

The FIRST BALDRIGE AWARD

– LARRY’S SHORT STORIES #191 –

From my perspective, the greatest success, during our first 32 years, wasn't any of the record breaking months or years, it was that day in November when the United States Secretary of Commerce called to tell us that MidwayUSA was to receive the 2009 Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award.

The Baldrige program was created in the 1980s to encourage American businesses to increase the quality of their products and services. Baldrige is about systematically applying basic leadership and management principles throughout the organization. There's really nothing new in the Baldrige Criteria, we've seen it all in various business books; but it's one thing to

know the principles of leadership and management, it's another thing to systematically apply them day in/day out, within the organization. Baldrige Award recipients do that; and their results improve dramatically, as a reward for their efforts.

Our journey started in the late 1990s, with an introduction to the Missouri Quality Award (same criteria as Baldrige). Unfortunately, we got off to a false start and walked away, after two years; but by 2004,

we developed a new approach – two members of our Senior Leadership Team volunteered to be examiners in the 2005 Missouri award cycle. In 2006, four volunteered. MidwayUSA was adopting Baldrige! By the fall of 2006, it was clear that we could win the award, and I announced to the organization that we would apply for and receive the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award in calendar year 2009. That may be the most important announcement a CEO can ever make to his/her organization.



Made of crystal, the Baldrige Award is impressive in its simplicity and elegance.



Brenda and I chose Matt Fleming and Deanna Herwald to represent the Company on the stage with Vice-President Biden and Secretary Locke – a great memory for each of them.

The Baldrige Criteria is divided into seven categories, Leadership, Strategic Planning, Customer Focus, Process Management, Human Resources, Information Management, and Results. Baldrige was getting a hundred applications per year, granting site visits to fifteen finalists, and presenting five awards. Our first challenge was to write a nearly-perfect application, to ensure a site visit. The second was to re-organize and update our systems and processes to become a Baldrige company.

"...the greatest success..."

The application was limited to fifty pages; answers to about 250 critical questions. The key was to understand each question, then provide a correct essay response; that would get the site visit. To win the Award, we would have to really impress the Site Visit Team, with our functioning systems and processes. 2009 came quickly; we sent in the application, hosted the Site Visit team, and got the call, from the Secretary of Commerce – a success of great magnitude!



Larry Potterfield

MidwayUSA
Office of the Founder and CEO
Columbia, Missouri
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Many MidwayUSA Employees contributed significantly to MidwayUSA's first Baldrige Award; the greatest effort was from the Senior Leadership team, and the Quality Management Systems Department, pictured here: (l-r) Stan Frink, Holly Ketchum, Matt Fleming, Deanna Herwald, Adam Ray, Sundeep Larkin, Aaron Oelger, Brenda Potterfield, Larry Roberts, Linda Bounds, Joel Felten, Terry Potterfield, William Burke, Sara Potterfield.