Meeting the Challenges in Sustaining Business Excellence

Professor Alan Brown
School of Management
Edith Cowan University
Perth, Australia
Business Excellence
Frameworks are used because,

- Global framework
- Encompass quality principles
- A basis for continuous improvement
- Self-assessment
- External assessment
- Benchmarking
- Discipline
- Business improvement
The ABEF components

- Strategy and planning
- Leadership
- People
- Process management, improvement and innovation
- Information and knowledge
- Customer and market focus
- Success and sustainability
What are the challenges in sustaining?

Literature
- Failure (Harari, Miller and Cangemi)
- Critical success factors (Saraph et al, Tamimi, Zairi)
- Sustaining (Van der Wiele and Brown, Venkat and Nilakant)
The study

- Australian Business Excellence Award winners
- Advanced/maturity with using ABEF
- Successful performance (based on ABEF and award status)
- Mixture of industry sectors
- Interviews with main drivers
- Documents
Sample

- Financial services (Computershare)
- Construction (Doric)
- Manufacturing and services (Schindler)
- Transport (Fremantle Port)
- Aged care (Summitcare)
- Local government (City of Hobart)
- Pharmaceuticals (Tasmanian Alkaloids)
- Public sector (Main Roads WA)

All ABEF winners (many gold and silver)
Challenges
Leadership

- Maintaining drive and support
  - From senior levels
  - From a critical mass
  - By middle managers
- Ensuring consistency
  - Communication, messages
  - Especially in multi site organisations
- Communicating culture, values, actions
Criteria for leadership appointments
Routine of self assessment > action
Senior leadership “walk the talk”
MBWA, visibility
Bringing leaders together
Strategy

- Engaging managers and employees
- Making it meaningful so everyone can relate to it in their role (operationalise)
- Effective communication of strategy
- Achieving a balance - not too complex, not too much information, not too much reporting
- Ensuring consistency in application throughout the organisation
- Participation in developing it
- Prioritising
Solutions

- Strategy development with cross-section of participants
- Plans on a page (POP)
- Work plans, diagnostic not reporting
- MBWA discussing strategic matters
- Prioritise strategic goals
- Link strategy and operations
People

- Handling cynics – “we’ve done it all before”
- Personalising it - What about me? - How does it apply to my job?
- Effective communication
- Achieving engagement – what’s in it for me? (managers and employees)
Solutions

- Getting people together regularly
- Open culture
- Build into performance management
- Focus on operational actions
Processes

- Beating silo thinking
- Instilling CI mindsets
- Ensuring quality is everyone’s business
- Building and maintaining teams
- Focusing on key processes (big picture approach)
Solutions

- Interdivisional/Cross functional teams
- Build quality into all leadership positions
- Big picture process improvement
- Reducing number of processes
- Process mapping, simplification
- Regular self-assessment
Information

- Making it easily accessible within the organisation
- Capturing tacit knowledge
- Ensuring people are not overloaded
- Being selective in producing, collecting and providing data and information
Solutions

- Intranet
- Exception based reporting
- Focus on information to assist meeting customer needs
Customers

- Providing timely and accurate information on customers
- Ensuring that everyone is aware of their role in delivering customer service