

The UNIFIED PROTECTOR

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Who is a Unified Protector? A utopia, a universal soldier, or a controversy in the making for the security and risk management industry.

Over the last few security and risk management conferences, a new term has come up during discussions. The UNIFIED PROTECTOR. Who is a Unified Protector? It's an interesting concept that certainly gets people's attention. A utopian concept, a universal soldier, or a mere controversy in the making for the security and risk management industry.

In the year 2011, NATO aptly coined a robust 360 action plan - "*Operation Unified Protector*". This was an integrated, well-led and successfully executed operation under NATO's unified banner. The operation was initiated and largely led by France and the United Kingdom, with command shared with the United States. Eventually, nineteen states would come together as one "Unified Protector" to secure and safeguard Libyan civilians on multiple vulnerable points, by enforcing multi-level protection such as no-fly zones, arms embargos, naval blockades, and ground support led by coalition forces.

The stakes although different than at NATO's level; at an organizational level, also require a more wholesome and unified approach to protection, expanding from the confining perceptions of what "Security" has come to be. So much so, there have been some definitive murmurs to remove "Security" from the organizational vernacular and instead keep – Risk Managers and Unified Protectors.

What holds us back from this Utopia, Unicorn, this Universal (Unified Protector) Soldier? And are we ready for it?

Both security and risk management are broad areas with just so many disciplines, branches, and practices. Unless specified the terms Security and Risk can mean different things to different people. E.g., When we say, *Law enforcement Officer* we know there is less chance of miscommunication on what he/she does for a living. But say, “*Chief Security officer*” and the listener will try to “guess” whether it means cyber security or perhaps infrastructure assets’ security but it is unlikely they will think about physical security or personnel security.

Furthermore, this disconnect, and ambiguous perceptions also stem from how at an organizational level, each of these silos is disconnected from the other, lacking synchronization and stove piping information and intelligence in one direction. This leads to zero overall value creation or knowledge management for the organization or the industry at large. However, the What and Who need protection don’t necessarily come in silos. It’s all connected. It requires Unified Protection. Senior, top-notch business executives need physical protection, but so do their devices, knowledge, communications, personal information, their assets. You get the drift.

Let’s pay attention to the elephant in the room. The controversy. What is better – a Specialist or a Generalist? Controversial, because it can be a conundrum for some; whether better to master your specialization first, before you can add ancillary pieces to your resume or be perceived as a dilettante. Historically, most protectors, at least in risk management and security space, want to be specialists first and then understand the other ancillary connected pieces. The reality is a broadly skilled integrator who thinks big picture, maybe more capable of adding wholesome value to an organization than a specialist with blinkers. That’s a Unified person. Organizations need to value and empower such unified generalists who have the skills and knowledge with authority to take emergency measures about an organization’s vulnerabilities and risks, and then direct them to a specialist, if need be.

Then there is the problem of Certifications. Whose stove pipe is bigger, and whose stove pipe is smaller becomes a topic of competing importance, whether it's Business Continuity, Emergency Management, Physical Security, or Cyber security. Each has its own certifications, credentials, specializations, and super specializations.

The goal is to rise above and beyond and be an agile workforce in the "Certainty Management Business". This means that the new unified avatars of Protective Services Personnel will ensure with certainty that the organization can meet the objectives that their Boards agree upon and are trying to achieve. This includes protecting the elements of people, supply facilities and information, the key assets so that that organization has a high probability of achieving the objective that they're trying to create with those assets and with their business processes – Objective Centric Risk Management. List-based enterprise risk registers and heat maps need to be replaced by 360-risk assessments, mitigate risks, develop strategy and ultimately control costs for achieving organizational objectives across the entire risk domain.

How to be a Universal soldier aka Unified Protector to bring about Utopia?

- At an individual level, keep learning (learn enough), upskill in adjacent areas and be multi-dimensional, leverage company resources, and knowledge bases, talk to subject matter experts within and outside the organization and take short courses. Strive to be a *Multi Capable Protective Personnel*.
- All disciplines in this approach need to align strengths and resources and integrate and demolish the metaphorical silo walls. To do that one needs to operate in a thoughtful, professional, multidisciplinary way, not as competing and non-synchronized stovepipes. Work as a joint united force on a combat mission. Remember the reference to NATO's - Operation "Unified Protector"?

- As an organization, be proactive, and agile, think macro, and address the weakest link (people), business vulnerabilities and risks that hinder achieving business objectives. The US DoD has adopted what they are calling agile combat employment. That is, they want to take Multi capable personnel into battle. This value-adding, consistently contributing, all-rounders are capable of shifting and morphing and dealing with the then-current requirement. Good to have someone like that in battle, right?

For now, the discussion on this hot topic is likely to continue in seminars and conferences and be up for some intense debate. However, many large organizations (that are clients and known to the author), have shown initiative, intent and innovation and adopted Unified Protection, Objective centric risk management and Multi Capable Personnel concepts and paved the path for a “Unified Protector’s Utopia”. Stay tuned for updates!