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Using the Baldrige Assessment Criteria to Improve Company Performance

Many organizations are using the powerful assessment tools provided by the Malcolm Baldrige Award criteria to drive performance improvements and to revolutionize management techniques. The assessment process alone can be a tool used in a long-term strategy to outperform the competition.

As a distributor of fasteners and related mechanical and electrical assembly components, NYF Corp. associates know that the small size and relatively low unit cost of these products belie their technical complexity and importance in critical applications. Our journey to incorporate the valuable feedback and experiences derived from the self-analysis process began in 1997, referencing core Baldrige criteria: leadership, strategic planning, customer and market focus, information and analysis, human resource focus, process management, and business results.

As a result of this exercise, NYF expanded upon its team-oriented structure by implementing cross-

functional, customer-focused teams. These teams, including account management, procurement, quality, and inspection representatives, have a broad skill set but a narrow focus: the customer's needs. The company implemented a customized customer relationship management system within its existing ERP system, enabling all team members to exchange information and assign responsibilities to resolve customer-related needs or tasks; a supplier-managed inventory (SMI) program complements this system.

The company has continued to use the Baldrige assessment tools to ensure alignment of resources and processes. Methodologies employed by NYF include Six Sigma, lean manufacturing (one piece flow), and kaizen. For example, company employees and their counterparts at the customer site used value stream mapping (VSM) during the design phase at an aircraft operation to document and analyze the customer's process steps. This VSM exercise helped the

customer eliminate 86 steps (95 percent reduction). In another program with a defense and aerospace contractor, NYF personnel performed a failure modes and effects analysis (FMEA) to identify what was causing a spike in demand at point-of-use (POU) bin locations. Bins in high-visibility areas such as hallways had been identified by design engineers as sources of hardware; as they pulled components from these areas, their demand threatened stock-out situations on the production floor. NYF rectified the situation by installing POU bins specifically designed for engineer use. Thanks to the company's improvement efforts, NYF was awarded the Silver New Jersey Governor's Award for Performance Excellence in November 2002. We plan to continue applying the Baldrige criteria as we look for additional improvement prospects.

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