



**CEBMa**  
*center for*  
**Evidence-Based Management**

**Strategic Policy Plan  
2016 - 2017**

## **Preface**

The Center for Evidence-Based Management (CEBMA) was founded in 2011 as a non-profit organization by an international group of management scholars and practitioners. Its primary mission was to promote evidence-based practice in the field of management (“Helping managers and organizations make better decisions”). In order to achieve this mission, the Center would function as a platform for the development of evidence-based practice (EBP) in the domain of management, where key players could join forces to develop an overarching frame of reference, set up general guidelines, and, above all, provide support to managers, teachers, and academics.

The Center has been very successful – it has the active support of a large group of leading scholars from prominent universities and provides free support and resources to practitioners through a website that is visited by more than 10,000 people per month. In addition, the Center has given hundreds of talks across the UK, US, and other countries, run numerous workshops and in-company training sessions, and helped several universities to set up EBP programs.

Although CEBMA has been successful so far, it faces three major challenges. The first is funding. CEBMA’s operational annual costs are around 120,000 euros, but to truly fulfill its mission CEBMA needs at least 250,000 euros per year. The second challenge is time. CEBMA is a small organization with a limited number of staff who can dedicate their time only to a limited number of activities and projects. The third, and perhaps most fundamental, challenge is the fast-growing popularity and uptake of EBP in our domain.

This strategic business plan is an attempt to address these challenges. It is a frame of reference that helps us to prioritize and make strategic choices. However, we also invite the members of CEBMA’s academic council, CEBMA’s fellows, and all others who support CEBMA to read this plan. We are open to your suggestions.

Eric Barends, Managing Director

Rob Briner, Scientific Director

## 1. Market Positioning

The mission of CEBMa is “*helping people in organizations make better decisions*”. Our vision is “*a society where evidence-based practice is a defining feature of what it means to be a professional in business and non-profit organizations*”. As described on our website, CEBMa wants to achieve this mission by 1) promoting and 2) teaching EBP in the domain of management: explaining to people what it is and why we need it, and teaching people how do it. Although the uptake of EBP is still slow, its popularity is growing. As a result, EBP runs the risk of becoming a poorly understood, poorly implemented fad. To prevent this from happening, CEBMa needs to position itself as the pre-eminent authority on EBP in management, setting the standard against which both managers (organizations) and teachers (educational institutes) can evaluate their practice.

*Objective 1: By the end of 2016 for CEBMa to have positioned itself in all of its publications and presentations as the leading authority on EBP in the field of management.*

*Objective 2: By the end of 2016 for CEBMa to have developed a framework for EBP skills that can be used by teachers and/or educational institutions as a guideline and quality standard for teaching evidence-based practice.*

*Objective 3: By the end of 2016 for CEBMa to have developed an evaluation tool that can be used by managers and/or organizations to assess the evidence-base of their decision-making processes.*

*Objective 4: By mid-2017 for CEBMa to have developed an accreditation standard for it to use to accredit courses on evidence-based practice.*

*Objective 5: By mid-2017 for CEBMa to have developed a guideline for conducting Rapid Evidence Assessments (REAs) that serves as a quality standard in management.*

On CEBMa’s website a third area of focus is mentioned: consulting. Although CEBMa has conducted several evaluations of projects and supported several organizations by conducting Rapid Evidence Assessments, our main focus is first and foremost education. In order to differentiate ourselves from consulting firms and to emphasize our position as the leading authority, CEBMa will therefore position itself as an educational institute rather than a consulting firm – instead of advising managers and organizations a solution to their problems, we will instead teach them how to solve their problems themselves.

*Objective 6: By the end of 2016 for CEBMa to have positioned itself in all publications and presentations as an educational institution.*

## 2. Target group

At the inaugural meeting of the academic council in 2011 it was determined that CEBMa’s target group would include academia. However, as Neil Walshe, member of CEBMa’s academic council rightly pointed out, evidence-based practice is not an academic topic, it is a managerial topic. In addition, we have noticed that academics tend to focus on abstract, theoretical aspects of EBP that have limited relevance to practice. Finally, for academics there seem to be few incentives to become involved (primary research is still valued more highly than secondary research), and most academic associations (e.g. the Academy of Management) still do not seem to fully understand what EBP entails.

*Objective 7: From now on, publications and presentations (including seminars and workshops) in the realm of academia will have a low priority, unless they are directly related to teaching. Instead CEBMa will focus on publications and presentations that reach practitioners and/or the society at large.*

### **3. Services**

In the past CEBMa has provided different types of services for managers, academics, consultants, teachers, organizations, and universities. Guided by our mission and market position described above, CEBMa will distinguish between and focus on the following three areas: organizations/corporations, educational institutions, and individual practitioners.

#### **3.1. Organizations**

##### 1. Awareness session

An awareness session involves an interactive, fun, and challenging one- to two-hour meeting, during which the basic principles of EBP are discussed (what it is, why we need it, common misconceptions, etc.); practical examples are also provided. Based on the outcome (does it resonate with the target group?) and the budget available, an awareness session will typically be followed by a training and coaching program.

##### 2. Basic training and coaching program

The basic training program involves four (two-hour) small group and problem-based learning sessions, in which participants will learn EBP principles and modes of operation. The basic (group) coaching program supports the participants in managing a practical issue, project, or change initiative according to the principles of EBP. Each (two-hour) coaching session will be held immediately after the specific training session it supports.

##### 3. Advanced training and coaching program

During the basic training and coaching program, gaps in the organization's EBP capacity and/or the manager's EBP skills will be identified. Based on the outcome and available budget, the basic program can be followed by an advanced program focused on a specific skill, such as conducting a Rapid Evidence Assessment.

##### 4. Rapid Evidence Assessments

CEBMa supports organizations by conducting a Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA), a method of drawing together and critically evaluating the best available scientific evidence on a specific topic or question within a limited time frame. Conducting REAs, however, only contributes indirectly to CEBMa's mission. An organization's request to conduct an REA will therefore always be followed by CEBMa offering an advanced training and coaching program to teach people within the organization how to conduct their own REA.

#### **3.2. Educational institutions**

##### 1. Awareness session

An awareness session in an educational setting is similar to an awareness session in an organizational/corporate environment, but it focuses on teaching EBP. It covers why do we need it, what does it entail, and how does it fit within the curriculum? Based on the outcome (does it resonate with the faculty members?) and the budget available, an awareness session can be followed by a program for curriculum development

##### 2. Curriculum development program

Although CEBMa has been involved in the development of the curriculum at several universities, this program is still in the early stages.

##### 3. Accreditation and certification

As set down in Objective 4, by the end of 2016 CEBMa aims to have developed an accreditation standard to accredit courses on evidence-based practice. Using this system, CEBMa will be able to accredit educational institutions as well as individual teachers.

#### 4. Teaching

When an educational institute has limited experience of teaching EBP, CEBMa can provide courses on EBP (or aspects of it). These courses can be integrated into an existing program or offered as an elective.

### **3.3. Individual practitioners**

#### 1. Open courses

At the moment only a small number of educational institutions offer courses on EBP. In addition, most of these courses can only be attended by those officially registered as students. There are also no open executive courses on EBP apart from the online course modules provided by CEBMa (see below). It therefore is CEBMa's ambition to provide open courses that can be attended by individual practitioners.

#### 2. Membership

CEBMa provides five types of memberships that correspond to a specific level of knowledge of EBP. By becoming a member, individual practitioners receive access to online course modules, research databases, individual support and advice, and a network of other EBP professionals. In addition, the practitioner's name, professional profile, photograph, and a link to his/her own website will be visible on CEBMa's membership directory.

*Objective 8: By the end of 2016 for CEBMa's website to provide a clear overview of all its services.*

*Objective 9: By 2017 for CEBMa to have developed a curriculum development program for educational institutions*

*Objective 10: By mid-2017 for CEBMa to have developed an open course for unaffiliated individual practitioners*

### **3. Products**

Since its establishment CEBMa has developed several products to support the uptake and application of EBP. An overview is provided below.

#### 1. Online courses

In the last two years CEBMa has developed, in cooperation with Carnegie Melon's Open Learning Initiative, two course modules on EBP. Entitled "Basic Principles" and "Critical Appraisal of Research Findings", these modules are freely available to individual practitioners and teachers. A third module on experiential evidence is in development. In addition, CEBMa provides an online course on statistics.

#### 2. Apps

In the past year CEBMa has developed the "CAT Manager" app to help practitioners to critically appraise research findings. A beta version of CEBMa's "ASK Manager" app, which helps practitioners to identify evidence gaps in a decision-making process, was launched in August 2016. Finally, an app for Bayesian decision-making is in development.

#### 3. Instruction book

CEBMa has frequently considered writing a handbook on how to practice EBP, but until now this has not been seen as a priority. Due to the development of the online modules, however, we now have material that could be used as chapters in such a guide. It is therefore CEBMa's ambition to extend the available text with additional chapters and publish a handbook within the coming year.

#### 4. Online database with evidence summaries

In order to improve decision-making in management, CEBMa is constructing a freely accessible online database of evidence summaries that includes systematic reviews and meta-analyses, as well as rapid

evidence assessments (REAs) and critically appraised topics (CATs). A pilot version of this database was launched in 2015 and now contains more than 400 MAs and SRs. In the coming year CEBMa will, in cooperation with Science For Work, extend the database and add plain English summaries of the most relevant MAs and SRs.

*Objective 11: By the end of 2016 for CEBMa's website to have provided a clear overview of all its products.*

*Objective 12: By the end of 2016 for CEBMa to have developed an online module on experiential evidence.*

*Objective 13: By the end of 2016 for CEBMa to have launched a definitive version of the "ASK Manager" app for both the iPhone and Android devices.*

*Objective 14: By the end of 2017 for CEBMa to have written a non-academic handbook on how to practice EBP.*

*Objective 15: By the end of 2017 for CEBMa's database to contain more than 500 MAs and SRs, of which 30 will be summarized in plain English.*

#### **4. Promotion**

CEBMa's main promotion channels are its website, its newsletter, and the talks and presentations given by its members. CEBMa's website draws more than 10,000 unique visitors per month (average number of visits: 20,000; average number of pages visited: 95,000), and CEBMa's members give many talks and presentations at seminars and meetings all over the world. In addition, CEBMa's newsletter is sent four times a year to more than 2,300 subscribers. CEBMa is also present on Twitter and LinkedIn, but our activities on these platforms are very limited. In the traditional communication channels CEBMa is almost absent, for example, a non-academic book on EB-management does not exist.

*Objective 16: By mid-2017 for CEBMa to be fully present on Twitter and to tweet more than 6 times per week. In addition, to encourage CEBMa's clients to tweet regularly about CEBMa's services and activities.*

*Objective 17: By mid-2017 for CEBMa to have an active corporate page on LinkedIn.*

*Objective 18: By mid-2017 for CEBMa to have uploaded at least three short videos on EBP in management or related topics onto YouTube.*

*Objective 19: By the end of 2017 for CEBMa to have published a non-academic handbook on EBP in management.*

*Objective 20: By mid-2017 for CEBMa to have approached at least three national newspapers in the US, UK, and The Netherlands to dedicate a piece to EBP in the field of management and/or related topics.*

*Objective 21: By mid-2017 for CEBMa to have approached at least three professional bodies in the US, UK, and The Netherlands to promote EBP and to offer to give a talk, presentation, or workshop on EBP or a related topic.*

*Objective 22: By mid-2017 for CEBMa has to have approached at least three accreditation bodies to promote EBP and discuss the possibilities of integrating (elements of) EBP into the accreditation standard.*

## 5. Sales

CEBMa's operational annual costs are around 120,000 euros. Until now CEBMa's annual costs have been covered by the income it receives from providing services as mentioned above. In order to truly fulfill its mission, however, CEBMa would need at least 250,000 euros annually. Funding therefore remains CEBMa's biggest challenge, as it may jeopardize its mission in the long run. In order to increase CEBMa's revenue stream, we will actively pursue the following sales objectives:

*Objective 23: By the end of 2017 for CEBMa to have developed a partnership with at least one global provider of management courses to serve as a sales channel for CEBMa's open training and coaching programs.*

*Objective 24: By the end of 2017 for CEBMa to have developed a partnership with at least one university or business school in the US, UK, or The Netherlands to serve as a sales channel for CEBMa's open training and coaching programs.*

*Objective 25: By the end of 2017 for CEBMa to have developed a partnership with at least two other organizations to serve as sales channels for CEBMa's membership program.*

*Objective 26: By the end of 2017 for CEBMa to have approached at least four organizations to carry out an REA on a topic relevant to that organization.*

## 6. Priorities

Given CEBMa's limited resources in terms of time, funding, and staffing, it is unlikely that all 26 objectives will be met. It is therefore important to determine which of them are most important and to allocate sufficient resources to those ones. In order to prioritize the objectives, a distinction needs to be made between those objectives that mainly support CEBMa's mission, those that mostly generate revenue, and those that do both. This distinction gives rise to the following order of priority:

Goals end-2016	Mission	Revenue	Priority
- Provide a clear overview of all its products and services on CEBMa's website (objective 8 and 11)	++	++	+++
- Develop a framework for EBP skills that can be used by teachers and/or educational institutions as a guideline and quality standard for teaching evidence-based practice (objective 2)	+++	+	+++
- Launch a definitive version of the "ASK Manager" app for both iPhone and Android (objective 13)	+++	+/-	+++
- Develop an evaluation tool that can be used by managers and/or organizations to assess the evidence-base of their decision-making processes (objective 3)	+++	+/-	+++
- Develop an online module on experiential evidence (objective 12)	+++	+/-	+++
- Focus on publications and presentations that reach practitioners and/or the society at large (objective 7)	+++	-	++
- Position CEBMa in all of its publications and presentations as the leading authority on EBP in the field of management (objective 1)	++	-	++
- Position CEBMa in all publications and presentations as an educational institution (objective 6).	+	-	+

<b>Goals mid-2017</b>	<b>Mission</b>	<b>Revenue</b>	<b>Priority</b>
- Develop an open course for unaffiliated individual practitioners (objective 10)	+++	+++	+++
- Develop an accreditation standard that can be used by CEBMa to accredit courses on evidence-based practice (objective 4)	+++	++	+++
- Approach at least three professional bodies in the US, UK and The Netherlands to promote EBP and offer to give a talk, presentation or workshop on EBP or a related topic (objective 21)	+++	++	+++
- Upload at least three short videos on EBP in management or related topics onto YouTube (objective 18).	+++	-	++
- Approach at least three accreditation bodies to promote EBP and discuss the possibilities of integrating (elements of) EBP into the accreditation standard (objective 22)	+++	-	++
- Develop a guideline for conducting REAs that serves as a quality standard in management (objective 5)	+++	-	++
- Approached at least three national newspapers in the US, UK and The Netherlands to dedicate a piece to EBP in the field of management and/or related topics (objective 20)	+++	-	++
- Fully present on Twitter and tweet more than six times per week & encourage clients to tweet regularly about CEBMa's services and activities (objective 16)	++	+/-	++
- Have an active corporate page on LinkedIn (objective 17)	++	-	+

<b>Goals end-2017</b>	<b>Mission</b>	<b>Revenue</b>	<b>Priority</b>
- Develop a partnership with at least one global provider of management courses to serve as a sales channel for CEBMa's open training & coaching programs (objective 23)	+++	+++	+++
- Develop a partnership with at least one university or business school in the US, UK and The Netherlands to serve as a sales channel for CEBMa's open training & coaching programs (objective 24)	+++	+++	+++
- Develop a partnership with at least two other organizations to serve as a sales channel for CEBMa's membership program (objective 25)	+++	++	++
- Publish a non-academic handbook on how to practice EBP (objective 14)	+++	++	++
- Publish a non-academic book(let) on EBP in management (objective 19)	+++	++	++
- Develop a curriculum development program for educational institutions (objective 9)	+++	++	++
- Approach at least four organizations to conduct an REA on a topic relevant to that organization (objective 26)	++	++	++
- CEBMa's database contains more than 500 MAs and SRs, of which 30 are summarized in plain English (objective 15)	++	-	+