

Podcast kindly recorded by Jakob Barandun

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with

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What did you want to become when you were a kid?

Oh man, I thought you would start with an easy question. I'm not sure I remember what I wanted to become when I was a kid. What I know now is that I always try to solve anybody's challenges and improve the way things are being done. I'm not the kind of person good at small talk and internal company politics, I'm turn towards creating value for a person or an organization.

You moved from sales to risk management? why?

That is correct, I went through 8 years of sales and marketing, starting with selling copy machines in industrial parks around Paris France. I have to admit I hated this selling period as we had to lie to sell a copy machine, but I also have to recognize that I learn quite a bit in selling and building my self-confidence.

I moved to risk management thanks to the father of my best friend at the time who was looking for a salesman to embed risk management in an international organization. Although I knew nothing about the topic, their first intent was to have someone opening closed doors and giving a selling speech about risk management. So here I was at Arcelor in 2003, before the merger with Mittal, in charge of implementing a process in all company functions, a process I was discovering in the field.

How did risk management change over the years in organizations?

That is a very good question, I think that people change perspective in risk management over the years but I'm not sure the topic itself has evolved.

If I reflect on my personal journey, I went from implementing the very traditional way, basically risk reporting which was more a shareholder request than a real will to manage company risk, to a risk management for value creation.

With the years, you become savvy and people begin to listen to you. You realize it is much more important to solve your boss or company issue than to be right in your niche field.

So you stop using expert wording and you start offering or participating in business solutions instead.

On the other hand, for the ones that have been using standards such as ISO 31000, we have to admit that these process documents are evolving in the right direction with the integration of strategic views on risks.

What is the biggest risk in a company?

Of course, we all want to know that one and I believe that the biggest risk is the one you turn away from.

I have heard so many times in my career, while conducting interviews or risk assessment workshops, “there are no risks here, we know our job”. I would say, this is the first red flag for me. Being overconfident and hiding your head in the sand has never helped managing risks.

One thing to remember, things do not stop at a particular process in organizations, a risk scenario could go from R&D, impacting production and overall supply chain and then impacting legal, finance and the overall company strategy, so for me, oversimplifying risk is a danger and nurturing the silo-based approach is completely wrong. This is why the motto of Risk-In conference, went from breaking silos to building bridges instead. Breaking things is negative, building bridges is positive.

Can you eliminate risk completely?

This is something you surely do not want to do. Eliminating totally a risk has several implications, the first one, no risk no business so you may enter in a status quo situation and this is not where you want to be as an organization, even in the health, safety and security. No risk means no evolution.

The other aspect is that most of the time it would be extremely expensive to overcome all causes and all consequences of a risk. What you need to aim for is a risk based approach company strategy. This is too rarely done, risk are looked at once the strategy has been signed off and unfortunately it is too late. It should be integrated from the start.

What measures can implement to alleviate the risk?

Thanks for that one Jakob, I strongly believe that any organization has to master its basics and for me it is about having a very strong risk assessment capability. I’m not talking about a process but a real competence at all levels on how to identify correctly assess a risk. It is essential to understand what is the risk you are talking to me about, how this risk can happen, basically the reasons why and also if that risk would happen, what would be the consequences for our organization.

This competence should exist in the operational field, management and oversight level.

Risk management, in the way it is described by regulators, authorities and other international organizations is still quite young, which means that CEOs today have not been through these processes and competencies themselves, it is usually something which is delegated, and we forget that the ultimate risk takers are the CEOs.

What was the motivation of founding a risk conference?

That is an interesting one, I have been in quite a few conferences, and they are usually very well organized but at the same time the speakers do not share much insights or at least do not give you pragmatic ways to do your work. I've always missed this when I was an active risk manager for large organizations. So in the end, to help the community I built in Switzerland, I decided to create a conference myself. The aim in 2018 when we did the first edition was to have speakers ready to open their books in risk management, cyber, compliance overall security and resilience. Now, 6 years later, these topics are still relevant and we offer additional deep insights in ESG, insurance and captives.

What were the challenges at the beginning?

Well, diving into the world of conferences without knowing nothing about it was interesting. We created an event that looked like us. Us meaning my associate and myself. We wanted to have the most professional networking event in a relaxed atmosphere.

But, the biggest challenge is the find the appropriate funding for an event. You need money. You can always try to call a hotel and ask for their space for free, it doesn't work at all, it is like going to your bakery store and asking for a free baguette. Nobody works for free.

As leader of a conference or an organization how do you find the best talent for your team and company?

Yes thanks Jakob, I headed various teams and I needed to delegate tasks. The best people for me are the ones that can connect with me in the sense of understanding and challenging my needs, which is the first point. The second point is about the competency, risk management is not complex, it requires common sense and experience, this means I needed people with a pragmatic approach to company needs.

The End!

Come and chat with us during Risk-In conference 2025, May 11-13 2025 and meet 300 peers and experts in risk management, insurance, security, ESG and captive related topics

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