

Baldrige Core Values Key Differentiators in a Brutally Competitive Environment

Craig A. Anderson
President, Global Performance Systems, Inc.



In an article in this month's Popular Science magazine about rampant industrial espionage and product "cloning" in China, the following line caught our eye: "In the south, one cloning operation didn't just copy a technology company's product line--it duplicated the entire company, creating a shadow enterprise with corporate headquarters, factories, and sales and support staff." Duplicated the entire company....

This got us thinking about what "the entire company" means, in a global sense. What is your "entire company"? What is the essence of your organization that cannot be cloned? What is your true differentiator in a world where ideas and capital can flow across borders at the speed of light?

If you struggle with answering this, we have a recommendation: go back and sharpen up your management operating system with Baldrige Performance Excellence. Just like an operating system that optimizes the performance of the integrated systems and resources in a computer, your management operating system is unique to your organization and is the single most important element in your long-term success. Baldrige Performance Excellence is the blueprint for what a world-class management operating system looks like.

But a management system is not enough. Focus on the Baldrige Core Values, the "hidden" keys to performance excellence. Too often overlooked in the rush to "implement" Baldrige, the Baldrige Core Values are the foundation for long-term success.

As described in the Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence, the 11 interrelated core values "are embedded beliefs and behaviors found in high-performing organizations". Rather than have us list them, you can read more on pages 1-4 of the online version of the Criteria for Performance Excellence, http://www.baldrige.nist.gov/PDF_files/2007_Business_Nonprofit_Criteria.pdf. What matters is that these "embedded beliefs and behaviors" are the foundation of your organization and cannot be "cloned" by anyone; people and technologies will come and go, but your core values are enduring.

As with all aspects of the Baldrige system, your core values are developed through self-assessment. Begin a probing, authentic dialogue with your key people around the role of core values in your

organization. Are core values important to your organization? What are your core values? Where are the gaps with the Baldrige Core Values? How consistent is the embrace of core values across your organization? Do you and your team walk the talk? Do you manage by fact and not by opinion? Does an appreciation for systems thinking extend deep into your organization?

These are tough questions without easy answers. But then, pursuing performance excellence without a commitment to core values is a path to nowhere. And without a foundation of core values, you may be the next organization that is cloned out of existence. Whether this happens literally or figuratively is not even the point; your future will have already been determined.

Thanks for being part of the expanding global readership of Global Insights. Until next month, stay well, and good luck with your important work. If you want to learn more about how the Baldrige Performance Excellence System can help your organization, please contact our President, Craig Anderson, directly at 301-309-8530, or via email at canderson@gpsinc.us.