***Response to changes in Baldrige Examiner reimbursement policies***

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Alumni Examiner

Baldrige Examiner 2000-2011 – and coming back in 2012!

The Baldrige National Performance Excellence Program has announced that they will no longer be able to subsidize Baldrige Examiner training for those Examiners whose organizations do not pay for their training. Cost of training includes airfare, hotel, and incidental expenses of attending training in Gaithersburg, Maryland. While this is disappointing, I think all of us recognize the challenges that the Baldrige program is facing in reduction or elimination of funding for the Baldrige program.

The 2012 cycle will be my 13th year as a Baldrige Examiner, and I was a Minnesota Quality Award Evaluator for three years before that. I took advantage of Baldrige reimbursement for several of those years when my employer was not willing to pay for my expenses, but recently I’ve made the commitment to fund my own personal development and to help support the Baldrige program.

I encourage you to consider how you can help support the Baldrige program in this time of reduced funding. Consider the value of examiner training to you and your organization. I view Baldrige Examiner training as a “mini-MBA.” I got an MBA in 1984. How relevant is that MBA today? I looked at some of my textbooks stuck away in a box in my basement a few weeks ago. Much of what I learned in those days isn’t the leading edge of business practice today – especially in how we engage customers, employees, and key concepts such as innovation. On the other hand, my experience as a Baldrige Examiner keeps me current on the leading edge of evidence-based business practices each year that I return.

I encourage you to consider Examiner training as a key personal development opportunity. Many organizations continue to provide resources for employee development. Even if your organization is not using the Baldrige Criteria as a management system, your continued education in effective management practices should be viewed as having value for your organization Your evaluation of an applicant, especially if you are fortunate enough to participate in a site visit, is like having an internship to learn about effective management practices. Discuss with your company whether the expenses of Baldrige Examiner training can be reimbursed as part of your tuition reimbursement program.Remember, the only thing you are paying for is expenses…there is no cost for the actual training. In my opinion, this is one of the greatest employee development opportunities available.

But if your organization is still not willing to pay those expenses, consider investing in this training on your own. The experience gained should demonstrate to your organization your commitment to personal development. In addition, your experience as a Baldrige Examiner looks good on a resume, on your LinkedIn profile, and to anyone who is familiar with the Baldrige program. And there’s something about knowing that you are helping increase the competitiveness of American companies that is personally satisfying.

In summary, consider…and communicate…the value of being a Baldrige Examiner to your organization. Focus on your development and the value of that development to your company. If they are still not willing to reimburse you for expenses, consider the personal value of being a Baldrige Examiner, and consider making a personal investment in your own development.