



Partnership Risk Management

The client A large fire and rescue authority in the UK.

The challenge The client delivered a wider variety of functions within the community. Much of that work was delivered through partnerships. Some of these partnerships were well established and were delivering excellent outcomes. Others were less advanced and there were barriers to progress. The external audit had shown up that enterprise risk management in partnerships was lacking, and many of the barriers to progress in the underperforming partnerships were caused by lack of understanding and ownership of enterprise risks and opportunities.

Getting operational people to do risk management is tricky at the best of times. When it comes to working on partnership risk management it feels for management like it's even more nebulous. In this case study, we set out the simple steps that we took to ensure that this project was successful.

The response It was clear that in order for any programme of enterprise risk management within partnerships to be successful, it had to be owned by the management at all levels. Whilst there was significant support from the top for a programme of risk management, there was none lower down the ranks. This resistance in the lower echelons was because the fire officers considered themselves to be the finest risk managers, and any attempt to "train" or "teach" would be considered to be patronising.

This clear lack of meeting of minds was identified as being about the understanding of what was meant by "risk management". The operational fire officers had years of experience and skills in the operational (eg health and safety, fire protection) and professional risks attached to their roles and that to them was "risk management".

Once the difference in understanding of the terminology was identified it was evident that a different approach was needed. During a workshop with the heads of Business Units and Divisional Officers various suggestions were made, but the one that caught the most attention was "Business Risk Management". During the same workshop a programme for developing a "business risk" approach to the partnership work was designed and agreed. This included setting out a toolkit for how to talk about business risk and a suggested methodology and a prioritised roll out programme with the various partnerships.

The outcome LTRC has worked with the client to roll out a business risk approach to the top ten partnerships that were identified as having the most need for such an approach. All welcomed the opportunity for a common understanding and good progress has been made in using the business risk approach to solve barriers to progress and problem solve.

There is now much more clarity of ownership of the controls for the business risks and a better understanding that business risk can be good or bad, ie a threat or an opportunity.

Key points

- Need to address requirements and perceptions of operational staff and officers
- Agreed definition of business risk management
- Common toolkit and methodology

For further information about our Partnership Risk Management Toolkit and Guidance, go to

http://www.liztaylorryriskconsulting.co.uk/resources/Partnership_Toolkit.pdf

and

http://www.liztaylorryriskconsulting.co.uk/resources/Facilitating_Partnership_Meeting.pdf