

## KEEPING THE RM APPROACH RELEVANT

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### What makes a RM approach useful – three key learnings.

A few weeks ago, a colleague asked me 'what makes the Risk Management (RM) process and practices compulsory in our organisation?'. I was not being questioned about the importance of RM, or the framework endorsed by our leadership team or even its validity in our organisation – rather, it was a question of approach and implementation. After getting over my slightly bruised feelings, I realised that this was a legitimate question and upon reflection, three key learnings around 'what makes a RM approach useful' stood out to me.

#### 1. Keep it simple

These days information is easier to access, and it seems our customers can be influenced or exposed to an event before the proverbial ink in the risk register has dried. I found that, for our tools and practices to be effective, they need to be simpler and quicker to understand and use in an ever-changing environment. I realised that I had been confusing the simplicity of why RM is important with big, and sometimes daunting, frameworks and tools. What this has meant for me and my team is that we are always looking for ways to simplify and get back to basic RM principles so that the resulting RM practices can meet people and teams where they are at in their RM journey and can be used on-the-go, wherever we go.

#### 2. Focus on behaviour

There is an increasing expectation on our organisation from customers and other stakeholders to work smarter and improve the services we provide. Each day, our teams are making decisions and delivering services and projects that we can be proud of. So how does this compare to our lower organisational RM maturity? Our organisation has come a long way in RM practices but I realised that, the theory of RM, standards and frameworks is exactly that, theory. It is up to our organisation to determine how RM will drive value. There are many RM tools, methods and Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems in the market which helps us collect, measure and make sense of organisational risk maturity and information. It is important, for me, to focus on the outcome of RM before focussing on RM tools. One of the challenges for our RM function is effectively supporting and building linkages between risk information and risk maturity (the 'understanding' or 'knowledge' of RM activities) with the day to day behaviours of our people in managing risks (the 'thinking and doing' of RM activities).

**He tangata, he tangata, he tangata: Prioritise people over frameworks**

It has become apparent over time that there is a positive trend between the level of trust, perception and connection with the RM function; and the level of buy-in or effective imbedding of RM principles and practices by teams.

It is important for me (as a risk professional) to lean into the vision and goals of our organisation and to 'seek first to understand, then to be understood' (Stephen Covey) before recommending a course of action. For me, this has meant that I spend more time away from my desk to meet with people, I have placed higher focus on imbedding the RM principles (rather than tools and frameworks) and have adopted a more 'agile' approach in our RM practices so that it can be tailored to the working style and needs of the team.

Given the diversity in operations and the increased demand to serve our teams effectively and efficiently, I have also become more reliant on a network of risk professionals outside of my organisation for testing new ideas, sharing and brainstorming challenges in RM practices and for general coaching support.

Risk Management approaches will continue to change and adapt to the needs of our organisation – as they should. As a risk professional it is my goal to facilitate, build confidence in and support the imbedding of the core RM principles and make this as accessible as possible at all levels of our organisation.

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In 2019, Tiffany was a part of the team who received the Risk NZ Governance and Leadership Risk Management and Practices award.