Risk Doctor Briefing

Encouraging Team Involvement

Dear Risk Doctor,

I am convinced that a structured approach to risk management would help my project, but my team are resisting the idea. They say they are too busy to do risk management in addition to their normal project tasks. What do you advise?

Frustrated Project Manager

Dear Frustrated Project Manager,

Anyone who is too busy for risk management is too busy! People who have no time to think about potential problems in advance, always manage to make time to fix problems when they happen. Try a combination of the following eight steps to encourage your team to adopt risk management:

1. *Mandate it.* If you can, it might help to insist that a structured risk management process must be implemented on your project. While it is not the whole answer, it sometimes helps to tell people what to do. If your company procedures include a risk process, then you can refer to this and explain that there is really no choice.

2. *Simplify it.* Risk management need not be complicated. Make the process as simple as possible without compromising effectiveness. Minimise the overhead for the team, keep risk meetings short and focused, and only collect information which you intend to use.

3. *Normalise it.* Explain to your team that managing risk is a "normal project task", and it is not an optional extra. All projects are risky, and risk management needs to be built into every part of the project. Plan and review risk responses the same as other project tasks, and expect your team to treat them just like any other task.

4. *Demonstrate it.* The project manager should lead by example, and be a role model for the team. If you show that you are serious about identifying and managing risk, and actively do it yourself, the team are more likely to follow your example.

5. *Use it.* When risk reports are written and forgotten, the team will learn that risk management is not important. But where the direction and strategy of the project is adjusted in the light of risk information, people will see that their efforts make a difference to how the project is run.

6. *Update it.* If the Risk Register is produced once and never updated, or agreed responses are not reviewed and monitored, the risk assessment will quickly become outdated and useless. Ensuring that current risk exposure is understood emphasises the importance of the risk process.

7. *Celebrate it.* Look for proof that risk management has tackled a threat so that a problem was avoided, or evidence that a potential opportunity has been converted into a real advantage. Record these successes and tell people about them. Success breeds success.

8. *"Pull" it.* Seek the support and buy-in of senior management. When the boss asks for risk information as part of the project governance, the team will know that it matters.

These steps should ensure that your team knows how importantly you view risk management, and should encourage them to take it seriously and do it themselves – because it works!

With best wishes,

The Risk Doctor