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*Minnesota Council for Quality Stakeholder Update*  
*January 2004*  
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In This Issue:

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1. A Message from the President: Improving in an Improving Economy
2. Join the 2004 Board of Evaluators: Spring Training Session Approaching
3. Recognizing Fourth Quarter Members; Medtronic Becomes Sponsoring Member
4. Attention Church and Non-Profit Leaders Interested in Improvement – 1/20
5. Building Smart Partnerships – PIN Discussion 2/5
6. Selling a New Idea to the Established Healthcare Market – MSLF Discussion 1/27
7. A Drive Through Roc 52 – RAQC Discussion 2/10
8. Inver Hills Announces Spring Courses; Council Members Discounted 15%
9. Hennepin Technical College Announces Lean Courses; Council Members Discounted 10%
10. Century College Announces Spring Courses; Council Members Receive Discount
11. St. Thomas Offers Six Sigma Course to Council Members at a Discount
12. U of M Continuing Education's Spring Curriculum

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1. A Message from the President: Improving in an Improving Economy

Back in October of 2002, I wrote about the difficult economy and what it meant to organizations. I challenged leaders to focus on the basics of management -- to identify certain "leading indicators" of performance that would eventually drive their financial performance. Those things include a focus on customers, employees, operational and process performance, and so forth.

At the time (and I still believe it to be true), my sense was that many organizations were surprised by the recession. USA Today captured it succinctly in their January 5 paper (I was traveling that day, so took advantage of the free paper): "...[Many] companies' executives...were caught off guard when the economy turned south following the economic boom of the 1990s. Losses forced [many companies] to go from a 'growth at any cost' mentality to a central focus on building efficiency." It stands to reason: we all became complacent after over a decade of prosperity.

As a result, many organizations were bitten hard by the reality of a down cycle. They have spent the past few years analyzing all aspects of their operations to create leaner, more successful organizations. I guess you could call it a painful "cleansing period" for American organizations.

Today, conditions appear to be improving. Economists predict around a 4% GDP growth rate in 2004 and unemployment falling to 5.5%. Consumer confidence is rising, productivity is up, and the stock market continues to climb.

But I wouldn't relax just yet. In fact, I would challenge organizations' leaders to continue to focus on what has facilitated the economy's recent turnaround. Said another way...I would challenge leaders to continue to drive improvement in their organizations such that they: 1) prevent a "relapse" to the tough times of the last few years, and 2) prepare for the next inevitable tough market.

So what should organizations be doing today to prepare for the next tough time? Here are 5 things for your consideration – not necessarily in any order of importance:

1) Focus on your customers/stakeholders. No organization can survive without providing some value to some marketplace or constituency. Build listening and learning posts to understand your market needs; work to build relationships to ensure stakeholder satisfaction, retention, and loyalty.

(For more on this, check out my December 2003 article at [http://www.councilforquality.org/about\\_newsletter.cfm](http://www.councilforquality.org/about_newsletter.cfm).)

2) Focus on your employees/staff. You simply cannot have happy customers without having happy employees. Period. So work to provide training and development to your staff to get them the skills they need; build a work environment that makes them productive and comfortable; figure out what makes employees happy and build mechanisms to measure their satisfaction and well-being. A word of warning: though the economy is turning, the job market hasn't fully recovered. When it does, dissatisfied employees will make moves to other organizations. For more on this, check out my November 2003 article (at the same web link as above).

3) Identify your organization's key processes – those that deliver value to your customers and/or to the organization. Then work to identify requirements for those processes, (re)design the processes to satisfy those requirements, and identify measures to monitor process effectiveness and to guide future improvements. For more on this, check out my November 2002 article.

4) Identify what measures and data you need to manage the business – those that support your strategy and your goals. (If you don't have a strategy and goals, start there!) Build a scorecard of those measures, track and analyze performance, communicate results, and – most importantly – take action when performance is not on track. For more on strategic planning,

check out my June 2003 article; for more on Balanced Scorecard measurement, see my October 2003 article.

5) Work to improve your leadership system: develop a strong governance system that ensures accountability; build processes to set and communicate organizational direction; build processes for leaders to use data to make decisions; and build mechanisms to ensure social responsibility and ethical behavior. For more on governance, see my July 2002 article.

So I guess we've come full circle. In October 2002, I challenged leaders to focus on the basics of management to bring their organizations out of tough times. I now challenge the same leaders (or those who have survived!) to continue focusing on very same things to ensure sustainable success.

Yours in Improvement,

Brian S. Lassiter  
President, Minnesota Council for Quality

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2. Join the 2004 Board of Evaluators: Spring Training Session Approaching

The Minnesota Council for Quality is pleased to announce its training schedule for the 2004 Board of Evaluators. We are making three significant changes in 2004: we now will offer three sessions (spring, summer, and fall), the summer session will be in Rochester, and the training will address multiple Baldrige Criteria (spring and fall will be business and summer will be education). We hope these changes allow us to accommodate our Evaluators' diverse needs.

Mark your calendars! Spring training will be March 9-11, summer will be June 29-July 1 (in Rochester), and fall will be September 21-23. Specific locations will be announced shortly.

New Evaluators can select one of three dates for spring orientation: February 10, February 11, or February 19 (locations are being finalized, but will be in the Metro). Summer and fall orientation dates are not yet set.

Applications for new Evaluators are due February 6. Applications for returning Evaluators are due March 5 (and only require updates from your prior year application).

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.

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 [mc4quality@aol.com](mailto:mc4quality@aol.com), or call 612-462-3577.

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### 3. Recognizing Fourth Quarter Members; Medtronic Becomes Sponsoring Member

The Council would like to recognize 40 organizations and individuals who joined or renewed their membership in the fourth quarter. Special recognition goes to Medtronic for joining as a Sponsoring Member. As such, Medtronic's contribution helps support more affordable memberships for individuals and smaller organizations. "Medtronic has been a tremendous supporter of the Council's mission," says Brian Lassiter, president of the Council. "We thank them for their continued support, and we look forward to providing them services and programs that help continue their improvement journey."

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

Benedictine Health Systems Corporate Offices, Cambridge MN  
Curtis Brown, St. Paul MN  
Central Minnesota Jobs and Training Services (CMJTS), Monticello MN\*  
Century College Customized Training, White Bear Lake MN\*  
Karen Copp, River Falls WI  
Dairy Strategies LLC, Madison WI  
Defense Procurement Manufacturing Services, Inc. (DPMS), Becker MN  
Dunwoody Institute, Minneapolis MN\*  
Emerald Quality Services, Minneapolis\*  
Endurant Business Solutions, Eden Prairie\*  
Steve George, St. Louis Park MN  
Moti Gidwani, Roseville MN  
James Haedtke, Burnsville MN  
Hazelden Foundation, Center City MN\*  
Hillswick Group, Brooklyn Park MN  
Hirman Insurors, Rochester MN  
Richard Hokanson, Bloomington MN  
James Rogers and Associates, Rochester MN  
Johnson Consulting Group, Minneapolis MN

Lynn & Associates, Shorewood MN  
Management IQ, LLC, Albuquerque NM  
Management Mastery Inc., New Brighton MN\*  
Management Partners & Associates, Eagan MN\*  
MAZE Consulting, Shoreview MN  
Medtronic, Minneapolis MN\*  
North Memorial Health Care Improvement Systems, Robbinsdale MN  
Opportunity Services, Red Wing MN  
Pace Dairy Foods Administrative Staff, Rochester MN  
Pemstar, Rochester MN  
Performance Leadership Group, Woodbury MN  
Quality Process Solutions, Blaine MN\*  
Rochester School District #535, Rochester MN  
Sheldahl Managers & Quality Department, Northfield MN\*  
St. Paul Cos. Underwriting Operations, St. Paul MN\*  
Jim Stahley, Burnsville MN\*  
Al Strauss, Bloomington MN\*  
Sunny Fresh Foods, Monticello MN  
The Bank of Elk River, Elk River MN  
Total Quality Productivity Services (TOPS), St. Paul MN\*  
Virchow, Krause and Company, Bloomington MN\*

We thank all members for their support. As of December 31, the Council represents a growing community of 143 members representing over 82,000 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: you get recognition (in this newsletter, in press releases, on the website, and with a certificate/letter); you get discounts to Council services (Evaluator training, organization assessments); you get access to Council services (Clearinghouse, Vendor Referral Service, and free admission to Performance Improvement Network discussions); and you get discounts to our partners' services (other improvement-related non-profits, universities/colleges, and professional/trade associations).

Individual memberships are \$100 and organization memberships begin at \$250. For more information on the benefits of becoming a member, please visit [www.councilforquality.org/member.cfm](http://www.councilforquality.org/member.cfm) or email the Council at [mc4quality@aol.com](mailto:mc4quality@aol.com).

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4. Attention Church and Non-Profit Leaders Interested in Improvement – 1/20

Continuous improvement. Quality. Total Quality Ministry. These are some “key words” being used by churches around the state as they seek to improve,

learn, grow, and advance their missions and ministries. Bethel Lutheran Church of Rochester, an emerging role model for churches interested in improving their missions and ministries, recently won the Commitment Level of the 2002 Minnesota Quality Award. In cooperation with the Council, Bethel would like to share their story with other churches and non-profits and to explore ways to share and learn from each other.

As a church or social non-profit leader, you and/or your staff are invited to a half-day seminar on Tuesday, January 20. Specifically, the event will be from 9am to 1pm, is FREE for attendees, and will be held at Woodbury Lutheran: 7380 Afton Road in Woodbury.

This discussion will include Bethel's story about how they put quality principles in place so they could better help people with their spiritual journey with God. You will also hear more about the work being done by the Minnesota Council for Quality in their quest to help organizations improve their performance. Finally, we will explore the possibility of forming a consortium of churches/organizations who are willing to share results and information (i.e. staff satisfaction, program participation, financial support, successes) with each other. This consortium of churches/organizations would be looking to learn and to move their ministries and programs forward.

We hope that you will take advantage of this wonderful opportunity that can help you and your organization to grow, to learn, and to further your work. If you have any questions regarding this opportunity, please feel free to give Chris Zabel a call at 507-288-6430 or send him an email at [Zabel@bethellutheran.com](mailto:Zabel@bethellutheran.com).

To register for this free seminar, please email the Council at [mc4quality@aol.com](mailto:mc4quality@aol.com) or call 612-462-3577. If you know of others who might benefit from this event, please feel free to send them the information.

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#### 5. Building Smart Partnerships – PIN Discussion 2/5

Today's economy is driven by information and knowledge. Therefore, the success of organizations is based on their ability to harness, use, and share that knowledge. Building partnerships across the organization can facilitate better information flow, increased knowledge, and improved business success.

The Minnesota Council for Quality is pleased to welcome Mr. Stephen Dent, founder of Partnering Continuum, Inc. to the February 5 Performance Improvement Network (PIN) discussion. His discussion, "Building Smart Partnerships," will offer a logical and compelling case for adopting the

principles and practices of “partnering intelligence,” including why these partnerships are so critical into today’s’ information-driven economy.

Stephen will also provide a roadmap for companies that wish to develop the partnering acumen of their executives, managers and employees. His “Partnering Quotient Assessment,” “Six Partnering Attributes,” and partnering models form an integrated system for building a strong organizational partnering capability. Organizations that need to succeed using information and knowledge must develop individual partnering capabilities and a partnering culture to support them.

The discussion is from 8:00-9:00 a.m. on February 5 (networking and continental breakfast at 7:30) 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 [lassiter\\_brian@hotmail.com](mailto:lassiter_brian@hotmail.com).

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6. Selling a New Idea to the Established Healthcare Market – MSLF  
Discussion 1/27

The Minnesota Strategic Leadership Forum (MSLF), a partner of the Minnesota Council for Quality, is pleased to announce that Tony Miller, CEO of Definity Health, will speak at their January 27 discussion. Mr. Miller, co-founder of Definity Health, will talk about the design of a new style health plan that gives control and responsibility to the user of the plan. He will address the issues in introducing a new concept with a traditional industry and the challenges he faced in implementing his business design.

The event will be held at the Minneapolis Campus of St. Thomas. Registration is 7:00 a.m, buffet breakfast at 7:30 a.m., speaker begins at 7:45 a.m., and Q&A is at 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).

Also mark your calendar for MSLF’s February 24 meeting: Dr. Mick Sheppeck of St. Thomas on “Linking values with Skills, the new HR strategy.”

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7. A Drive Through Roc 52 – RAQC Discussion 2/10

Please join the Rochester Area Quality Council (RAQC), a partner of the Minnesota Council for Quality, on Tuesday, February 10 when they welcome MnDOT to talk about how they are using quality tools to redesign US Highway 52 through Rochester. Nelrae Succio, Transportation District Engineer, and Brian Jergenson, Public Affairs Coordinator, will lead the discussion.

The reconstruction of US 52 through Rochester is the Minnesota Department of Transportation's first "design-build" project. Based on the positive public response received thus far, it appears the design-build process has been a tremendous success. But the project and the positive PR associated with it didn't just happen, but rather was the result of a carefully planned out strategy that began several years ago. Find out how quality and innovation played a crucial role in transforming an 11-year construction schedule to 3.5 years! And find out how lessons learned from this project are being used to shape MnDOT's future design-build construction projects.

To register, please visit [www.raqc.com](http://www.raqc.com), call Kay Wiegert at 507-285-7560, or contact her by email at [kay.wiegert@roch.edu](mailto:kay.wiegert@roch.edu). This program will be held from 7:30 to 9:00 on February 10 at the University Center Rochester, Coffman Building Room CF206-208. The cost is \$10 for members (of RAQC or MCQ); \$20 for non-members. See you there!

Also, plan ahead to attend three very special RAQC events in 2004, each focusing on a 2002 Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award recipient: March 2 with SSM Health Care; April 13 with Branch-Smith Printing; and June 1 with Motorola Commercial, Government, and Industrial Solutions Sector. Mark your calendars now; details will be announced soon!

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#### 8. Inver Hills Announces Spring Courses; Council Members Discounted 15%

Inver Hills Community College recently announced its upcoming management and advanced IT networking classes. Council members receive a 15% discount on all listed tuition.

1/13 through 3/16, The Management Academy: An introduction of essentials for beginning managers and supervisors; \$995.

1/27 through 3/16, Fundamentals of Wireless LANs: focuses on the design, planning, implementation, best practices, operation, and troubleshooting of wireless networks; \$2495.

1/27 through 4/4, Check Point™ Security Overview: covers the principles of network security, and managing implementation of Check Point's FireWall-1™ product as an enterprise-level Internet security solution; \$1950.

2/10 through 6/8, The Management Academy II: Introductions to management law, quality systems, project management, strategic development, and presentation skills; \$995.

2/17 through 5/13, Fundamentals of Wireless LANs: focuses on the design,

planning, implementation, best practices, operation, and troubleshooting of wireless networks; \$2495.

3/1 through 4/26 and 3/18 through 5/13, Fundamentals of Network Security (CISCO): improve skills and knowledge in three key areas of network security: firewalls, intrusion detection systems, and virtual private networks; \$2495.

4/8 through 6/21, Check Point™ Security Overview: covers the principles of network security, and managing implementation of Check Point's FireWall-1™ product as an enterprise-level Internet security solution; \$1950.

For more information on any of these courses, call Bill Zwicky at 651-450-8679 or visit <http://depts.inverhills.edu/cect/>

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#### 9. Hennepin Technical College Announces Lean Courses; Council Members Discounted 10%

Hennepin Technical College, Eden Prairie, is pleased to announce a new 12-credit certificate on Lean Manufacturing. Lean is one of today's most popular management and improvement tools for manufacturers and non-manufacturers. The first two courses in this series will be offered this spring:

\* Fundamentals, Quality Concepts, and Systems (METS 1500): 3 credits offered Tuesday evenings from 5:00-7:00 pm from January 13-May 18 in Eden Prairie.

\* Principles and Practices of Lean Manufacturing: Lean Tools and Techniques. 3 credits offered Thursdays from 2:00-4:50 pm from January 15-May 13 also in Eden Prairie.

The instructor for both courses is Mark Paulson. Council members will receive a 10% discount on tuition. For more information, please visit <http://www.hennepintech.edu/index.htm>.

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#### 10. Century College Announces Spring Courses; Council Members Receive Discount

Century College in White Bear Lake recently announced its spring 2004 courses. In partnership with the Minnesota Council for Quality, Council members can receive a discount to certain courses when mentioning your membership at the time of registration.

Upcoming courses include:

1/14-3/2: ASQ Certified Quality Manager, \$795 (members \$745)  
1/22: Quality Basics, \$149  
2/3: Quality Basics, \$149  
2/9: How to Make ISO/Quality Registration Writing Easier, \$149  
2/24: Quality Basics, \$149  
2/26-4/1: Quality 101: ASQ Foundations in Quality, \$575 (members \$545)  
3/3-5/26: ASQ Certified Quality Engineer, \$875 (members \$825)  
3/30-5/11: ASQ Certified Quality Auditor, \$795 (members \$745)

For more information on these courses, contact Frank Schultz at 651-779-1740 or f.schultz@century.mnscu.edu. Or visit our Clearinghouse at [www.councilforquality.org](http://www.councilforquality.org).

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#### 11. St. Thomas Offers Six Sigma Course to Council Members at a Discount

The Management Center, University of St. Thomas is offering the Six Sigma Black Belt Certificate at a 15% discount to MN Society for Quality members. Manufacturing companies, governmental agencies, and service organizations are all facing greater demand from their customers for improved product and service quality. Many quality improvement programs and philosophies exist. Some organizations have used them with considerable success while others struggle to achieve their desired results. A newly considered approach to quality is called Six Sigma. Six Sigma is a customer-driven method that structures proven quality techniques and concepts in a way which brings new relevance to quality management. In the 18 sessions of this course, learn the background, strategies, and metrics of Six Sigma. Explore how to deploy and document Six Sigma projects and to integrate these into bottom-line profit.

This program begins beginning February 2, 2004. For more information, contact The Management Center at 651-962-4600 or visit [www.stthomas.edu/mgmtctr](http://www.stthomas.edu/mgmtctr) keyword "six sigma."

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#### 12. U of M Continuing Education's Spring Curriculum

The College of Continuing Education (CCE) at the University of Minnesota recently announced its spring curriculum. Upcoming organizational improvement-related courses include the following:

2/2-2/6: The Successful Manager's Leadership Handbook Program, \$2995  
3/2-3/3: Strategic Thinking: Planning and Implementation, \$895  
3/8-3/19 (Mondays): Systems Engineering Principles, \$950  
3/9: Driving Innovation, \$695

3/24-3/25: Project Management Essentials, \$895  
4/5-4/9: The Successful Manager's Leadership Handbook Program, \$2995  
4/13-4/14: Strategic Talent Management, \$895  
4/20: Relationship Selling, \$695  
4/21-4/22: Dynamic Facilitation Skills for Trainers, \$895  
5/12-5/13: Coaching for Maximizing Performance, \$895  
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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