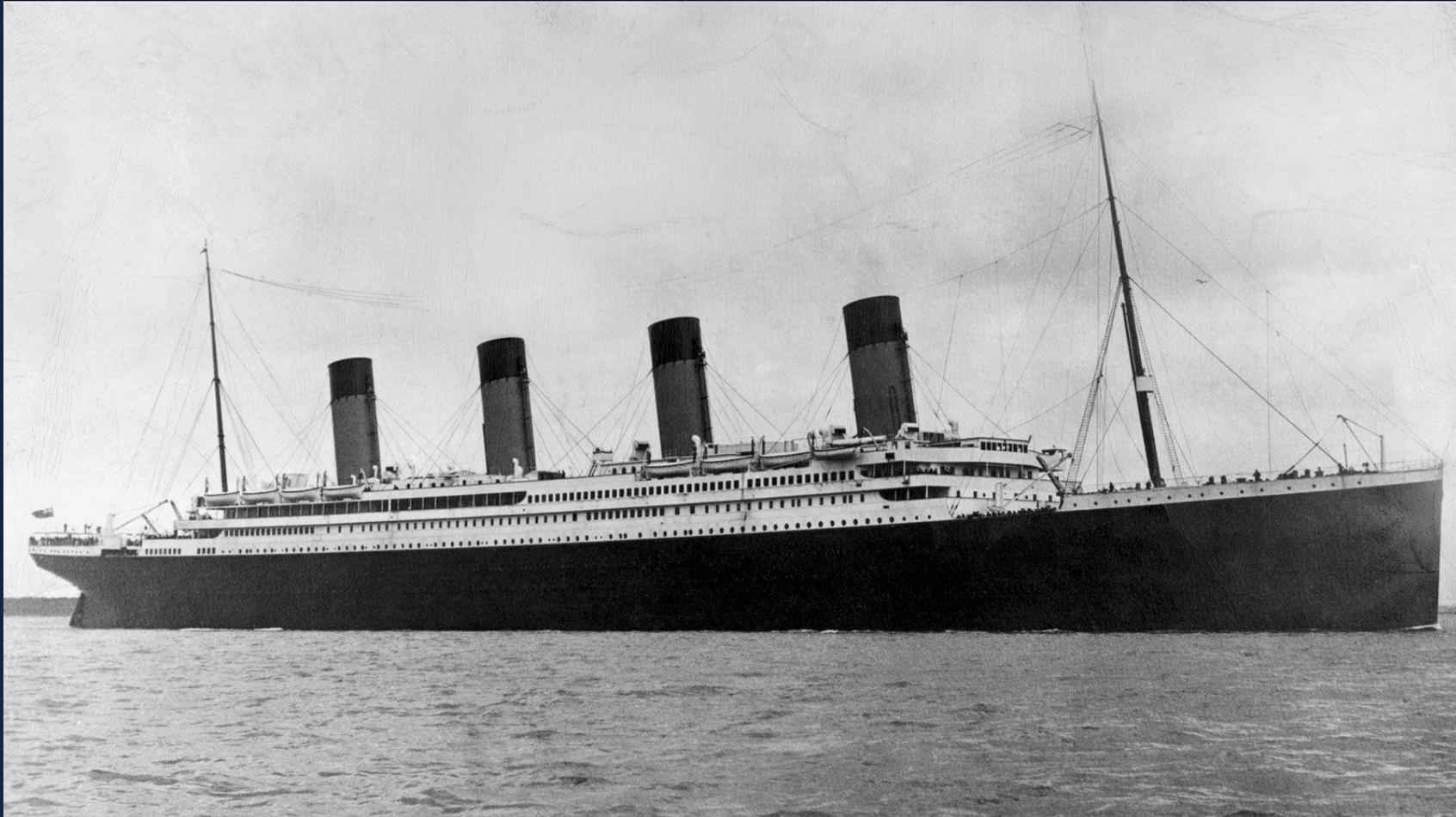


# The myth of the unsinkable ship

What the Titanic teaches us about resilience

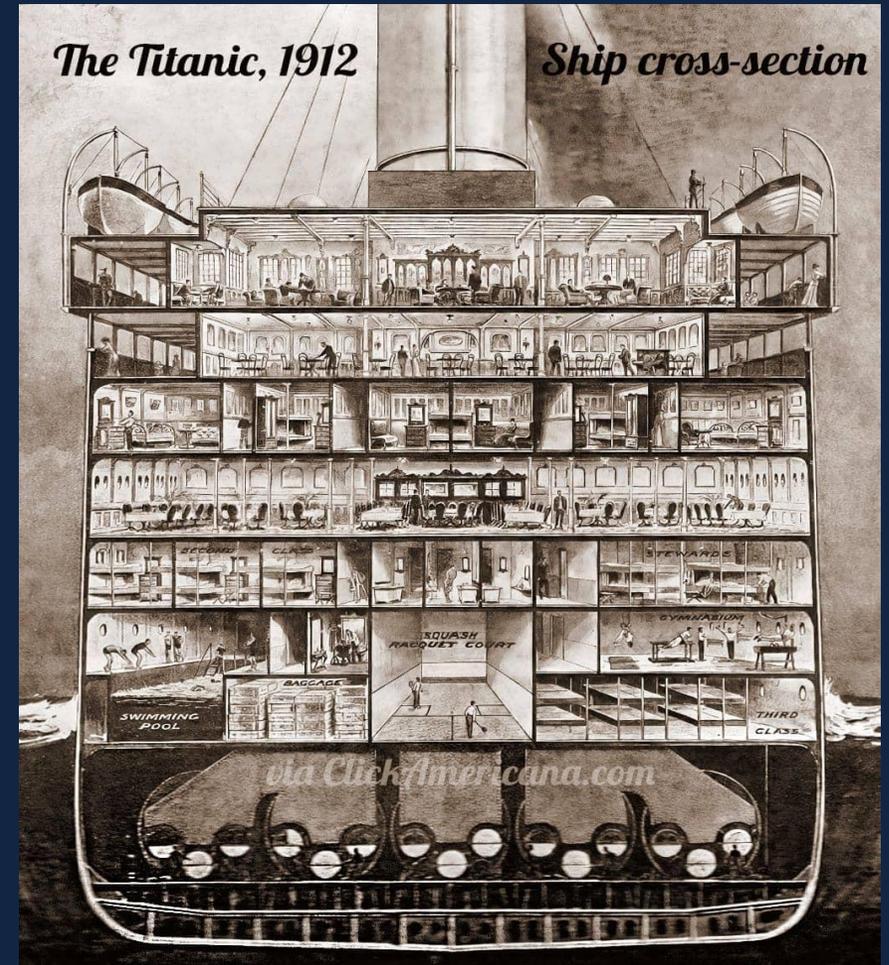
Matthew Meldrum  
Riskconnect

# A Titan by any other name



# A Technical Marvel

- 16 Watertight compartments
  - 2 could be 'exposed to the sea' with no issue
  - 4 could fill and still remain afloat
- Double-hull along the bottom
  - Served as a second skin in case of a tear
- Automated bulkhead doors
  - Operated from the bridge or by float
- Quadruple riveted in key areas
  - Failure in a sister ship led builders to add redundancies
- Powerful communications equipment
  - Capable of reaching 1600km away



# A Titan in Compliance

- Regulations of the time required 16 lifeboats - Titanic carried 20
  - Based on tonnage of the vessel, not passengers
  - Hadn't been updated for around 20 years
- Bulkheads were in compliance with current maritime laws still in use today
  - Did not extend up past Deck E
  - Illegal to have watertight bulkheads above passenger spaces with no means of escape
- Steel and Iron was up to code
  - The same steel used in contemporary ships like Queen Mary
  - Debate on the role of the iron rivets and their contribution to the sinking
- Inquiries showed Captain Smith followed established protocols of the time
  - Adjusted slightly to a more southerly heading
  - Prevailing wisdom of the day was either stop until light or press on to clear the area quickly

# 'Unsinkable'

- “I will say I cannot imagine any condition which could cause a ship to founder. I cannot conceive of any vital disaster happening to this vessel. Modern shipbuilding has gone beyond that.” - Capt. Edwards regarding the Adriatic
- “...the Olympic is unsinkable, and the Titanic will be the same when she is put in commission. Why, either of these vessels could be cut in halves and each half would remain afloat indefinitely.” – Capt. Edwards after the RMS Olympic was hit by the HMS Hawke
- “God himself couldn’t sink this ship.” – Uncredited crew member at launch
- “There is no danger that Titanic will sink. The boat is unsinkable, and nothing but inconvenience will be suffered by the passengers.” – Philip Franklin, head of White Star Line to reporters after initial news of the collision
- “I thought her unsinkable, and I based my opinion on the best expert advice.” – Philip Franklin two hours later
- “I’ll never let go...” – Rose to Jack before immediately letting go

# Chinks in the Armor

- Radio operators were overworked and exhausted
  - Told the SS Californian to “shut up” as he was clogging communications
  - Californian operator turned his radio off and went to bed
- Calm seas and good weather were actually a risk
  - Led to overconfidence in their visibility
  - Couldn’t see ripples caused by waves striking the iceberg
- Ship-wide emergency lifeboat drill was cancelled the day before
  - Crew had done one cursory exercise in the dock before setting out
  - Lists were posted with assignments, but few were read or understood
- Binoculars for the lookouts were present but inaccessible
  - Key to the footlocker was in the pocket of an officer reassigned last minute

The key  
(probably)



# A Lesson in Crisis Mismanagement

## **11:35pm: First Officer of the Watch spots iceberg directly in their path**

- Calls to the bridge to turn starboard and reverse engines
- Bulkhead doors are sealed

## **11:40pm: Titanic sideswipes the iceberg**

- Fairly minimal glancing blow
- First reports of water in 5 compartments

## **12:00am: First lifeboats ordered prepared**

- Confusion on intent of orders regarding 'women and children'
- One side thought 'women and children first', the other 'women and children only'

## **12:15am: First distress call sent**

- *Frankfurt* is the first to respond but is 315km away
- *Carpathia* is the closest to respond at 107km away (3 hours travel)

## **12:45-2:00AM: Lifeboats are lowered**

- Many at half capacity

## **2:20AM: The Titanic is sunk**

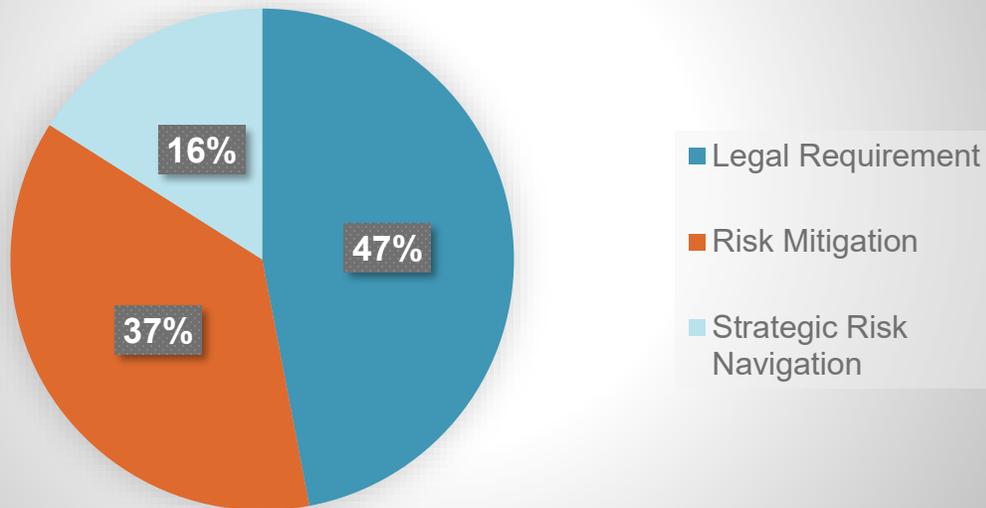
# 'Key' Takeaway

- Mapping critical dependencies is not optional
  - How do you define critical?
  - Internal Tools
  - External Parties
- Engage your process SMEs
  - Detailed view of what is really going on
- Keep up-to-date with key changes
  - Do we have the right contacts
  - Is our data still relevant and useful



# Compliance does not guarantee resilience

## Perception of the Role of Compliance



- Compliance is a baseline
  - Regulators don't know your business
  - Regulations take time to craft
- Don't just pass the Audit
  - Are your controls meaningfully mitigating risks
  - Where do we have greatest risk exposure while remaining fully compliant
- Compliance as strategic partners
  - Insight into regulatory trends
  - Don't have to retrofit to obligations

Source: FloQast Exploring Strategic Compliance Survey, Sept 2024

# Too Boldly Go

- Success breeds overconfidence
  - Good strategy or bad luck\*
- Facts vs Feelings
  - Using measurements and KRIs to analyze risks and objectives
  - AI analysis coupled with human context
- Recognising biases reduces their power
  - Inland Revenue case study\*\*
  - Implement bias testing for better decision-making

\*Adam, Tim R.; Fernando, Chitru S.; Golubeva, Evgenia (2012) :  
Managerial overconfidence and corporate risk management

\*\*<https://www.publicservice.govt.nz/guidance/papa-pounamu/addressing-bias>

# Failing the Test by Failing to Test

- Stress yourselves
  - Continue asking 'what if'
  - Create your perfect storm, then sail into it
- Know before you go
  - Is everybody aware of what they're supposed to do?
  - Have they been adequately trained?
- Continuous cycle of improvement
  - Document lessons learned
  - Reinforce your weak points



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## About Riskconnect

Riskconnect is the leading integrated risk management software solution provider that empowers organizations to anticipate, manage, and respond in real-time to strategic and operational risks across the extended enterprise.

Through its unique risk correlation technology, over 900 customers across six continents are benefitting from actionable insights that have not been previously attainable to deliver better business outcomes.

To learn more, visit [riskconnect.com](http://riskconnect.com)

