

A Baldrige Success Story:

Concordia Publishing Survives and Thrives

*By Pamela Wong*

We live in the information era. Laptops, cell phones, the Internet, eBooks, iPads—and the list goes on— signify a revolution in how society gathers and distributes information. Many newspapers, magazines, and publishers have been unable to adapt during the revolution—and they haven’t survived.

However, an outstanding survivor is [Concordia Publishing House](http://www.nist.gov/baldrige/award_recipients/concordia_profile.cfm) (CPH), the publishing arm of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Based in St. Louis, Missouri, CPH is the first faith-based nonprofit organization to win the national Baldrige Award (in 2011). Through its application of the [Baldrige Criteria](http://www.nist.gov/baldrige/publications/business_nonprofit_criteria.cfm) for Performance Excellence, CPH displays agility in adapting to changing technology, in listening to its customers, and in achieving financial success despite difficult times for the publishing industry.

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Dr. Bruce Kintz,

President & CEO,

Concordia Publishing House, 2011 Baldrige Award Recipient

How has CPH achieved success? First, with overall customer satisfaction scores exceeding 98 percent, CPH knows how to read its customers. Purdue University ranked its customer call center, which provides same-day responses, as a “Center of Excellence” in 2009, 2010, and 2011.

CPH uses voice-of-the-customer procedures to gather customer input, including compliments, product ideas, and complaints. Teams analyze the data to prioritize and design products. In addition, the publisher uses technology to help build customer relationships. CPH also collects and analyzes data from customers of competitors to identify relationships between certain product sales and types of customers.

The firm also leads in exploring state-of-the-art technologies to deliver innovative products such as eBooks, iPhone/iPad products, church management software, and customizable Web-based curriculum builders. CPH increased its number of eProducts from 457 in 2008 to 1,927 in 2010.

The financial bottom line shows that CPH’s timeliness and innovation are paying off: its earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization as a percentage of net sales were at +5 percent in 2010, compared to -10 percent by comparable church publishers.

CPH’s Baldrige journey was first recognized in 2009, when it received the Missouri Quality Award from the [Excellence in Missouri Foundation](http://www.excellenceinmo.org/Pages/Home.aspx). The Missouri Quality and the national Baldrige Awards are testaments to its success, but Concordia doesn’t regard those achievements as the end of its journey.

“We continue to use the Baldrige Criteria as we review the feedback report,” says Dr. Bruce Kintz, Concordia’s CEO and president. “The examiners have provided us with an invaluable service by visiting our company and providing their feedback. We are creating action plans to address many of the OFIs [opportunities for improvement] from their report.”

Why are the Criteria important to Concordia?

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The quest for excellence continues.