

WORLD FIRST BUSINESS EXCELLENCE 'SELF-ASSESSMENT' TOOL LAUNCHES IN NEW ZEALAND

Low Tech Solution Packs High Tech Management Punch

Press release, 6 November 2007, Pyxis Consulting: Hot on the heels of a recent call by the newly formed Business Capability Partnership* for businesses to lift performance to better compete internationally, Pyxis Consulting is launching a world first self-assessment card system that enables ambitious organisations – large and small, public and private - to pit themselves against the world's best.

Based on the internationally acclaimed Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence, 'Assessor' provides a fresh and agile approach for businesses keen to improve performance and profit.

Business Excellence expert and Director of Pyxis Consulting, Michael Voss, says "The message is clear - if our business leaders don't pick up the pace by working on the business instead of in it, we will be taken over and left behind. Businesses don't grow by being static; success evolves through excellence and leadership whose goal is continual improvement."

"New Zealand has a large percentage of small businesses – mostly set up for lifestyle reasons rather than raw ambition. This is a serious problem when it comes to competing globally. Performance excellence, which looks at all areas of business from leadership to systems and measurement, is now *the* determining factor of business success."

The Management Focus Initiative recently launched by the Business Capability Partnership aims to encourage business people to assess their upskilling needs and to provide the inspiration, motivation and information to do something about it.

"This is where Assessor can help," says Voss. "It is designed to allow busy leaders to reach for and attain a performance level that is world-class."

Assessor, which has taken Voss since 1999 to develop and perfect, is a powerful and purposefully low tech self-assessment card system that enables businesses to quickly recognise and work on areas that need improvement.

The system is unique in that it is an engagingly interactive, card-based assessment system that is also time-efficient and affordable. It enables businesses to measure themselves against world-class organisations by showing how they achieve strategic goals through smarter execution, better aligned resources, improved communication and efficient processes.

Having worked for many years with the Baldrige Criteria as an evaluator, facilitator, observer, trainer and mentor, Voss realised that the process of self assessment is an extremely effective learning experience. He says, "Many organisations are making enormous progress by applying the Criteria in a sustained manner. New Zealand could be in a much stronger position than 21st place in the OECD listings if businesses undergo full performance reviews on an annual basis."

Voss says, "I came up with the idea to develop Assessor when I saw many organisations – especially SME's – struggling to take senior management from their daily routine to spend the 2-3 days needed to adequately cover the Criteria. I felt there had to be a better way to enable these organisations to use the Criteria and gain the benefits that others had."

"I also noticed that people unfamiliar with the Criteria were finding it frustrating to absorb and comprehend all the intricacies, particularly when calibrating the scoring prior to application. This is why Assessor allows effective learning and application to happen concurrently. It reduces the time needed to complete a full organisational self assessment to a single day and makes it easier and more affordable to realise the full benefit of regular assessments."

Robin Mann, Founder and Head of the Centre for Organisational Excellence Research at Massey University and Chairman of the Global Benchmarking Network, encouraged Voss to make Assessor available to all outside of PYXIS Consulting. He says, "I have reviewed hundreds of assessment tools in the past 20 years and Assessor certainly stands out as a unique, visually appealing, and practical tool for business excellence assessment. I thoroughly recommend senior management teams and project teams to use Assessor to hone in, identify and prioritise areas for improvement".

About Assessor

Assessor is a low tech, interactive system developed to bring a fresh approach to learning and applying the Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence to organisations. It consists of a set of cards that allow members of a team to work together efficiently on various aspects of their organisation. The cards come with a set of instructions for self application. As an alternative to self assessment an organisation can employ a facilitator to guide a session using the cards, or use a team member trained in how to use Assessor.

'Mind maps' supplied as part of the system are used to record the results from the Assessor session. Organisations can also use the cards to score their results in line with the Criteria to see how they compare with world class performing organisations.

Baldrige's searching questions are transposed and presented in a series of statements on individual cards within the Assessor card deck. Each card is grouped into blocks that align with the seven Baldrige Criteria Categories:

1. Leadership
2. Strategic planning
3. Customer and market focus
4. Measurement, analysis and knowledge management
5. Workforce focus
6. Process management
7. Results

The card gives all the participating team a voice and being an interactive action based activity is actually fun. Freed from excessive note taking it allows members of the team to fully engage in a heads up discussion. Different learning styles are catered for. It is a visual and physical activity as well as a mental one.

The Assessor system is reviewed and updated yearly to keep it aligned with the changes in the Baldrige Criteria. As a continuous improvement tool other aspects of the system undergo timely improvements. PYXIS encourages users of Assessor to share their experiences.

About Michael Voss

Michael Voss is the director and founder of PYXIS Consulting, an independent consultancy established in 1999 that provides focus and direction to enable organisations to achieve performance excellence. Prior to PYXIS Voss was the Business Improvement Manager of PEC (NZ) Ltd for more than 13 years. His achievements include 5 years as business improvement coach and mentor, and over 15 years in assessing companies to the NZ Business Excellence Foundation criteria for performance excellence. Michael blogs on MICHAELVOSSNZ.COM

For further information, contact Michael Voss on 0274 433 908, or [email me](mailto:) to discuss your needs

* See article: Lifting NZ Performance – Why the focus falls on management. Management Magazine, October 2007