



We Are All Good at Risk. Just Not at Risk Management. Why something simple became something complicated

The Crossing

Pore Amyas wanted cake. The shop was across the road. Traffic moved steadily. Not fast enough to be dangerous. Not slow enough to ignore.

She paused.

Looked right. Looked left.

Judged the distance. Judged the speed.

Stepped forward.

Stopped.

A car approached faster than expected.

She stepped back. Waited.

Then crossed.

The Decision

No register.

No heat map.

No workshop.

No scoring.

And yet, everything we recognise as risk management was there.

An objective.

A threat.

An assessment.

A decision.

A response.

The Translation

Later that day, Doctour Karinne described a project risk.

“Supplier delay may impact delivery timelines.”

Dame Anwen nodded.

“Likelihood?”

“Medium.”

“Impact?”

“High.”

Pore Amyas frowned. It sounded familiar. But it felt distant.

The Difference

Crossing a road feels simple. Managing risk in an organisation does not.

But the thinking is identical:

- Understanding what you are trying to achieve.
- Recognising what might get in the way.
- Judging whether it matters.
- Deciding what to do.
- And knowing what you will do if it happens.

What Changed

Dame Anwen once described it like this.

“We did not make risk more complex,” she said. “We made it more abstract.”

Pore Amyas tilted her head.

“How?”

“We separated it from the decision.”

The Abstraction

In the road, the risk and the decision are inseparable. You see the car. You decide. Immediately.

In organisations, we do something different. We:

- describe the risk
- document the risk
- score the risk
- report the risk

And only then, try to reconnect it to a decision.

The Wyrd Observation

Doctour Karinne made a note.

“We treat risk as something to manage,” she said. “Rather than something to decide with.”

Pore Amyas nodded.

“And in doing so, we make it harder than it needs to be.”

The Comfort of Process

Process creates consistency. Structure creates comparability. And both are useful. But they also create distance. Distance from:

- the situation
- the context
- the consequence

And most importantly the decision.

The Realisation

Dame Anwen paused.

“The risk was never the road,” she said. “It was the distance between Pore Amyas and the cake.”

Pore Amyas smiled.

“So we were never really managing the road?”

Dame Anwen shook her head.

“No,” she said. “We were deciding whether the cake was worth it.”

She glanced at the paper on the table.

“In organisations we often forget what the cake is.”

The Subtle Trade

Something else happens. The more structured risk becomes, the more it appears rigorous. But not necessarily more useful. Because structure creates confidence. Even when it creates distance.

A Better Question

Instead of asking:

“What is the risk?”

Dame Anwen preferred something simpler.

“What are we trying to do, and what might stop us?”

And then:

“If it does, what will we do?”

Conclusion

Risk is not complicated. We just made it look that way. Risk management is not a specialist activity. It is a human one. We do it instinctively:

- Continuously.
- Effectively.

Until we formalise it. And in doing so, we often lose the very thing that makes it work:

- Clarity.
- Context

- Connection to decision.

Which means the real challenge in risk management might not be:

- Improving the process.

But reconnecting it to how decisions are actually made.

***We didn't make risk better.
We made it look more rigorous.***