

A

STRATEGY EXECUTION ROADMAP

FOR NAVIGATING THE BALDRIGE JOURNEY

*Integrated Project Management Company applied its
Strategy Realization Model for transforming organizations
to prioritize and execute its Baldrige pursuit—
and used Baldrige feedback to improve the model.*



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Start with what you know. It's what we at Integrated Project Management Company, Inc. (IPM) told ourselves when we decided to pursue the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award.

Project leadership and strategy execution are our core competencies. Based on 30 years of experience and knowledge, IPM developed a Strategy Realization Model (SRM) that brings together our best methodologies in setting strategic direction, aligning the organization's resources with the strategy, and then executing the related projects and programs efficiently and effectively.

We use this systematic approach to accomplish our own organizational strategy. And we use it to help implement our clients' strategies. Here's how we applied the model to our Baldrige journey, and how it evolved along the way through cycles of improvement.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION

The story begins not with the decision to embark on the Baldrige journey, but with IPM's mission and vision to be a world-class consulting firm with global market leadership and a strong reputation. To help accomplish this vision, we set the strategic imperative—or objective, in Baldrige parlance—to grow responsibly and profitably.

One of the strategic goals supporting the growth objective was confirming that we had the processes and infrastructure to support growth without diminishing quality. Enter the Baldrige Award.

We didn't set out solely to get the award, though we're delighted that we did. We set out to objectively assess our business processes and learn from the Baldrige framework. Our strategic business planning team included pursuit of the award as a strategic initiative within our 2014-2015 strategic plan. In our Strategy Realization Model, strategic initiatives are the programs and projects that are critical to accomplishing the imperatives and related strategic goals.

The SRM evolved throughout our four-and-a-half-year Baldrige journey, in part due to cycles of improvement learned from the applications and feedback. For example, criteria from Category 4 helped enhance how we identify, collect, and evaluate the right data to drive decisions. IPM tracks nearly 400 measurements, and we used to call everything a key performance indicator (KPI). Our review of key measures, managed measures, and monitoring measures helped us define our true KPIs. Tracking the appropriate KPIs helped us identify additional opportunities for improvement and review processes to make sure they were effective and measurable. (See sidebar, "Cycles of Improvement," for more examples of changes made along IPM's Baldrige journey.)

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

In the SRM, strategic alignment is the process of verifying that initiatives will, in fact, contribute to the imperatives and goals. This is where portfolio management comes in, to review, prioritize, and communicate the programs and projects that will advance the company toward its vision.

IPM'S STRATEGY REALIZATION MODEL



Leading the effort to ensure alignment between the strategy and the actual work getting done is a Strategy Realization Office: the person or group of people who owns the process of aligning and leading the execution of the strategic initiatives. The SRO's job is to confirm the business case for each project, prioritizing and balancing them based on risk, return, timing, required resources, etc. To keep them from being swayed by any specific function and to give them direct access to those who are responsible for strategy decisions, budget approval, and resource allocation, the SRO reports to the executive team.

Early in our Baldrige journey, we learned that better prioritizing our strategic initiatives would lead to better resourcing decisions and more precise timelines. We incorporated a tiering system into our SRM. Tier 1 initiatives are critical to accomplishing the strategic goals and receive the resources they need to succeed. The pursuit of a Baldrige award was deemed a Tier 1 initiative.

Each year, the executive team evaluates the strategic goals and initiatives as part of the business planning process, and each year IPM continued to see the value in our Baldrige journey. A senior-level manager was reassigned from other duties to build a team and lead the effort, and he and our CEO went through Baldrige examiner training.

Pursuing the Baldrige required time and funding, resources that were prioritized over other work. Change management techniques are used throughout the SRM, including communicating the impact the goals and initiatives will have on the organization. President and CEO C. Richard Panico was the driving force behind the Baldrige journey, and he repeatedly and consistently emphasized that applying the Baldrige framework would help us improve overall performance and ensure scalability of our processes for future controlled growth.

The Baldrige journey and all other IPM strategic initiatives are communicated in multiple ways. They are announced and discussed at quarterly staff meetings, and they are posted on our intranet. The company values, mission, vision, strategic imperatives, and goals are posted at desks.

STRATEGIC EXECUTION

Using a time-tested project management approach, IPM breaks down projects into their elements. Starting with planning, the project manager collaborates with a core

team and sub-teams to develop a project schedule. For the Baldrige project, initial milestones included documenting our key approaches and identifying gaps against the criteria; identifying opportunities for improvement; and submitting the application for the ILPEX Recognition Program, Illinois' affiliate to the Baldrige Program.

As IPM project managers do on every engagement, the team leading the Baldrige effort was disciplined in implementing change, proactively communicated challenges, and held each other accountable to deliver against high expectations. This organizational advantage, coupled with support from management, enabled IPM to quickly make improvements and rapidly execute our Baldrige journey.

As the Baldrige process unfolded, opportunities for improvement emerged. The SRO vetted them, assessing the business case, resource requirements, and impact, and prioritized them against other efforts. As with changes that arise in the execution of any strategic plans, the executive team played a vital role in communicating the rationales. Through ongoing change management, IPM took a systematic approach to ingrain the Baldrige improvements in a sustainable way, building them into the business process.

THE RESULT

Completing the application and aligning with Baldrige criteria is not easy. In our case, we needed to hunt for comparative competitive data, continually prioritize our opportunities for improvement, and communicate often to maintain workforce engagement, buy-in, and enthusiasm.

But overall, our method worked well. The Baldrige journey followed the same process as other Tier 1 initiatives within our Strategy Realization Model, which brought us a Silver recognition in our first ILPEX application in 2015. We applied what we learned and earned a Gold on our second try. Again, we used that feedback to improve, and received a National Baldrige Award on our first attempt.

Executive and organizational commitment, as well as process discipline, were essential to our short Baldrige journey. Our core competencies ultimately are what helped us to win, and what enabled us to transform the Baldrige framework from an initiative to the way we work. ■

CYCLES OF IMPROVEMENT

The Baldrige criteria encouraged IPM to pressure-test many of our business processes, including each layer of the Strategy Realization Model. Here are some of the cycles of improvement of our rapid journey to receiving the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award.

- Ideation on projects to achieve strategic goals now includes involvement from more of the organization. Staff at all levels can fill out surveys, participate in functional working sessions, and contribute ideas and market knowledge to a central Observations and Trends portal.
- Also aiding strategy development are advanced insights from functional groups, regional offices, and market-facing subject matter experts.
- Better prioritization of strategic initiatives led to a tiering system.
- A dedicated Strategy Realization Portfolio Manager is responsible for evaluating capacity and recommending resources for the most important initiatives.
- All projects within the portfolio are led by a project manager, following a disciplined approach.
- All strategic goals and initiatives are directly linked to our mission and vision on a dashboard on our intranet, along with up-to-date status reports.
- Several dashboards (e.g., Executive and Marketing) were created to track organizational performance and improve access to the data.
- A newly established Discovery and Development function adds structure and enhanced customer insights to drive innovation and new services development.
- An enhanced metrics framework includes key measures, managed measures, and monitoring measures, to ensure we're collecting and evaluating the right data to drive decision-making. Data includes internal, market, and competitive measures.

Integrated Project Management Company, Inc. (IPM)

is a business consulting firm focused on planning and implementing strategically critical initiatives across multiple industries, including life sciences, healthcare, consumer products, and industrial.

Since its inception in 1988, IPM has served more than 400 clients and completed more than 4,000 projects. Headquartered in Chicago, IPM has regional offices in Boston, St. Louis, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Minneapolis, and Parsippany.

To learn more about IPM and its services, visit www.ipmcinc.com or call 630-789-8600.

