
Increased Confidence, Leadership Skills, Innovation, Engagement—What Baldrige Examiners Take Back

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What value does a [Baldrige examiner](#) take back to his or her organization? I've been thinking about this as national examiner training is taking place at the Baldrige offices here in Gaithersburg, MD. For each of four weeks, which began on April 24 this year, about 100 examiners come for the three-day Examiner Preparation Course (add an extra day for new examiners and senior examiners) to learn how to apply the Baldrige Criteria and evaluate applications for the [Baldrige Award](#).

Examiners or their employing organizations pay the expenses associated with travel to training. In addition, examiners commit a significant amount of volunteer time to their studies and to applicant review. A key reason examiners attend is to develop expertise to help their own organizations improve and possibly engage in the Baldrige journey.

Here's what Matt Fleming, president of [MidwayUSA](#), a 2009 Baldrige Award recipient in small business, said:

"We are seeing personal growth and development in our employees, especially our senior leaders, who are [Baldrige] examiners. We are seeing increased confidence, better leadership skills, a major level of excitement and energy, and more engagement in participation in all of our meetings."

It's clear that employers encourage their workers to participate because of the benefits the employee brings back to them. Following is a list of benefits that examiners and organizational leaders have shared.

"I view Baldrige examiner training as a 'mini-MBA.' . . . It keeps me current on the leading edge of evidence-based business practices each year that I return."

The training provides "continued education in effective management practices."

Serving as an examiner provides training in the "tools of leadership"—such as strategic planning, core values, and in developing meaningful measures and metrics.

The cost is lower than it would be to hire a consultant—and the employee brings the knowledge back to his/her organization.

Baldrige examiners are "always thinking about improving, making more connections, being more systematic. . . . If you're thinking of your work in that fashion, it is helpful to your organization."

"I have been able to . . . learn about other industries' performance, and that has enabled me to become more innovative within my own organization."

“The [Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence](#) apply not only to the applicants, but [the Criteria] are transferrable to any organization.”

Serving as an examiner provides the “opportunity to look at some of the highest-performing organizations in the country and to see . . . their best practices.”

In the opening session of examiner training, examiners introduce themselves by sharing their name, organization, and number of years as an examiner. The breadth and number of organizations are always impressive. In a recent week, I counted five or six examiners from organizations that have *already* won the Baldrige Award. What a statement, I thought, of the value organizations find in having their workers serve as examiners.

What value has your organization realized from having their employees serve as Baldrige examiners? Consider how this experience could impact your journey to performance excellence.



About Pamela Wong

I've been on staff with the Baldrige Performance Excellence Program since 2006, and I work as a writer and editor. A new area of my focus is communications--getting word out about the tremendous value that Baldrige creates for organizations and the U.S. economy. My husband and I have three children who are young adults, ages 24, 22, and 19. We also enjoy our lovable 14 1/2-year-old Jack Russell terrier named Max.

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