

Steven M. Baldrige, P.E., S.E.

Business Leadership Hawaii '03, a Pacific Business News event honoring the achievers in business excellence.

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**By Nina Wu**  
Pacific Business News

In just eight years, Baldrige & Associates Structural Engineering Inc. has enjoyed a steady growth of about 25 percent in revenues annually. This is due, in part, to Baldrige's personalized approach.

"We try to be structural collaborators rather than structural engineers," said Steven Baldrige, president of Baldrige & Associates. "We try to find out what the client is looking for."

Five engineers could draw up a different design for one problem, according to Baldrige. No two approaches are ever the same.

Whereas some firms have been operating the same way for the last 15 years, Baldrige is interested in learning the latest in the industry. Not all of them will work for Hawaii, but the idea is to adopt the ones that do.

"We try to take the best of what's done locally and mesh that with techniques on the mainland," Baldrige said.

Instead of waiting for opportunities in the market to come along, Baldrige makes an effort to search out and create them.

"We create opportunities instead of responding to them," Baldrige said.

For example, Baldrige has invested in professional training for the anti-terrorism and force protection design, making it one of the few firms in Hawaii to specialize in this area. This knowledge has made Baldrige one of the state's leading firms in designing military facilities.

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Besides creating a "blast" testing program, Baldrige is writing a design guide for "progressive collapse design." It also has created an alliance of contractors, suppliers and designers who can build warehouse space, for which there is a growing demand in the Hawaii market.

To maintain its competitive edge, Baldrige says it is willing to invest twice as much per engineer for its technical library, computer software equipment and continuing education. The 15-member staff is included in the planning and decision-making process. Senior project managers also are sent to the mainland for leadership training.

Besides that, there is a quarterly bonus program that rewards top performers. Employees can use company time to work in community programs that Baldrige is involved in and every once in awhile, they might find a gift certificate to a local restaurant after receiving praise from a client.

Baldrige & Associates was instrumental in bringing the architecture-construction-engineering mentor program to Kailua and Roosevelt high schools. Baldrige sits on the board of directors of Adult Friends for Youth, a nonprofit dedicated to working with at-risk youth.