



RISK DOCTOR BRIEFING



EFFECTIVE RISK FACILITATION: UNDERSTANDING THE FOUR P'S

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The role of the facilitator is to make things easier for a group of people working together on a common task. This is a difficult job that needs special skills and careful preparation, particularly when facilitating a risk workshop, where the element of uncertainty introduces special challenges. There are two main ways in which a facilitator can make things easier for a group undertaking a risk workshop:

- *Easier than individuals working alone.* By helping the group to function effectively together, the facilitator ensures that multiple perspectives are shared openly to provide a common understanding of the risks facing the project.
- *Easier than the group working alone.* By taking care of practical elements of the risk workshop, the facilitator can release the group to concentrate on what they are doing, allowing them to dedicate their full attention to identifying and assessing risks, then developing appropriate responses.

To be fully effective, a risk facilitator needs to understand four key areas:

1. Project. The risk facilitator should be familiar with the project's characteristics, including:

- The scope and objectives to be considered during this risk assessment
- Underlying project assumptions and constraints
- Current project status, including issues, problems and concerns

2. Principles. The risk facilitator must clearly understand basic concepts of risk, including:

- All risks are uncertain, and all risks affect at least one objective if they happen
- Risk includes both threat and opportunity
- Risks should be owned by the person or party who owns the affected objective

3. Process. The risk facilitator will know which tools and techniques to use for the various steps in the risk management process, including:

- Strengths and weaknesses of different techniques to identify risks, including both threats and opportunities
- How to describe a risk clearly and unambiguously, for example using risk metalanguage to separate cause-risk-effect
- How to define risk thresholds to be used when prioritising risks for further attention
- When and how to use quantitative risk analysis techniques
- How to choose an appropriate risk response strategy, turn it into specific actions, and ensure implementation

4. People. The risk facilitator must have excellent interpersonal skills, and be able to:

- Motivate all participants to contribute openly and freely
- Recognise and counter bias
- Ensure that everyone is heard and respected
- Handle difficult people

A good risk facilitator will combine all four aspects in their preparation and facilitation of the risk process, enabling them to support the group effectively. The goal is for participants in a risk workshop to leave feeling that they have done a good job, confident that they have identified the real risks, and ready to tackle them proactively. Easy!