

Practical Process Roger Tregear

Steepening the curve

Do you remember the time when having something 'go viral' was a good thing, a time when being on an exponential curve gave cause to celebrate?

While 'going viral' may not be a popular aspiration right now, it is still what we want to happen to our best ideas. There is a saying 'never waste a crisis' as it can provide the opportunity and impetus to make positive, and perhaps dramatic, changes. We just need to look at the examples of rapid production of medical equipment in novel environments around the world as a small but significant demonstration of what we can do if we put our collective minds to it and think differently about problems, solutions, and opportunities. Could we invert and repurpose what we learn in frustrating the spread of the 'bad' to encourage the spread of the 'good'?

Without doubt, there will be many examples as we go through this crisis of other 'immune systems' being eradicated, clearing the way for new operating models and modes of collaboration. Our challenge, of course, is to ensure we retain the positive changes and embed them as our sustained way of working without organizational and societal immune systems successfully defending the status quo.

Many individuals and communities have been profoundly impacted by COVID19 and we cannot minimize the personal and economic losses that will be felt for months, for years, for lifetimes. All experiences are different, and some of us have lost a lot while many of us have been very fortunate.

While deeply respecting all those losses, we can also observe and learn. Some understandings will come with the benefit of time and distance; some lessons will benefit from the immediacy of experience.

What can we learn now from our current experiences in dealing with viral spread? Can we find a sliver of silver for the future in these current dark clouds? Can we invert our current experiences to find new ways to start rather than to stop something important?

What insights can we gain now from this largest single change management project the world has ever undertaken?

Can we use our experiences in dealing with the SARS-CoV-2 virus and the resultant COVID-19 and related diseases to develop a model for the development of *positive virulence* that aids us in spreading and sustaining the impact of important beneficial ideas? What if we wanted a *positive virus* to spread?

Are there process management and improvement lessons we can learn from the current pandemic and our responses to it? Can we get effective process thinking and action to spread more easily through our communities?

To help with that inverted mindset, here is what might be the future *World Improvement Organization (WIO) Situation Report #42* dated 5 May 2025.

World Improvement Organization +APM-24 Virus Task Force Situation Report 42 May 5, 2025

Background

In partnership with other organizations and countries in the United Nations system, the World Improvement Organization (WIO) continues its vital work to encourage the sustained infection of the whole world with the +APM-24 novel management virus.

The Positive Advanced Process Management (+APM) virus has long been known to exist in small pockets at random locations around the world. Research indicates that it may have been prevalent for millennia citing the *Pyramid of Pkpi* at Notgiza as evidence that the ancients held process practitioners to be more God than human.

In late 2024 the WIO advised all member states that an outbreak of +APM-24 had been detected simultaneously in many countries and that members should take urgent steps to ensure herd infection and eliminate the inoculative effects of endemic organizational immune systems. A pandemic of sustained organizational performance improvement has been declared.

The Chief Process Officer (CPO) of the WIO, Dr B. P. More, encouraged all countries to *"track the uptake of +APM-24 strategies and to urgently take all possible steps to steepen the curve."*

The symptoms caused by +APM-24 continue to be a persistent desire to understand and improve business processes resulting in a demonstrable and sustained improvement in organizational performance, nurturing of a culture of collaboration, and development of significant internal capability to continuously manage and improve processes.

Currently available data indicate that I_0 , the basic improvement number, of +APM-24 is 1.8. I_0 can be thought of as the expected number of performance-improved organizations directly generated by one case in a population where all organizations are susceptible to infection.

Dr. More suggests that to ensure the rapid and sustained spread of the beneficial +APM-24 virus effects a much higher I_0 is required.

The infectivity of +APM-24 has been shown to be much higher in some circumstances and the incidence of organizational performance improvement caused by the pathogen has been quite variable.

Studies coordinated through the WIO Office of the CPO continue to determine what circumstances are optimum to develop and sustain MPV, maximum positive virulence, for +APM-24.

WIO is encouraging all organizations to urgently take active and coordinated steps to increase and sustain an I_0 of at least 50 to ensure the steepening of the curve.

Situation Update

This *WIO Situation Report 42* is issued to update member states and all interested parties on the current ⁺APM-24 position and related WIO recommendations.

To encourage ongoing spread of ⁺APM-24 performance improvement and the accumulation of resulting organizational benefits, WIO strongly recommends that organizations take immediate steps to strengthen or begin the following initiatives:

- ❖ Ongoing communication, using multiple channels (briefings, hotline, websites, publications, social media etc.), explaining the theory and practice of process-based management and what that means for the organization, its people, and their teams, is of paramount importance.
- ❖ Community transfer of performance improvement symptoms should be encouraged through group gatherings and social closeness. It is only through the sharing of positive process management and improvement experiences that all stakeholders can build resistance to immunity.
- ❖ Person-to-person spread is the most effective way to maintain the rate of active process management infection in an organization. Organizations should develop plans for active communities of interest, information forums, internal conferences, project briefings, and other ways for staff to meet and share ideas and stories.
- ❖ For many, the instinctive response to change is to be fearful, to deny the reality of the benefits, or to question the motives of 'those in charge'. Organizations must listen to such people, hear their concerns, and calmly and consistently provide information to allay their understandable, and sometimes justified, fears.
- ❖ Personal exposure equipment (PEE) should be provided to all ⁺APM-24 positive staff to enable them to fulfill their role as spreaders of improvement ideas. Adequate training in the use of PEE must be provided in a timely manner.
- ❖ Proactive contact planning should be encouraged to ensure that the maximum number of people throughout an organization is exposed to the ⁺APM-24 pathogen and its proven benefits. Contact tracing is vital to ensure high contact penetration.
- ❖ In these times of great change, the psychological wellbeing of all stakeholders, especially those who test negative to ⁺APM-24, should be carefully monitored and action taken to provide effective and ongoing support.
- ❖ Modeling of processes is vitally important as an integrated part of an effective process management and improvement plan. A consistent modeling framework is needed, and all assumptions must be clearly stated. Belief in the models and an understanding of their limitations will be vitally important in sustaining the positive benefits of ⁺APM-24 contagion.
- ❖ Process hygiene must be maintained so that model currency and completeness remain clear, model usefulness is tested, and governance mechanisms are well understood by all.

- ❖ Performance measurement of the impacts of +APM-24 must continue. It will not be possible to steepen the curve without clear evidence that there is a proven and positive return for the effort involved.
- ❖ Testing must continue to guard against the development of anti-change-bodies and so that positive viral effects can be tracked and organizational maturity in harvesting advanced process management benefits can be enhanced.

WIO remains confident that the current wave of organizational performance improvement will be sustained and encourages all organizations and their stakeholders to remain vigilant in ensuring that the benefits of the +APM-24 performance improvement pandemic are optimized and sustained.

What other insights have you gained? What have you seen happen during this period that might be repurposed towards improving organizational performance? Please share your ideas in the comments.

Stay protected in your current world and think about how you might use this experience to shape new ways of organizational life.

[My thanks to colleagues whose wise guidance about this column was confidently sought and generously given: [Jo Tregear](#), [Dan O'Neill](#), [Sandeep Johal](#), [Hannelie Eksteen](#), [Sandra Moorhead](#), [Abdulrahman AlForaih](#), and [Daniel Weatherhead](#). Any errors or misjudgments remain [all my own work](#).]