

**The Relentless Pursuit of ‘Healthy’ Business Performance**

You’ve heard the cliché that healthy weight can be achieved only by living the right lifestyle, not by dieting. As hackneyed as that cliché is, however, it’s also a profound truth. No less an authority than the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention succinctly define that healthy lifestyle in a one-page PDF appropriately titled “[It’s Not A Diet, It’s a Lifestyle](https://www.cdc.gov/media/subtopic/matte/pdf/031210-Healthy-Weight.pdf).” This truth is borne out by the large number of people who often regain lost weight when ending their diets.

Recognizing this reality, Weight Watchers in September 2018—after being part of the popular culture for 65 years—[officially changed its name to WW](http://fortune.com/2018/09/24/weight-watchers-name-change/) to demonstrate that it’s real focus is helping people attain a “wellness that works” lifestyle.

While this “it’s a lifestyle not a diet” metaphor has become somewhat extended, it’s really, really important. Senior managers responsible for organizational success need to internalize this lesson’s applicability to the pursuit of high-performance in business.

Especially in today’s environment of enormous, continuous and unpredictable change—popularly called “VUCA” for volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity—achieving high performance in the context of your industry, and maintaining that edge in your competitive set, requires a lifestyle of continuous improvement that, like WW membership, should never end.

**Start Your Pursuit of High Performance with an ‘Annual Physical’**

To extend the metaphor still further, if continuous performance improvement is a lifestyle not a diet, the first step should be to get the equivalent of an annual physical.

Your own annual check-up is a thorough examination in which your doctor analyzes all aspects of your health and well-being. Any resulting treatments, though, focus only on areas of concern (if any), such as high blood pressure, low blood sugar or high cholesterol. Your organization’s “performance physical” should be a thorough examination of all aspects of your business operations to assess their health (performance) in relation to other known healthy specimens (industry best practices), as well as to confirm that your operations are aligned with organizational objectives.

The Capability Maturity Model Integration (CMMI) V2.0 is a performance-improvement framework that companies of all types and sizes (e,g., commercial, government agencies, small businesses) are increasingly turning to for just such a “performance physical”—but continuously, not just once a year. What CMMI V2.0 brings to an organization’s performance check-up is a core focus on business value creation that runs like a spine up and down the model framework.

Beginning with the practice statements—which are derived from studying a multitude of healthy high-performance organizations—all aspects of the CMMI V2.0 model tie to “business value statements.” Employees use practice statements to objectively determine what activities the organization is performing and at what level of maturity. The business value statements embedded within the practices define what return on investment (ROI) the business should get when performing a given process that meets a model practice correctly; if there’s no evidence supporting that ROI, then the organization’s process isn’t performing—at least not well. This is where the CMMI outpaces the competition, because these value statements enable the ability to determine HOW well.

CMMI V2.0’s performance reports also tie explicitly to the business objectives, success indicators, and results, as seen through the lens of these value statements. The performance reports identify process or practice issues affecting the “health” of organizational performance in specific areas and offer insights into possible “treatments.”

Even CMMI V2.0 appraisals tie to business value statements. Instead of determining whether or not a specific process is compliant with a practice, CMMI V2.0 appraisals focus specifically on performance and business value achievement—and only in the context of practices that are relevant to your particular organization. Further, because appraisals are focused on business results, when healthy results are absent, appraisers can help you root out the real causes and, like the performance reports, identify possible fixes.

**Benchmarking Organizational Performance Health**

Because CMMI V2.0 is based on a proven set of global best practices for specific functions, it enables businesses and public-sector organizations to compare their processes against others in their own industry. That helps organizations quickly identify the practices that directly impact key aspects of business performance such as quality, cost and time to market, and then drive performance improvements focused in those areas.

By integrating organizational practices, performance analyses, appraisals and benchmarking all through the lens of business value creation, CMMI V2.0 creates a holistic view of enterprise performance health that is also very fine-grained and comprehensive. Establishing a solid base of disciplined practices gives organizations a clearer understanding of their own capabilities, makes best use of limited resources and budgets, and enables them to be both nimble and systematically innovative. Consequently, CMMI V2.0 can help organizations not only identify obstacles to healthy performance and fix them, but also help them shift rapidly when business conditions change.

In all these ways, CMMI V2.0 defines for organizations a lifestyle of continuous performance improvement that never ends.