, Hewlett-Packard, Corning, Yahoo, Abbott Labs, and Siemens.

Just think for a minute of the concealed power in your organization’s employee base and the possible implications if you (or your leaders) were to systematically unlock that power by soliciting staff opinions. Harnessing their collective intelligence could improve decision making, identify organizational improvement ideas, discover new product ideas, or identify creative solutions to challenging problems.

How does it work? Mr. Mauboussin doesn’t really know, but he has a theory: “I’m not sure why it works. [But] all of us walk around with a little information and a substantial error term. And when we aggregate our results, the errors tend to cancel each other out and what is distilled is pure information.”

So if that’s the case, every organization should set up prediction markets to take advantage of their employees’ collective insights. And why stop with internal consensus? This consensus method could be applied to customers (or prospects) to predict demand for new products/services or predict new feature adoption (maybe prediction markets would be more accurate than an organization’s marketing department!). Prediction markets could also be used within communities to solve societal issues; in essence, this is systematically giving citizens a voice, which certainly is the foundation of our democracy.

So let’s try an experiment. I set up a brief, six-question survey on Zoomerang that asks our stakeholders to predict a few things (such as the winner of upcoming elections, the winner of American Idol, and the Fed’s next move). The survey should take all of 30 seconds to complete, so please take a moment to do so:

[http://www.zoomerang.com/reports/public\\_report.zgi?ID=L22MTCLR7HS](http://www.zoomerang.com/reports/public_report.zgi?ID=L22MTCLR7HS)

I have my opinion about each question, but I wonder if the collective wisdom of our stakeholders will provide more accurate predictions. I’ll publish the results in a future newsletter.

Yours in Improvement,

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

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2. 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](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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3. 2005 Minnesota Quality Award Recipients Announced; Recognition Event Drew 250

The Minnesota Council for Quality recently announced the recipients of the 2005 Minnesota Quality Award. Ten organizations received recognition this year:

- Achievement Level
  - Mate Precision Tooling (Anoka)
  - Rochester Public Schools (Rochester)
- Advancement Level
  - Allina Hospitals & Clinics (Minneapolis)
  - Central Minnesota Jobs & Training Services (Monticello)
  - Mayo Health System (Rochester)
  - Winona Health (Winona)
- Commitment Level
  - Benedictine Health System (Duluth)
  - Kasson-Mantorville Schools (Kasson)
  - Immanuel St. Joseph's Medical Center (Mankato)
  - Rochester Catholic Schools (Rochester)

“The 10 organizations receiving the 2005 Minnesota Quality Award represent most of Minnesota’s economy -- a manufacturer, a non-profit service organization, three K-12 school districts, and five health care providers,” says Brian Lassiter, president of the Minnesota Council for Quality. “The organizations recognized are in various stages of their improvement journey, but they are all *on* the journey. They are making systematic progress towards higher levels of performance -- performance that will add value for their customers, their owners, their patients, their students, and their stakeholders. And performance that will add value to the quality of this already great state.”

All 10 Award recipients were recognized at a public event May 9 in Bloomington. Attended by nearly 250 leaders, the event was sponsored by the ELCA Board of Pensions, Mortenson, Northland Community & Technical College, Sunny Fresh Foods, and Unisys (Silver Sponsors), and by BlueCross BlueShield of Minnesota, Cargill Business Excellence, DuFresne Manufacturing Company, MN Healthcare Quality Professionals, Pemstar, Ronning Leadership Seminars, Sheraton Hotels & Resorts, and Studer Group (Bronze Sponsors). The event also recognized 2005 Minnesota Quality Award Board of Evaluators, a team of nearly 120 volunteers supporting this program, giving a combined estimated 10,000 volunteer hours of service.

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, 80 organizations have received Minnesota Quality Award recognition at various levels (a full list is at [http://www.councilforquality.org/assess\\_org\\_award.cfm](http://www.councilforquality.org/assess_org_award.cfm)).

Organizations that participate in the process receive comprehensive feedback that outlines their strengths and improvement opportunities in dozens of organizational processes including: leadership; strategic planning; customer and market focus;

measurement, information, and knowledge management; human resource focus; process management; and results. This feedback is typically used by senior leaders for organizational learning, planning, and improvement.

Dale Thompson, CEO of Benedictine Health System in Duluth states: “The Minnesota Quality Award and Baldrige unleashes our passion for quality. It provides energy, passion, and focus so that we can improve the quality of care for our patients.”

“It’s not about an award,” stated Diane Schwinghammer, Superintendent of Rochester Catholic Schools. “We are on a journey towards excellence. I could talk about our achievement scores and all of the student accomplishments. But if that is all that we focus on, we are making a huge mistake. The Baldrige process exposed so much more, and focusing on our opportunities for improvement will help us accomplish our mission of helping our students learn. [In this process,] we have learned that quality is not sustained by random acts, but by a systematic process and a culture of continuous improvement provided by productive employees who are nurtured and supported.”

Peter Grant, Superintendent of Kasson-Mantorville Schools agrees: “Many of you here are from businesses, but we are not a business. Our ‘bottom line’ is in helping kids learn and get ready for the world. Being new to the district, I was somewhat skeptical that Baldrige could help us accomplish our mission, but I now see the value of how this process helps us focus.”

Jerry Williams, Superintendent of Rochester Public Schools added: “I am absolutely convinced that Baldrige has contributed to the growth in our organization and to our ultimate goal of high student achievement. We have been on this continuous improvement journey for a decade, but in some ways we’re only just begun.”

Dean Sundquist, Chairman and CEO of Mate Precision Tooling in Anoka, the only manufacturer receiving recognition, commented: “We’re different that the other nine Award recipients; we actually make something! [Seriously,] we chose Baldrige because the framework evaluates everything in our business, not just the manufacturing processes...I just got back from a trip to China, and it occurred to me that we will not beat overseas competition with \$1/hour labor. We need to beat them with our brains. The Baldrige framework and the Minnesota Quality Award will help Mate to better compete with our brains.”

Mike Luker, president of Sunny Fresh Foods, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Cargill and a two-time Malcolm Baldrige Quality Award recipient, offered keynote remarks. “Achieving performance excellence requires buy-in from the top and throughout the organization,” says Luker. “It also requires a great deal of patience on this journey. For us, Baldrige is the absolute best model that has led to our prosperity and sustainability as a business.”

The 2006 Minnesota Quality Award cycle has already begun, and the Council expects 12-15 organizations to receive recognition this year.

“Minnesota organizations have always led the nation in quality and organizational improvement,” says Lassiter. “The fact that an increasing number of organizations are using sophisticated management frameworks like Baldrige, Six Sigma, Lean, and others, indicates that organizations in this state intend to remain leaders in their industries.”

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4. Four Elected to the 2006 MN Quality Award Panel of Judges

The Minnesota Council for Quality, is pleased to announce the recent election of four new judges to the 2006 Minnesota Quality Award Panel of Judges:

- Ann Burns, Continuous Improvement Facilitator, Sunny Fresh Foods (Cargill, Inc.)
- Dr. Steve Hagedorn, Assistant Professor of Family Medicine, Mayo Clinic Rochester
- Jim Hill, Senior Project Manager, Nuclear Management Company
- Sylvia Rolfs, CEO, Rolfs & Associates.

The four newly elected judges have over 25 years of experience with the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award and the Minnesota Quality Award. They replace Gary Floss, director of Quality at Marvin Windows and Doors; Paul Grizzell, consultant at Studer Group; Lois Mackin, independent consultant; and Ken Rich, retired. All four had served the maximum term of six years as judges.

In addition to the four new Judges, the Council also elected Jean Bronk, quality director at M.A. Mortenson Company, as Chief Judge for the 2006 cycle. She replaces Gary Floss.

“With the election of the four new Judges, the 15-member Panel of Judges continues to represent the diversity of our economy,” says Brian Lassiter, president of the Council. “The Panel includes representatives from the manufacturing, service, health care, education, and non-profit sectors. They represent leaders in their fields, and have a tremendous depth of knowledge and management experience upon which to judge the levels of performance excellence of Minnesota organizations.”

The primary role of the Panel of Judges is to determine levels of recognition for organizations participating in the Minnesota Quality Award. Judges also provide coaching and feedback to evaluation teams as they conduct organizational assessments for the Award.

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, 80 organizations have received recognition at various levels; a full list can be found at [http://www.councilforquality.org/assess\\_org\\_award.cfm](http://www.councilforquality.org/assess_org_award.cfm).

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.

The current Panel of Judges include the following members: Dr. Debra Bowers, St. Louis Park Schools; Jean Bronk (Chief Judge), M.A. Mortenson Company; Ann Burns, Sunny Fresh Foods (Cargill); Rick Carlson, Medica; Dr. Julie Furst-Bowe, University of Wisconsin-Stout; Dr. Steve Hagedorn, Mayo Clinic Rochester; Jim Hill, Nuclear Management Company; Dr. Robert B. Jones, Department of Human Services; Linda Mazzuco; Dr. Mary Ann Nelson, Minnesota Department of Education; Pat O'Boyle, Unisys Corporation; Mike Reagan (Chief Judge), Brainerd Regional Human Services, retired; Sylvia Rolfs, Rolfs & Associates; Rachelle Schultz, Winona Health; and Michael Wirth-Davis, Goodwill/Easter Seals of Minnesota.

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5. Using Baldrige to Improve the MN Army National Guard -- PIN Discussion 6/1

Adjutant General's vision is to exemplify the motto, "Citizen Soldiers and Airmen, Always Ready." Our elected officials need trained and ready soldiers and units capable of full spectrum operations to answer the call to defend America, respond to crisis in the state, and to partner with communities. But the high operational tempo, dynamic environment, and evolving nature of the military's structure and stationing require focused leadership to balance readiness while preserving the "citizen" basis of the force. In so doing, the Minnesota National Guard is committed to "Three Pillars" -- soldiers, their families, and their employers -- before, during, and after a deployment.

The Minnesota Council for Quality is pleased to welcome Col. April Corniea (retired), Chief, Organization Development Office of the MN Army National Guard, to the June 1 Performance Improvement Network (PIN) discussion. April will share details about the Minnesota Army National Guard's use of the Baldrige-based "Army Performance Improvement Criteria" as the foundation for improving their overall performance.

Used since 1995, the Guard's success is evident in their results; in fact, the Minnesota Army National Guard is among the top organizations within the Department of the Army. At a time when many states are struggling to maintain a positive strength posture, Minnesota has experienced a net gain of more than 1,700 soldiers since 1995. They have maintained solid levels of readiness in personnel, equipment and training, despite the deployment for more than 6,500 soldiers. When the average percentage of personnel who successfully pass through a mobilization station is approximately 80% for most organizations, for Minnesota the average exceeds 98%. Overall, through participation in Army Communities of Excellence program and the application of the APIC as the

foundation for improving performance, the Guard has become a stronger and more effective organization -- one that is better able to meet the demands of today, while preparing for the challenges of the future.

April will share the Guard's quest for excellence, including a review of the Army Communities of Excellence Program, a senior leader's perspective about how the Criteria has made the MN Army National Guard successful, the incorporation of the Criteria into their operations and measures of our success.

The discussion is from 8:00-9:00 a.m. on June 1 (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](mailto:brian.lassiter@councilforquality.org). For more information, visit [www.councilforquality.org/performance.cfm](http://www.councilforquality.org/performance.cfm).

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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](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.

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7. Council and MNISPI Agree to Alliance; MNISPI Announces May 20 Workshop

The Minnesota Council for Quality and the Minnesota Chapter of the International Society of Performance Improvement (MNISPI) have agreed to an alliance that will bring programs and services to each others' members at a discounted rate.

“This alliance is consistent with the Council’s mission of building networks that bring organizational improvement resources to our members,” says Brian Lassiter, president of the Council. “MNISPI has a long history of providing excellent programs and events that focus on performance improvement. We are excited to offer their programs to our members at a discount, and we hope that our services can be of value to their members.”

The arrangement entitles Council members to a 50% discount to MNISPI monthly chapter meetings; Council members need to declare their membership at the time of registration to receive the discount. MNISPI will also offer an “affiliate” rate to Council members to MNISPI special events, referred to as Professional Development Events and National Speaker Events and other special workshops MNISPI sponsors.

In exchange, MNISPI members will receive a 50% “partner” discount to the Council’s Performance Improvement Network (PIN) breakfast meetings, a “partner” rate for listing in the Council’s Consultant Referral Network ([www.consultantreferralnetwork.org](http://www.consultantreferralnetwork.org)), and a “partner” rate to the Council’s special events, such as the annual Minnesota Quality Award event and various workshops.

The two organizations have also agreed to announce each others’ events, link websites, and communicate to each membership base in other ways.

“As two non-profits with consistent missions, I believe there are many ways that MNISPI and the Council can partner for the mutual benefit of our respective members,” continues Lassiter. “Collaborations like these build a strong network between non-profits, allowing us to share knowledge and benefit a larger community of individuals and organizations all focusing on performance excellence.”

In other news, MNISPI is pleased to host a workshop on May 20 to help professionals decide whether pursuing the Certified Performance Technologist (CPT) is a good fit for them, and to prepare them for the application process. The CPT, a core program of ISPI, develops and recognizes the proficiencies of performance improvement and training professionals. Certification requires a performance-based (rather than knowledge-based) demonstration of competencies. The application process involves providing evidence from three to seven projects that demonstrate the use of 10 Standards.

The May 20 workshop offers a blended approach, consisting of a self-study assignment, a half-day workshop, and a post-session follow-up. The half-day workshop is scheduled for Saturday morning, May 20, at Open Book near 35W on Washington Avenue in Minneapolis and will feature a full breakfast and one hour of networking. It will be facilitated by Jeanne L. Anderson, CPT and professor at St. Cloud University, and Tim Gustafson, CPT and performance improvement consultant.

Fees for the session are \$50 (\$40 for Council members and \$30 for MNISPI members). For more information, visit <http://www.mnispi.org/>.

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8. Creating a Culture of Excellence: Baptist Health Care Leadership Institute 6/6-6/7

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.

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." The "Creating a Culture of Excellence" conference will provide you with the information you need to safeguard your success. They will provide proven tools and strategies built around their Five Keys to Service and Operational Excellence:

- \* Build and maintain a great culture
- \* Select and retain great employees
- \* Commit to service excellence
- \* Develop great leaders
- \* Hardwire success through systems of accountability

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. The conference is sponsored by the Minnesota Council for Quality, HealthPartners, American Hospital Association, and Health Forum.

Early Registration (ends 5/16/2006) is \$1,200 per attendee; late Registration is \$1,400 per attendee. Council members are entitled to a 20% discount (enter code MNQ990).

For information or to register, visit <http://www.baptistleadershipinstitute.com/Conferences/CreatingACulture/> or call Becky 850-469-7860.

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9. How Allina Ensures Corporate Responsibility -- RAQC 6/6

Please join the Rochester Area Quality Council (RAQC), a partner of the Minnesota Council for Quality, for their June 6 meeting, featuring Allina Hospitals & Clinics and their focus on corporate responsibility. The meeting will be held from 7:30 to 9:00 a.m. Cost will be \$10 for members and \$20 for non-members. Save the date and please check the website, [www.raqc.com](http://www.raqc.com), for program details.

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10. New Frontiers in Loyalty Rewards and Payment Systems -- MN Strategic Leadership Forum 5/23

The Minnesota Strategic Leadership Forum (MSLF), an alliance partner of the Minnesota Council for Quality, is pleased to announce their May 23 discussion “New Frontiers in Loyalty Rewards and Payment Systems: An Introduction to DualCurrency Systems and Universal Reward Solutions.” The discussion will be facilitated by Joel Hodroff, Founder and CEO of DualCurrency Systems and Brian Beutner, Chief Operating Officer of DualCurrency Systems. Please join us to learn about and discuss innovations in money and payment systems that can promote a universally high standard of living and quality of life for all business stakeholders: owners/investors; employees; customers and communities.

DualCurrency Systems (DCS) offers a patented business method and technology to promote Universal Reward Solutions<sup>SM</sup> in the loyalty rewards industry. Participating merchants agree to accept a portion of their retail prices in frequent flyer miles or other rewards points. This approach provides them with incremental sales and profits through cost effective cross-promotion with loyalty marketing program operators, banks and credit card strategic partners. The DCS system makes frequent flyer miles and other customer loyalty rewards more attractive and valuable. Prices paid at the checkout counter are denominated partly in cash and partly in rewards. For example: a \$50 restaurant meal in the DCS system might cost \$32 in cash plus \$18 in frequent flyer miles (with tax and tip added to the card in US\$).

But consumer loyalty rewards are only the tip of the DualCurrency iceberg... Today, most loyalty rewards are for consumer spending, so that those who have the most cash to spend also enjoy the most rewards. The long-term vision of DCS is to capture currently underutilized capacity in the business sector, such as empty restaurant tables, empty airline seats and empty college desks; off-hours at movie theaters, health clubs, oil change shops and salons, unsold retail inventory, consumer electronics, medical supplies, automobiles and more.

Pooled in a Universal Rewards Virtual Warehouse, all of this available wealth could be used to back new types of rewards and incentives. Examples include: low-cost employee benefits; wellness incentives that lower everyone's cost of healthcare; volunteer rewards that promote healthier communities; senior credits that enhance social security without

raising taxes or risking seniors' life savings in the stock market; EcoBucks to promote environmentally friendly behaviors (recycling, car-pooling or bicycling). Such rewards would demonstrate private sector leadership in community economic development, while promoting a more level economic playing field.

The discussion will be held Tuesday, May 23. 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>.

Don't miss the last meeting of this 2005-2006 program year. We hope you can join us. Please pass this information onto anyone you think would be interested in this program.

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11. What's Right in Health Care -- Studer Group Conference 6/15-6/16

"What's Right in Health Care," scheduled June 15-16 in Atlanta, is an intensive two-day program aimed at bringing individuals together with a series of peer-to-peer learning sessions designed to provide proven tools, tips, and techniques you can use to achieve the quick wins so critical to making a difference.

It's an objective all health care organizations share: to help make health care a better place for patients to receive care, physicians to practice medicine and employees to work. Over 28 sessions focus on ways to help you move service and operational excellence to the next level in every area of your organization. This conference will focus on providing prescriptive, immediately applicable solutions to address the issues and challenges leaders face today. "What's Right in Health Care" will bring you together with others in health care who, just like you, burn with passion and caring. This conference is about "fire starters," individuals who know the power of purpose, worthwhile work and making a difference in the lives of others.

What you can expect:

- \* A positive, inspiring experience.
- \* Time among peers learning proven techniques for improving results.
- \* A prescriptive approach, not just case histories. Not just what they did; what you can do.

The Studer Group is a member of MN Council for Quality and was a sponsor of our MN Quality Award event on May 9. For more information or to register, visit [www.studergroup.com](http://www.studergroup.com).

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12. Finding and Keeping Skilled Employees -- Manufacturers' Alliance 6/8

The manufacturing downturn and outsourcing has shrunk the labor pool of skilled workers in manufacturing. Learn firsthand how and where employers are looking for qualified workers and what they are doing to retain them.

The Manufacturers' Alliance, an alliance partner of the Minnesota Council for Quality, is pleased to announce their Monthly Educational Program on June 8, from 7:30 - 9:30 AM at Hennepin Technical College in Brooklyn Park.

Presenters are from three local manufacturing companies: Ultra Machining Corporation, Gyrus ACMI, and Honeywell Aerospace. The speakers will share their approaches, how their choices affect their companies, and what has worked and what has not.

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](http://www.mfrall.com/free_pass.htm) to print a free pass. For more information or to register, visit [www.mfrall.com](http://www.mfrall.com).

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13. Conversation Cafe -- MN Facilitators Network 5/18

The Minnesota Facilitators Network (MFN), a partner of the Minnesota Council for Quality, is pleased to announce their May 18 session, "Conversation Cafe."

This month's meeting will feature Marilyn Lamoreux, software engineer and methods coach, who helps software teams tackle difficult-to-discuss issues, listen with openness and learn from each other. How does she? She uses a set of simple agreements and a format called Conversation Café. Come spend the evening in spirited dialogue and learn the Conversation Café method.

The session will be May 18 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](mailto:paulaanderson5@msn.com).

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14. The Kiev Practicum: International OD Experience in the Ukraine -- MNODN 6/6

The MN OD Network, an alliance partner of the Council, is pleased to announce their June 6 discussion: "The Kiev Practicum: International OD Experience in the Ukraine." Dr. John Conbere and Dr. Alla Heorhiadi will lead the discussion.

In February, 10 St. Thomas graduate OD students of varied backgrounds and experience journeyed to the Ukraine for a week-long practicum. When they arrived in Kiev, they work with five client organizations, provided them with a week's consulting and in

return, received an invaluable cross-cultural experience. At MNODN's June session, come hear from a number of the practicum participants.

The discussion will be held June 6 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 Al VanArsdal at 952-210-7676 or vanarscon@aol.com.

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15. ASTD Regional Conference -- Call for Papers due May 26

ASTD-Twin Cities Chapter, a partner of the Council, is proud to announce its Regional Conference: "Designing the Future: Business Savvy, Influence and Skills for the Learning & Performance Professional." The conference will be held Thursday, November 16, 2006, at the RiverCentre in St. Paul, Minnesota. The conference will be marketed to over 700 ASTD-TCC members, as well as more than 1500 members of other ASTD chapters in the region and local professional organizations for the learning and performance industry. In addition, the program will be marketed through our national ASTD website.

There are 15 total one hour and fifteen minute breakout session opportunities for participants. ASTD is excited about offering a variety of topics for learning and performance professionals and encourages professionals to consider sharing their expertise with colleagues. Based on feedback from our community, ASTD is particularly interested in workshop proposals with these suggested topics: Blended Learning, Leadership Development, Facilitation Skills, Developing Business Acumen, Coaching, Managerial and Supervisory Skill Development, Learning & Performance as a Strategic Partner in Organizations, Team Effectiveness, and Evaluation of performance. But ASTD welcomes ALL proposals even if a topic is not listed here. Each breakout room will be set with round tables of 8-10 and limited to 60 participants. They are seeking workshops that ensure creativity, audience engagement, take-aways for immediate application, and FUN! Absolutely NO SELLING. If your presentation is chosen, you agree that ASTD-TCC will have permission to post your presentation on our website or through use of other electronic means (CDs, jump drive, etc.).

The deadline to submit a proposal is May 26.

The American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) represents approximately 70,000 training and development professionals in more than 100 countries. Of ASTD's more than 150 local chapters worldwide, ASTD-Twin Cities Chapter (ASTD-TCC) is one of the top ten with more than 700 members. Members specialize in areas including instructional design, group facilitation, training delivery, organizational development, performance improvement, career development, sales and marketing, computer-based training and total quality management.

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## 16. University of St. Thomas Announces Spring Courses; Announces New Systems Engineering Program

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

- 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
- 6/14 Interpersonal Communications at Work; \$345
- 6/15 Project Planning; \$695
- 6/19 Mini Master of Marketing Management; \$1795
- 6/27 Writing for Results; \$345
- 6/29 Project Management Problem Solving; \$375
- 7/11 Optimizing Your Project Team; \$395
- 7/19 Project Execution; \$395
- 7/24 Mini MBA® in Health Care Management; \$1795
- 7/27 Systems Thinking for Project Managers; \$325

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

In addition, UST's School of Engineering is accepting applications from prospective students for a new master of science degree program in systems engineering. The program, which begins next fall, was developed in consultation with representatives of area businesses and industries. It is designed for engineers and related technical professionals. Systems engineers design, develop and implement complex technological systems that serve the public in many areas, such as communication, medical technology, medicine, commerce, government, the military, transportation, manufacturing and entertainment. The new program will emphasize lifelong learning, ethical decision making, sensitivity to cultural needs and the inclusion of people from underrepresented groups in systems design and development.

Admission criteria include a bachelor's degree in engineering, computer science, physics, chemistry, biological science, mathematics or statistics and three years of relevant work experience. The School of Engineering also offers master's degree programs in technology management, manufacturing systems engineering, and manufacturing systems; professional development opportunities and certificate programs.

For further information about the new master of science in systems engineering and other St. Thomas graduate programs in engineering and technology management, call (651) 962-5750, or visit the school's Web site for more information:

<http://www.stthomas.edu/technology>.

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