



Pigskin Playbook For Baldrige



**Dale Hershfield, Senior Consultant
ValuMetrix Services ; Ortho-Clinical Diagnostics Inc.**

Texans have a mighty big affection for football. But did you know that the gridiron is also a great place to study Baldrige? Grab your team jersey, pack the cooler and let's take a look!

Start by opening the Baldrige playbook to Chapter 5, Workforce Focus:

- “How do you recruit...new members of your workforce? How do you ensure your workforce represents the diverse ideas, cultures, and thinking of your hiring and customer community?”
- “How do you manage...your workforce to...reinforce a customer and business focus [and] exceed performance expectations...?”

College football provides an excellent case study for these requirements. Want your team to “exceed performance expectations?” How about a national championship!

What does it take to win the national championship? Consider one sportswriter's view on the challenge faced by teams in the Big Ten Conference:

“To win a national championship today in college football, a school must have certain building blocks. A massive fan base that buys tickets and makes donations. A legacy of success that attracts recruits. An administration willing to pay for top-flight coaches and facilities.

But it's become clear that one element trumps them all: local talent. The best players, increasingly, come from the South and West, and that's a problem—potentially a permanent one—for the Big Ten Conference.”

His diagnosis:

“The main problem seems to be rooted in the population growth of the South and West, and the greater zeal for high-school football in those regions.”

Elite players are the chief focus for top college recruiters. These are players who can tilt the balance in favor of the home team by their natural, extraordinary abilities. Finding them is a numbers game. The more kids who play, the more top notch players there are, thus the benefit of population growth and well-stocked high school programs.

How are college football programs addressing this challenge and what can we learn from them? Let's put the X's and O's up on the chalkboard.

The University of Oregon and Oregon State, while located in the high growth West, reside in a state with a relatively small population of 3.8 million people. Their answer? California, population 37 million. Yet, because California has its own powerhouse schools like USC and Cal that recruit primarily within the state, the Oregon schools need to dig deeper. They recruit underrated California high-school players that the in-state schools pass over. Both Oregon and Oregon State have built successful programs as a result, e.g. the Oregon Ducks went 10 – 2 last season and played in the Rose Bowl.

Notre Dame pairs an established national reputation with a solid Midwest location. They recruit nationally: 97% of their players last season came from outside of Notre Dame's home state of Indiana, with 36% of the players hailing from Southern or Western states. (Just 5% of the University of Texas team, in contrast, came from outside of Texas.)

Notre Dame uses unique recruiting tools. Over the next several years, Notre Dame will play one "home" game each year at a site outside of Indiana. Last Fall they played in San Antonio at the Alamo dome. In 2011 and 2014 they will play at the Citrus Bowl in Orlando. Their thinly veiled objective: recruit local talent.

Let's move off the chalkboard and onto the playing field to apply these learnings. First, identify the key workforce capability and capacity needs in your organization. Common challenges include the shortage of key skills, such as skilled trades in manufacturing and certain specialty professionals in health care. Changing customer demographics also present a challenge. For service industries, including health care, serving a diverse population of varied cultures and native languages presents distinct workforce capability requirements. In the manufacturing sector, ensuring that product designs respond to highly heterogeneous customer preferences often requires diversity of experience among designers and marketers.

Next, build the systems and processes that will allow you to recruit a great team.

- Integrate your knowledge of customer requirements and expectations with the workforce capabilities you need to develop. What does a winning season look like for your customers and what staff talents do you need to provide it?
- You may need to journey far from home (far from traditional sources) to find the talent you need. Do you have a means to identify fertile grounds for recruiting, like the high growth South and West for college football? How will you build relationships with key contacts in those areas, like a network of high school coaches?
- You may need to use unique and unconventional approaches to reach recruits, like Notre Dame's outreach at the Alamo dome. How do you scan the environment to identify new venues for reaching recruits? Do you have the skills to take advantage of new communication approaches, like social media?

All right, it's time to suit up and head to the stadium. So put on your game face, grab a beverage from the cooler and let's go to the game!

References

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