

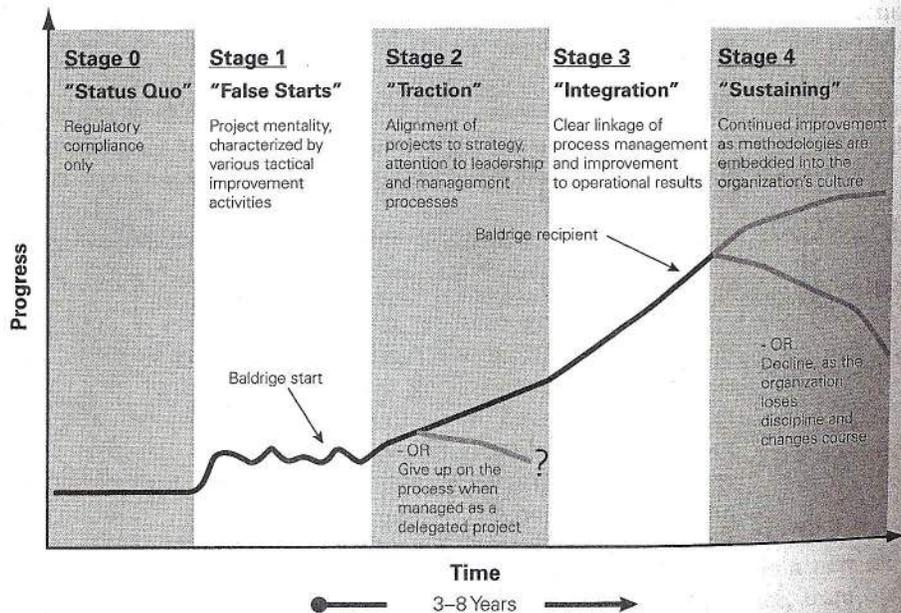
manager cited “management commitment and leadership from the top” as the key to its successful second quality initiative. The quality life cycle of this second initiative reflects its progress from adoption to maturity. This approach created strong quality dynamics, which achieved strategic alignment and deployment throughout the organization.

From this example, we observe two things:

1. Awareness that separate initiatives create a cumulative impact leads to an appreciation that selection of new quality initiatives must be based on where an organization is in the quality life cycle.
2. Understanding that the quality life-cycle elements enable an organization to apply energizing or regenerating actions proactively to successfully sustain its quality journey.

Understanding such impacts on the dynamics of quality, in particular on the characteristics of the quality life cycle, provides the capability to sustain successful quality management by strategically adopting responses based on energizing and regenerating elements.

In studying Baldrige recipients in the health care sector, a group of former Baldrige examiners and judges proposed a similar model that describes the Baldrige journey, shown in Figure 11.1.<sup>26</sup> At Stage 0, organizations opt to wait for mandates and regulations, and they implement change when required to maintain compliance. While they may experience occasional “random acts of improvement,” there is no overarching impetus to drive the organization to higher levels of performance. In Stage 1, organizations commit to a proactive approach to improvement. Initial steps



**FIGURE 11.1** BALDRIGE ROADMAP TO PERFORMANCE EXCELLENCE

tend to include learning and implementing quality improvement tools and methods. Often this project-focused phase brings new capabilities to execute initiatives that change routine practices and processes for the better. However, organizations at this stage typically reach a plateau. Leaders became frustrated with the overall impact of their continuous improvement efforts and the pace of change. For most of these organizations, projects succeed often enough, but the overall culture does not change and system-wide performance excellence is elusive. Visionary leaders recognize the inherent limitations of a project-based approach to performance improvement: slow pace of change, incremental gains, and depleted organizational energy. They seek an approach to build system integration across silos and departments in order to create a high-performance, results-oriented culture throughout their organizations.

When senior leaders became personally and actively engaged with the criteria and feedback—whether through simply answering the questions, conducting a self-assessment, or writing an application for a state or national award program—they begin to experience traction on their organizational transformation strategies (Stage 2). This phase marks the transition from the singular focus on change through projects, however well executed, to systematic evaluation and improvement of leadership approaches. Projects become more focused and aligned to organizational strategy, while leadership and management processes receive attention as well, shoring up capability to spread improvements and hardwire sustainability. As organizations become more skillful at these approaches, integration (Stage 3) begins to occur. Approaches and processes of leadership, such as values deployment and culture building, begin to link and align with strategic planning and action planning, scorecards and dashboards, job descriptions and performance review methods, and other operational processes. Nonaligned improvement initiatives are dropped or postponed as focused effort replaces frenetic activity. The Integration phase is characterized by action on the feedback, usually by incorporating it into the strategic planning process.

Finally, the sustaining stage (Stage 4) can result in two outcomes: continued improvement or decline as organizations lose focus or become distracted. Although receiving a Baldrige Award might appear to carry with it the potential for loss of momentum, many organizations renew their commitment to achieving even higher levels of performance. This may occur through continuing annual participation in a Baldrige-based award process, or through internal assessment processes, often as a first step in annual strategic planning.

## SELF-ASSESSMENT

Organizations should begin with a critical self-assessment of where they stand. Such assessment identifies strengths and areas for improvement and determines what practices will yield the most benefit. At a minimum, a self-assessment should address the following:

- *Management involvement and leadership.* To what extent are all levels of management involved?
- *Product and process design.* Do products meet customer needs? Are products designed for easy manufacturability?