Homeland Security Assessment Manual: An Organizational Assessment Based on Baldrige Criteria

by Donald C. Fisher

Milwaukee, WI: ASQ Quality Press (2004) ISBN 0873896 40 8
(223 pages, \$60)

Reviewed by William Parrish

Donald Fisher's recent work, *The Homeland Security Assessment Manual* offers security professionals working in both private and public organizations a set of tools to assess levels of security preparedness.

Fisher bases the development of his homeland security assessment on the 'Baldrige criteria'; these give organizational planners and strategists the framework in which to examine organizational readiness in light of their homeland security responsibilities. Since 9/11 almost every public and private entity has roles and responsibilities in homeland security, whether personnel awareness, aggressive physical security actions, or measures to enhance supply chain security.

Fisher's manual, however, is not a stand-alone document, and is thus probably mis-titled. Other than a brief mention (found in the introduction) of the National Strategy for Homeland Security and the Homeland Security Advisory System, the book lacks the detail required for security professionals working in the field. Indeed, the reader lacking established competencies associated with homeland security strategies, including prevention, protection, detection, disruption, and response and recover, will find it difficult to assess their organization's homeland security readiness. For example, the book does not afford the reader a ready answer to the following important question: 'How does your organization reinforce the use of new homeland security knowledge and skills on the job?' This is because the manual lacks sufficient supporting material which addresses proper homeland security skill sets that must be understood before someone can make an honest evaluation or assessment of organizational readiness.

If a corporation were to use Fisher's manual, it should first charge its security team with the task of conducting in-depth research on the application of homeland security principles, prior to writing an assessment plan using the Baldrige criteria. This should not be viewed as a total drawback, especially if the team or task force is comprised of mid- to upper-level management. This would offer positive results and certainly raise the level of security requirements at the senior management level, which is the goal of every corporate security director.

I would recommend Fisher's book to corporate security offices as a good starting point for building a process to evaluate their organization's level of preparedness for homeland security. However, it must be augmented with a set of salient 'meat and potatoes' homeland security principles in order to provide an accurate assessment. Hopefully, in a second edition, Fisher will team up with someone with a strong security background; this would result in a 'one-stop' product that leads an organization to achieve success in their respective roles and responsibilities in homeland security.

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