



RISKY RESOLUTIONS

© January 2008, Dr David Hillson PMP FAPM

david@risk-doctor.com

It's that time of year again! In January many people make New Year's Resolutions, capturing a mixture of good intentions and guilty consciences. The top five resolutions include: spend more time with the family, get fit, lose weight, quit smoking, and learn a new skill. Most of these survive only a few weeks, and get shelved again until the same time the following year. By the time you read this, it's likely that very few of your New Year's Resolutions will remain unbroken. Here are **four risky resolutions** which can truly transform your life, your projects and your business.

Risky Resolution 1: Be more risk-aware. There are many risks facing us, both personally and professionally, including both threats and opportunities. We might pretend that risk doesn't exist and hope that it goes away, but it would be much better to face the fact that risk is everywhere, and adopt a more proactive approach towards it. Why not **resolve to be more risk-aware this year**, remembering that risk-awareness isn't a technique; it's a state of mind, being alert to risk all the time, seeking out possible uncertain events that could affect achievement of our objectives.

Risky Resolution 2: Get integrated. Many people do risk management in isolation, as a bolt-on extra. Usually that's because we're busy doing "real work", and can't spare the time to think about things that might never happen. Risk management becomes a dispensable luxury. But unmanaged risks lead to avoidable problems and reduced benefits. Instead of viewing it as an optional extra, you could **resolve this year to integrate risk management into your normal activities**. Treat it as "real work", and make sure that it fits with your other work. For example, think about risk when you make your initial estimates or draw up the project plan. Use risk assessment as part of your change control process. Make your risk management "built-in not bolt-on" in order to get the full benefit.

Risky Resolution 3: Take sensible risks. It's neither possible nor desirable to live life without taking risks. If we tried to be safe all the time, and not expose ourselves to any uncertainty, we would never do anything. Of course we should try to reduce our risk exposure to a level that is acceptable, while not stifling creativity and innovation, but that level is not zero. We need to take some risk, without being irresponsible. Perhaps this year you should **resolve to take more risks, but to do so sensibly**? Sensible risk management means identifying genuine risks, assessing them realistically, and acting appropriately. It means not being paralysed by risk, but taking risk with our eyes open.

Risky Resolution 4: Don't give up. Risk doesn't go away just because you've held a workshop and issued a Risk Register. Risk exposure is dynamic and changes frequently – that's why the risk process is iterative. But sometimes we get bored with doing the same things over again. We're fed up with having to update the Risk Register and think of new risks. We'd rather "file and forget". But this is bound to lead to problems. We need to **resolve to keep going**; managing risk is a marathon not a sprint. Try to reduce the process burden as far as possible, making it easy to identify and manage risk. Consider refreshing the risk process with new techniques, or investing in some training. As the risk challenge evolves, so our approach to tackling it needs to be kept up to date.

Happy New Year! So as we step into the new year, why not make these **four risky resolutions**, to make your risk management as effective as possible? And if you have trouble remembering them, it might help to think of them like this:

- *Risk-aware*
- *Integrated approach*
- *Sensible risk-taking*
- *Keep going*