The People *vs.* Project Risk

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WHO AM I, REALLY?

- Project Controls Professional
- Risk Management Geek
- Micro to Giga Projects
- Saved People a Bit of Money
- Passionate About the People Side of Risk
- IRM Infrastructure SIG
- APM PRAM Author

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Eyes down, registers out – welcome to:

EXHIBIT A: THE CRIMES

RISKY BINGO EDITION

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**The only risk review you might actually enjoy.*

How to Play

1 As I go through, tick off the crimes you've seen in real life.

2 Count your score at the end to see which category you land in.

3 Remember: lower is better…

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Risky Bingo Card

The Action Zombie

1 Same action, same owner, due date keeps getting pushed out by a month at every review.

The Calendar Shuffle

2 Risk invites spark an urgent search for a double-booking.

The Graveyard Slot (aka the 4.55pm Special)

3 If Risk even makes the agenda, it's last – when everyone's halfway out the door.

The End-of-Month Special

4 Magically, every action is due on the last day of the month.

The Copy & Paste Register

5 Every 'new' risk register looks suspiciously identical to the last one.

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Risky Bingo Card

The 1-Line Wonder

Risk descriptions so vague they could apply to anything: “risk of delay”.

The Greatest Hits List

Otherwise known as the top 5 things someone made up on the train this morning.

Seeing Red

Endless debate about whether it’s red or amber, while nothing else gets done.

Schrodinger’s Risk

Simultaneously ‘high priority’ but never anyone’s responsibility.

The Risk Review Comet

Blazes across the agenda once a month, bright for 5 minutes (or most likely 1 hour) then gone until the next orbit.

Sentencing

0	1-3	4-6	7-8	9-10
BEYOND JURISDICTION	CLEAN RECORD	MISDEMEANOUR OFFENDER	FELONY OFFENDER	MOST WANTED

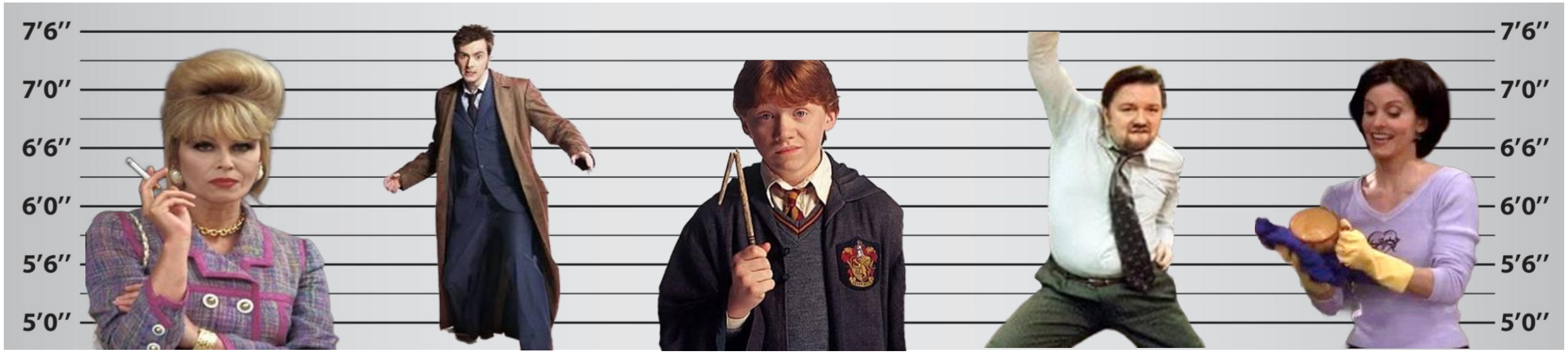

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EXHIBIT B: THE RAP SHEET

The Calendar Cartel

Charges

Evasion, Disappearing Acts, Time Theft.

Category: Misdemeanour

Frustrating and wasteful, unlikely to sink the whole ship on their own.

Sentence

Skip a risk review?
You chair the next one.

THE RISK REVIEW COMET

- Monthly meetings and a vanishing Risk Manager in between.
- Actions left untouched until the next review.
- Nobody remembers what was agreed last time.

THE CALENDAR SHUFFLE

- Monthly meetings and Ghost Town Workshops.
- Invites declined due to ‘real priorities’.
- Key decision-makers rarely in the room.

THE GRAVEYARD SLOT

- Always at the end of an agenda (if it’s even on there).
- Squeezed into 5 minutes because time’s run over.
- People visibly packing up laptops when the topic arrives.

The Ctrl C Crew

Charges

Plagiarism, generic risks, risk register identity theft.

Category: Misdemeanour

Minor annoyance if caught early but can escalate into credibility collapse.

Sentence

Mandatory creative writing course where the only acceptable genre is risk registers.

THE COPY & PASTE REGISTER

- Every project mysteriously has the same risks whether it's a bridge, a hospital or a coffee shop fit-out.
- Generic risks so broad they could double as LinkedIn buzzwords.
- Risk register reads like it was lifted straight from ChatGPT: "bad weather, delays, supply chain'.

THE ONE-LINE WONDER

- No detail on cause, impact or mitigation.
- Impossible to judge severity or assign actions.
- Statements like 'scope creep', 'project may be delayed'.

The Deadline Dodgers

Charges

Delay, deflection, eternal extensions.

Category: Felony

Serial project killers.

Sentence

Cross out the due date and put ‘yesterday’.

THE ACTION ZOMBIE

- Same action, same owner, same due date for months.
- Updates are always ‘in progress’ with no evidence.
- Excuses repeat like clockwork: “waiting on X”, “still discussing”.

THE END-OF-MONTH SPECIAL

- Every action ends on the 30th/31st regardless of when the work is actually needed.
- Nobody ever asks why that date – it’s just a default filter.

SCHRODINGER’S RISK

- Listed as a top risk but no named owner.
- Everyone nods gravely when it’s mentioned, then moves on.
- Lives in limbo between teams, never advancing.

The Fabricators

Charges	Category: Felony	Sentence
Invention, last-minute lies, report falsification.	Convincing on paper. Collapses in court.	Locked into a room to debate amber vs red.

THE GREATEST HITS LIST

- The ‘top 5’ appears in the monthly report, but mysteriously none of them exist on the risk register.
- Risks that only live and die in reports.
- Actions to address them? Never assigned, never tracked, never mentioned again.

SEEING RED

- Endless debate about what colour it is.
- Heatmaps get more airtime than solutions.
- RAG status conveniently ‘downgraded’ before sponsor reviews.

THE PROSECUTOR'S PLAYBOOK

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The Prosecutor's Playbook

Technical	People	The Link
Budgets & Timelines	**Motivation & Engagement**	Even with perfect budgets, if people aren't motivated or connected to the goal, they won't deliver efficiently. Engagement sustains performance.
Systems & Processes	**Behavior & Communication**	Systems define *what* to do; people decide *how* to do it. Miscommunication is what turns a good process into a bad outcome.
Governance & Controls	**Leadership & Trust**	Governance only works if people trust the leaders enforcing it. Without trust, controls feel like constraints not guidance.
Roles & Responsibilities	**Ownership & Accountability**	Assigning a role isn't enough; ownership is emotional. When people feel it's "their" task, accountability happens naturally.
Planning & Reporting	**Collaboration & Alignment**	A plan is just data until people align on purpose. Collaboration turns reports into action.

The Prosecutor’s Playbook

Foster Intrinsic Motivation

1 Foster intrinsic motivation by creating an environment where team members feel personally invested in the outcomes.

Encourage Curiosity

2 Encourage team members to ask questions, explore possibilities, and seek deeper understanding.

Promote Psychological Safety

3 Promote diversity of thought, allowing for a more robust discussion and identification of blind spots.

Influence Without Authority

4 Build credibility and trust through consistent, accurate, actionable insights.

Establish Accountability

5 Establish clear expectations and responsibilities. Drum-beat, dripping tap. Keep the pace on tracking actions. Foster accountability.

The Prosecutor’s Playbook

Risk Tests

Personal risk attitude test, or the risk intelligence test. There are free resources that can help risk feel more ‘personal’.

Risk Surveys

Anonymous feedback surveys that will show you what your specific barriers are.

Personality Tests

Surrounded by Idiots, Insights, MBTI. Understand yourself and those around you.

Risk Play

Gamification can encourage interaction; the joker card, hangman, themed workshops, mixing up styles.

Be the Bridge

Step into the role of someone who drives progress and who brings everyone together.

THE VERDICT

Thank You

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