

On the Subject of Brief Risk Management Guides¹

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

2 March 2022

Ref: New PMWJ series of Brief Risk Management Guides

Dear Editor,

With four young grandchildren living nearby and a portfolio of other voluntary duties, I have decided to refocus my career on project Sunset. Having closed my business, I am now looking for a longer term means of enabling access to one of its resources, a collection of risk management guidance sheets. You have kindly agreed to publish an updated version of these in the PM World Journal. The plan is to publish one two-sided sheet each month, starting with one on Risk Identification.

The sheets are designed to be summaries focused on particular topics rather than being detailed guidance instructions or to, collectively, form a complete guide to project risk management. Such approaches have been covered by many other sources, including guides produced by the Project Management Institute (PMI) and the Association for Project Management (APM). My guidance sheets are, instead, aimed at filling a gap in the market for easily digestible insights, hints and tips. I have also often used them when working with clients.

In creating this material, I have followed two golden rules:

Lived experience: I have used all of the tools and techniques covered in the sheets and have only described methods that I think to have been useful. Similarly, where there are words of caution or advice on limitations, I have witnessed all of the associated mistakes.

No simple “best way”: All projects are different and most projects go through different phases. Given this and that my view is that risk management is a response to the implications of uncertainty (i.e. lack of certainty), I believe that no single approach, tool or technique can be the best one to use in all circumstances.

No chef would recommend a single cooking method for all dishes. By analogy, no organisation should expect to get the best results by following a single recipe when

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implementing a process to manage project risk, although it is surprising to see how many seem to do so. Instead, I believe that much the art of project risk management lies in following sound principles and making good choices. Accordingly, I recommend not choosing tools and techniques until, as a minimum, after understanding the project's purposes and context and identifying what matters most.

We discussed the idea of listing references separately on each sheet. However, we agreed that this would take up too much space and would thus compromise the objective of enabling the sheets to be printed on a single (double sided) sheet of paper. For the purposes of background, I have therefore provided a reference list below of what I would consider to be some of the most relevant books and guides.

Sincerely,

[Martin Hopkinson](#)

United Kingdom

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