



What's in a Name? In this case, an act of Congress.

Since 1987 the President of the United States has presented an award annually to a highly select group of organizations judged to be the finest in their sector, based on a series of exacting criteria. The Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, created by Public Law 100-107, has honored organizations such as Motorola, Boeing, the Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company, Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital and FedEx for their achievements.

As the award approached its 20th anniversary, the Department of Commerce - the government agency in charge of the award - decided it was necessary to apply some of its own strict criteria to the award itself. Specifically, the department wanted to confirm that the word "quality" still resonated with American organizations, despite the rapid evolution of business standards and practices in the past 20 years. The Baldrige Program decided, in effect, to conduct a branding audit of itself.

After receiving RFP's from several companies, the Baldrige Program selected Sterling Park Group and its partner, Optimization Group, to conduct a four-phased study. The study included perception research and conceptualization research conducted online. Then, utilizing IdeaMap®, a proprietary conjoint analysis research tool, a quantitative measurement was made of all research elements.

The name for the Award had to align with changes to the Baldrige Criteria and also needed to consider the sectors of Education, Healthcare and Non-profit Organizations that had been added since the award's inception. Any new name, should one be chosen, would have to be approved by a majority vote in the U.S. Congress. The research study, therefore, had to encompass an extensive range of subjective variables, yet produce statistically accurate clarity.

After a thorough analysis that included a multitude of new name options and positioning lines, several name and tagline options were presented to the Secretary of Commerce for consideration. The Secretary has, in turn, been working with Administration officials and Congressional leaders to identify a name and tagline that is acceptable to all stakeholders.

The branding study has been a valuable tool in providing input for these discussions.

QUICK FACTS:

Who is Malcolm Baldrige?

Malcolm Baldrige was the U.S. Secretary of Commerce from 1981 until his death in a rodeo accident in July 1987. Baldrige was a proponent of quality management as a key to this country's prosperity and long-term strength. In recognition of his contributions, Congress named the award in his honor.

What is the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award?

The Baldrige Award is given by the President of the United States to businesses - manufacturing and service, small and large - and to education, healthcare and non-profit organizations that apply and are judged to be outstanding in seven areas: leadership; strategic planning; customer and market focus; measurement, analysis, and knowledge management; human resource focus; process management and results.