

iTEA™ International Team
Excellence Award

powered by

ASQE™

2021-2022

JUDGES REPORT

CASE STUDIES. BENCHMARKING. **RESULTS. RECOGNITION.**

Introduction

Thousands of teams from companies across the globe have participated in the **International Team Excellence Awards (ITEA)** program, demonstrating key areas of impact, including customer satisfaction, waste reduction, and employee morale. For over 35 years, this program has been rooted in quality history and recognized high-performing team achievements, with a focus on improvements in business performance. As a part of **ASQ Excellence (ASQE)**, a trade association, the ITEA program serves global organizations with a means to:



EXPLORE

Understand best practices by using ITEA criteria



SHOWCASE

Share your project's examples of continuous improvement success



BE RECOGNIZED

Award employees and motivate your workforce to pursue organizational excellence at all levels



BENCHMARK

Evaluate how your project measures up against ITEA criteria

The mission of ASQE is to inspire excellence, providing programs and benefits to serve this purpose. ASQ and ASQE complement and enhance each other by providing member value for both individuals and organizations. The societies are directly connected through the rich 75-year history of ASQ to develop both resources and networks, focusing on quality and best practices to pursue excellence. The ITEA program directly supports ASQE's key strategic initiatives such as advancing the field of quality and inspiring organizational excellence best practices.

QUALITY EXPERT JUDGES – A VIEW FROM 2021-2022

ASQE is proud to feature four quality subject matter experts in our 2021-2022 ITEA Judges Report, focused on key findings and takeaways from their volunteer participation. Performing a crucial role within the ITEA program's success, ASQE greatly appreciates the 85 ASQ member volunteers that served as judges throughout the 2021-2022 program cycle. These select experts represent decades of service to ITEA, in addition to decades of experience leading organizations in their pursuit of excellence through quality. Explore these judges' insights into how teams can best perform and understand their contributions to performance excellence.

Featured Interviews with:

BRENT BUNNELL, CMQ/OE, CQE

Executive Director,
Global Quality Center of Excellence
Sealed Air Corporation

DAMIAN BOZZACCO

Quality Manager
M-B Companies, Inc.

PATTI TRAPP, CQA, CQE

Quality Director,
Product Integration and Continuous Improvement
Mercury Marine - Brunswick Corporation

GLENN WALTERS

Owner
GW Enterprises

QUESTION: *From your experience and observations as a judge, can you describe how you have seen quality methodology directly impact a team's performance?*

GW: A fundamental principle of quality is participation and teamwork by everyone in the organization. I use the definition that a team is a "small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common

purpose, a set of performance goals, and an approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable" – in short, a group of people working together towards a common goal. Or as one of Dr. W. Edwards Deming's 14 Points of Management states, "Break down barriers between departments. Create cross-functional teams so everyone can understand each other's perspective." Whether teams are trying to solve an organizational problem or seeking improvement, successful team characteristics include having a clear purpose, direction, and communication. To me, this includes clearly defined roles and responsibilities, a plan, well-defined decision procedures, stakeholder involvement, and aiming for an enjoyable experience.

QUESTION: *As a quality professional, what do you feel is the most important aspect to remember about quality's role in developing a team?*

BB: Quality's role in the structure and development of teams is critical. As the primary advocate within the organization for the customer, quality's participation in team development helps to ensure that the voice of the customer (VOC) is directly or indirectly represented within the team's stakeholder set. This directly impacts the ultimate results of the team. Quality can, and should, act as a key resource to identify the structure and makeup of improvement-focused teams, ensuring that the team is not only focused on VOC, but also includes a breadth of knowledge, experience, authority, and appropriate level of corporate recognition to ensure team success. In

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QUALITY EXPERT JUDGES – A VIEW FROM 2021-2022

many cases, it will be quality resources that manage and drive these teams, and a knowledge of team processes and dynamics will be paramount for success. The ITEA criteria that has been developed and refined over the years in the program provides an excellent foundation to deliver the roadmap for how to go about identifying and selecting the team members that will have the highest potential for success.

QUESTION: *In your experience, how have you seen the criteria give clarity to what a high-performing team looks like?*

PT: Having been involved with ITEA as a judge, master judge, master trainer, and master scorekeeper for 15+ years, I have been a part of the criteria evolving – from being broad in nature, to having very specific items that might be interpreted more as solid checkpoints for *what to do* when executing a project, to the most current framework inspired by **Baldrige**. All versions of the criteria have no doubt benefited teams and their organizations, but as ASQE and the quality community is known to do, we continually evolve and strive for performance excellence as well.

The 2021-2022 ITEA criteria focuses on *how* teams move from one facet of their project to another, regardless of the methodology being applied. This gives teams more flexibility to execute and maximize the benefits of the project for their organization. It also allows teams more flexibility in how they present their project because the criteria looks at what decisions the team made and what prompted them to make the decisions they did as they moved through the project. These checkpoints support—but also demand—the team to be high performing with a well-scoped project and solid foundation of data.

QUESTION: *For teams that need improvement, are there a few tips that you can recommend in using the ITEA criteria to benchmark their performance against?*

PT: First, to benefit from the criteria, the team needs to fully understand the *intent* of the criteria *before* executing the project, and to consider the criteria as part of the project plan and execution. Too often, we have seen teams complete a project, then try to match their project back to the criteria, which results in lots of criteria gaps, awkward replication to attempt to fill these gaps, and usually a difficult-to-follow presentation.

Second, teams sometimes think more is better—more tools, more comprehensive slide contents, etc. This may be driven by an organization’s “required” list of fundamental tools; sometimes more just seems impressive. If a project scope warrants appropriate extensive tools, great, but teams tend to spend more time and effort showing *what* they used but not *why* these were the best tools or *how* they progressed through the project to arrive at decisions based on the data generated using these tools. The over-abundance of slide content can be difficult to absorb and can even take away from telling the story of the project. Instead, tell the project story through the presentation as though you are using a map to go from one place to another. Creating a visual story that is easy to follow helps benchmarking be more effective to the team and organization. Knowing where you are is the starting point but knowing where you are going is the objective.

QUESTION: *From your perspective, how have you seen ITEA teams best describe their continuous improvement efforts?*

DB: Over the years, I have judged countless team presentations against the ITEA criteria. Team present-

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ations range from first-time submittals from an organization trying their best to understand the criteria and put together a project story, to well-polished presentations from organizations that have been using the ITEA framework for many years. Regardless of their experience, teams that best describe their continuous improvement efforts are those that provide a cohesive story of their project. The project story should flow from problem or gap identification through all phases of the project, culminating in project results, maintaining the gains, and communication with all stakeholder groups. The use of data and visual graphics to paint a full picture of the team's thorough understanding of the project helps the audience better understand the project story and the team's efforts.

QUESTION: *As a judge, what types of results do you look for when teams describe their use of quality to achieve their goals?*

GW: In over 20+ years as a judge with the ITEA program, I have seen many organizations achieve significant, tangible benefits by using teams that work together for a common purpose, and by using a model for improvement that they have chosen. When talking about the team experience, Peter Senge said, "When you ask people about what it is like being part of a great team, what is most striking is the meaningfulness of the experience. People talk about being part of something larger than themselves, of being connected, of being generative. It becomes quite clear that, for many, their experiences as part of truly great teams stand out as singular periods of life lived to the fullest." It is my belief that using the ASQE ITEA program for organizational improvement can create both truly positive organizational results as well as memorable experiences for teams and individual team members.

QUESTION: *As a judge, what do you look for in a team that is demonstrating a mature level of performance?*

DB: Within the context of ITEA judging, team maturity can sometimes be overlooked. In addition to achieving high ratings in the ITEA maturity model scale, "mature" teams understand the intent of the criteria and do not simply provide evidence that they meet the criteria. Teams can demonstrate additional levels of maturity by connecting the dots from one criteria item to the next or tying the entire project together with illustrative examples that build on each other. This is especially valuable during the team's project walkthrough, where they explain in detail the story of their project.

QUESTION: *Thinking about the future of quality, what do you feel will most impact the performance of teams?*

BB: As global digitalization continues to exponentially increase, and the ease by which data can be collected continues to generate ever-expanding volumes and complexity of information, the role of quality is more critical than ever. While information technology provides cutting-edge tools to gather and share massive amounts of critical information in real-time, the ability to assess and process that data requires the quality organization to provide an analytical backbone that effectively manages and structures the data in a way that provides the right information to the right entities at the right time. In the world of team-based improvement efforts, keying in on the most critical data will often mean the difference between success and failure. In the future, quality will continue to be a key player in helping to build and guide problem solving for teams, and provide leadership the leverage to empower their teams by continuously improving dynamics.

Key Takeaways

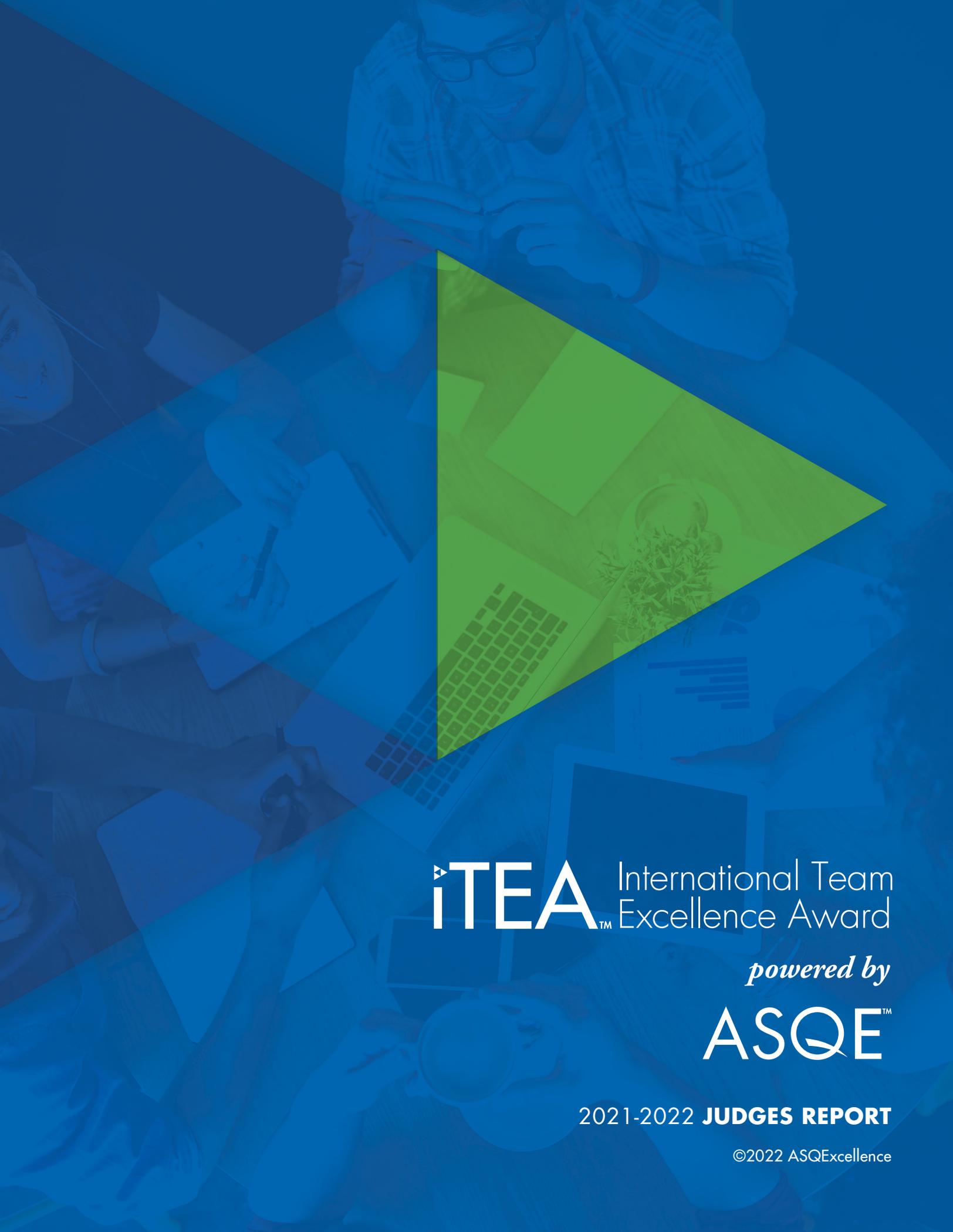
Per the 2021-2022 ITEA judges' feedback, there are several key takeaways that any organization can utilize to improve their team's performance. Especially within times of significant disruption and change, it is helpful to keep these guiding points in mind to foster high-performing teams:

- Breaking down barriers is essential to team success – a clear, shared purpose and communication is empowering.
- All team members should understand what the full intention is (the *why*) before starting any type of project, and must consider voice of the customer (VOC) feedback to guide efforts and desired end results.
- Utilize data and graphics to help tell the story of results or performance success – this can help with both internal and external stakeholders to gain buy-in or alignment.
- Purpose motivates a team to perform and succeed, but the team must use an agreed-upon methodology to guide them.
- Use a systems approach within the team to connect dots, demonstrate value, and analyze and process data to track critical information.



Interested in more resources and tools to help your teams succeed? The ASQE **Insights on Excellence® research** is full of actionable guidance to help organizations and teams in their pursuit of quality excellence. You can also visit asq.org to access Quality Resources in a wide range of topics, including articles, standards, books, tools, and learning courses.

Looking for more organization-wide excellence resources and tools? Contact ASQE today to learn more.



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