
Minnesota Council for Quality Stakeholder Update
July 2003

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1. A Message from the President: Building an Improvement Clearinghouse

Last month, the Council launched our on-line improvement “Clearinghouse.” Located at www.councilforquality.org, the Clearinghouse is a web-enabled resource center that provides information and resources for improving organizational performance.

There is nothing quite like it in the marketplace. It includes white papers, articles, announcements of improvement-related training and events, and links to well over 100 other organizations that focus on some aspect of organizational improvement. Material is contributed by members and the public for the benefit of members and the public: the Clearinghouse literally acts as the intermediary to broker existing information and resources.

I believe the launch of this service is an important step in creating value for members and organizations throughout the state. A major part of the Council's vision is to broker knowledge, information, resources, and best practices relating to organizational improvement. So much of this information and expertise already exists in the market, but oftentimes it is difficult to know where to go to find it. So the inherent value of a tool like this is in its ability to help organizations quickly – and cost-effectively – find and access it.

Reflecting the Council's non-profit mission, most of the content of the Clearinghouse is free and open to the public. Because of its format, the Clearinghouse provides a cost-effective way for organizations to access information on improvement. And in a difficult business climate, we hope this resource will offer value to smaller businesses, educational institutions, non-profits, public sector agencies, and other organizations that otherwise can't afford to search for the information or attend an expensive seminar or conference.

Some information and functionality is reserved for members only. For example, the member directory – intended to promote benchmarking and networking – is accessible to members only. Furthermore, members can conduct more refined searches through articles, events, and web links. A search on “quality,” for example, might yield a few dozen website links, but members can refine their search to identify the most valuable websites (as rated by other users) or those that apply more specifically to their sector.

We are working hard to build value for our members. The Clearinghouse may not be a “one-stop shop” for members desiring to improve their organization’s performance, but our goal is for it to be the first place you go to find more information on a particular improvement technique.

The Council will release the second version of the Clearinghouse this fall, which will include a Vendor Referral Service that connects consultants and trainers with organizations desiring external assistance (see Article 5 below), a larger benchmarking section, and an Improvement Resource Center with common improvement definitions and tools.

The Council would like to thank Endurant Business Solutions (www.endurant.com) for their expertise and in-kind contributions in building the Clearinghouse. We would also like to thank the literally dozens of individuals who provided input and feedback throughout the process (their names are listed on the Clearinghouse, under the volunteer section).

I invite you to visit the Clearinghouse at www.councilforquality.org. Feel free to submit material any time, and I encourage you to bookmark and access the tool when you have a particular organizational improvement need. I hope you find it of value, and I look forward to your feedback.

Yours in Improvement,

Brian S. Lassiter
President, MN Council for Quality

2. Save the Date: 2002 Minnesota Quality Award Date Announced – September 11

Thanks to a generous contribution by Virchow Krause & Company , the Minnesota Council for Quality is pleased to announce that we are bringing back our annual public recognition event this year! This year’s event will feature the five organizations that received 2002 Minnesota Quality Award recognition, and will also recognize and thank our Board of Evaluators and other volunteers. It will be an event that is full of learning, networking, and celebration.

Please save the date: Thursday, September 11 in the early evening. Details will be announced in the coming weeks.

3. Seeking 2003 Evaluators: Fall Training Approaching; Time Is Running Out!

The Minnesota Council for Quality is pleased to announce its fall training schedule for the 2003 Board of Evaluators. New Evaluators can select one of three dates for orientation: July 31, August 6, or August 12 (locations are being finalized). Training for all Evaluators (new and returning) is scheduled for September 9-11 at Medtronic Energy and Component Center in Brooklyn Center.

Applications for new Evaluators are due on a rolling schedule: July 24 if you plan to attend the July 31 training session, July 30 if you plan to attend the August 6 session, or August 5 if you plan to attend the August 12 session. Attending the earlier sessions will give you longer to complete the pre-work required before the September 9-11 training. Applications for returning Evaluators are due Friday, August 29 (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 your 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.

And this year we are in need of additional Evaluators to handle the projected number of Minnesota Quality Award applicants! Your contribution as an Evaluator not only is valuable to you and your organization, but also provides tremendous value to other Minnesota organizations desiring to improve their performance and effectiveness.

If you are interested in learning more about the benefits of becoming an Evaluator or would like a fall 2003 application, please email the Council at mc4quality@aol.com or visit our website at <http://www.councilforquality.org/assess.cfm>.

4. Council Membership Hits 100: Recognizing Second Quarter Members and Hutchinson Technology

The Minnesota Council for Quality hit a membership milestone last month: we now have 100 organizational and individual memberships representing over 21,000 employees throughout the state. “This is significant because so much of our vision is predicated on have a large number of members,” says Brian Lassiter, president. “Our vision is based on scale so that we can begin connecting members to other members for networking, information sharing, and benchmarking. Our growth – from 17 members in May of 2002

to our current of 100 – is incredible, and is a testament to the value we are building and to the outreach of our members and volunteers. But we have a long way still to go.”

The Council would like to recognize 22 organizations and individuals who joined or renewed their membership in the second quarter. Special recognition goes to Hutchinson Technology for joining as a Sponsoring Member. As such, Hutchinson’s contribution helps support more affordable memberships for individuals and smaller organizations. “Hutchinson has been a long-time supporter of the Council’s mission, and we thank them for their membership,” says Lassiter. “Not only will their contribution benefit the employees of Hutchinson Technology, but it will help the Council continue to execute our vision of helping organizations in Greater Minnesota.”

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

Alexandria Extrusion Company, Alexandria*
Anagram International, Eden Prairie
Dean Andrew, St. Paul
Bluefire Partners, Minneapolis
EHS Management Partners, Shorewood
Carol Harris, Minneapolis
Hutchinson Technology Inc., Hutchinson
Joshua Tree Consulting, Eagan
Kaposia, Inc., St. Paul
Mayo Clinic Quality Office, Rochester
Trish McGovern, Minneapolis
Memorial Blood Centers of Minnesota, Minneapolis
Minnesota Department of Revenue, St. Paul*
MnSCU Office of the Chancellor/SOQS Committee, St. Paul
Padilla Speer Beardsley, Minneapolis
Path, Incorporated, St. Paul
Quantum Performance Group, Palmyra, NY
Sathe & Associates Executive Search, Minneapolis
Rick Shomion, St. Paul*
Strategic Solutions Exchange Group, Bloomington
The Solutions Exchange, Minnetonka
Unisys Twin Cities, Roseville

We thank each of them for their support. 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 or email the Council at mc4quality@aol.com.

5. Seeking Sponsors for Vendor Referral Service

As part of the second phase of the improvement Clearinghouse, the Minnesota Council for Quality will begin offering a Vendor Referral Service later this year. The service will be an on-line, dynamic search engine that connects organizational improvement consultants, trainers, and facilitators to organizations desiring to hire them. As envisioned, there is no tool quite like this: it will greatly accelerate a member organization's search for a qualified vendor, and will provide a legitimate channel for our member-vendors to market their services.

Design of the Vendor Referral Service began last month with several focus groups, and many of our members will receive brief surveys later this month to finalize requirements.

Simultaneously, the Council is seeking sponsors to help fund the technical development of this valuable tool. "We have heard from the marketplace," says Craig Robinson, Council Chair, "and we recognize the strong need for a service like this. To accelerate its launch, we are looking support from companies who will benefit from the service...from members who will use the tool to identify vendors, and from vendors will be listed in it."

For a one-time contribution, your organization would be listed on the Vendor Referral Service's homepage for one year. For a contribution of:

\$250-999, your organization would be listed as a "Bronze Sponsor,"
\$1000-2999, your organization would be listed as a "Silver Sponsor," or
\$3000 or more, your organization would be listed as "Gold Sponsor."

If your organization would benefit from using this service (and/or if your organization would benefit from being listed in it) and are interested in making a one-time sponsorship contribution, please email the Council at mc4quality@aol.com. Our goal is to secure sponsorships within 30 days so that we can develop and launch the tool this fall.

6. Mastering Project Work: Where's the Juice? – PIN Discussion 8/7

Through the nineties, it was easy to overlook the need for a juicy, personal purpose for work. Distracted by golden carrots dangling from platinum parachutes, many confided that once their options made them rich, they would ditch their death marches and start doing what they really love. Many, perhaps most, held their breath but never achieved

that liberating threshold. Now they find themselves slaving in some cube-farm salt mine, refining a process they don't really believe in.

Beyond traditional notions of leadership, our projects today demand something other than the ability to lead a charge. How might you create that sense on your projects that "we can do anything together?" How do you make them more successful for everyone involved?

The Council's Performance Improvement Network (PIN) is pleased to welcome Mr. David Schmalz, President of True North pgs, to our August 7 discussion. His talk will focus on those actions anyone can take – without permission from anyone else – that can turn even death march-hopeless efforts into enlivening personal experiences. Mr. Schmalz who recently authored "The Blind Men and the Elephant: Mastering Project Work" (Berrett-Koehler; see a review by Cheryl Coupe in the SAO newsletter: http://www.sao.org/newsletter/pdfs/jun03/cheryl_coupe_0603.pdf), will summarize his experience of what it takes to make even the most complex projects successful. Specifically, he will address things like managing stakeholder expectations, removing barriers, maneuvering through politics, building communities, and focusing on making projects "juicy" and rewarding for yourself.

The discussion is from 8:00-9:00 a.m. on August 7 (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 or email lassiter_brian@hotmail.com.

7. Applying Quality Principles to Your Workplace: RAQC Discussion 8/5

The Rochester Area Quality Council is proud to welcome Mr. James Crannell, a Science teacher from Chaska High School on Tuesday, August 5th for his presentation "Applying Quality Principles to Your Workplace." Mr. Crannell will talk about how he used quality principles and the Baldrige framework for a portion of an organization; in his case, the portion was an individual course within a high school. He will discuss why a "systems" approach is valuable, how to define your goals, and figuring out how to measure and communicate progress as well as ideas on how to find those first steps. Using this approach, he applied for the Minnesota Quality Award in 2001 and received the Advancement Level.

This presentation will be of interest to anyone who has wondered how to apply the quality principles to their specific work. It will be of specific interest to teachers who are looking to apply the principles in their classroom.

This breakfast program will be held at the University Center Rochester, Coffman Building, Room 206/208 from 7:30 to 9:00 a.m. From 9:00 to 10:00 a.m. in Room 202 an additional informal question and answer session will follow. Please contact Kay Wiegert at 285-7560 or by email at kay.wiegert@roch.edu to register. You may also register at

our website, www.raqc.com. The cost is \$10 for RAQC or MCQ members and \$20 for non-members. See you on August 5th!

8. U of M Announces Fall Curriculum; Council Members Get Discount

The College of Continuing Education (CCE) at the University of Minnesota recently announced its fall curriculum. As in the past, the CCE has agreed to offer a \$50 early bird discount to all Council members and a \$100 discount off the November 4 Balanced Scorecard course. Upcoming organizational improvement-related courses include the following:

- 9/24-9/25: Project Management Essentials, \$895 (minus Council discounts)
- 10/7-10/8: Strategic Thinking and Implementation, \$895
- 10/21-10/22: Win-Win Negotiating, \$895
- 10/28-10/29: Fundamentals of Accounting and Finance for Managers, \$895
- 11/4: Using the Balanced Scorecard to Improve Your Organization's Performance, \$695
- 11/13: A Systems Approach to Managing Your Work, \$695
- 12/2-12/3: The Engineer and Technical Professional as Manager, \$895

For more information on any of these courses, visit <http://www.cce.umn.edu/business> or email Jodi Gowan at jgowan@cce.umn.edu.

9. St. Thomas Offers Quality Curriculum to Council Members at a Discount

The Management Center at the University of St. Thomas recently announced its fall courses. In partnership with the Minnesota Council for Quality, Council members can receive a 15% discount by mentioning your membership at the time of registration.

Upcoming courses include (prices are before member discount):

- 8/6: Leadership Skills Update, \$355
- 9/8-12/15 (18 sessions): Six Sigma Black Belt Training, \$10,495
- 9/11-10/23 (7 sessions): Supply Chain Quality Management Certificate Series, \$1295
- 9/12-12/13 (10 sessions): Mini MBA® In Leading Growing Companies, \$3495
- 9/23-9/24: The Influential Leader, \$595
- 9/23-12/9 (12 sessions): Mini Master of Quality Management, \$1695
- 9/25: Strategic Thinking, \$345
- 10/1-10/2: Lead With Your Strengths, \$995
- 10/21-10/22: The Leader as Coach and Collaborator, \$595
- 11/17-12/9 (8 sessions): Six Sigma Green Belt Training, \$3895
- 12/4-12/5: Introduction to Six Sigma, \$595
- 12/16-12/17: Basic Statistical Process Control (SPC), \$655

For more information on any of these courses please see
<http://www.stthomas.edu/mgmtctr/>.

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