

Flirting with Risk: A Driver for Learning and Change by Sulima Geerman, PhD

SABA

We have become better at managing risk

Where do we go from here?

Why are we here?

The current reality

- Risk awareness has increased
- Risk management maturity varies
- Professional judgment still drives many decisions

‘Risk management in healthcare’
IVA, 2026

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How my ‘flirting’ skills developed

‘Grew thicker skin’

Early in my career...

- Every difficult decision felt risky

With experience...

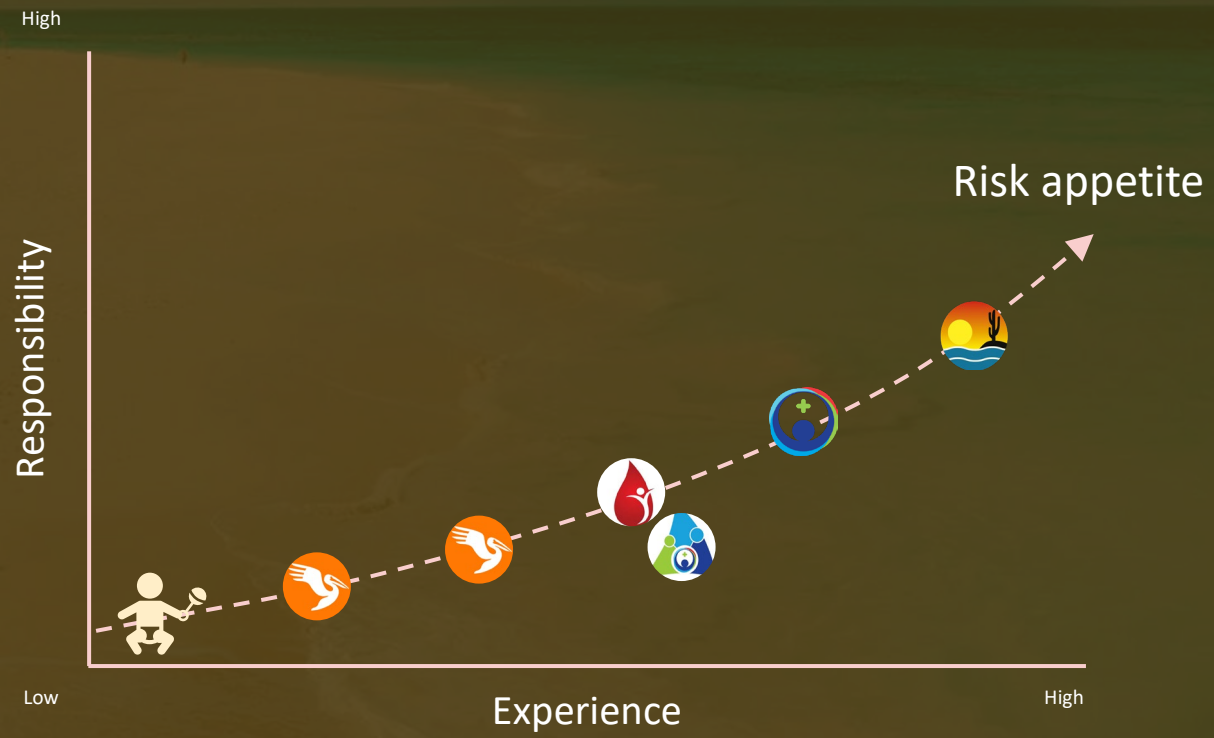
- I became more confident

Eventually...

- I became comfortable with uncertainty

Then I realized...

- Comfort itself can become a risk

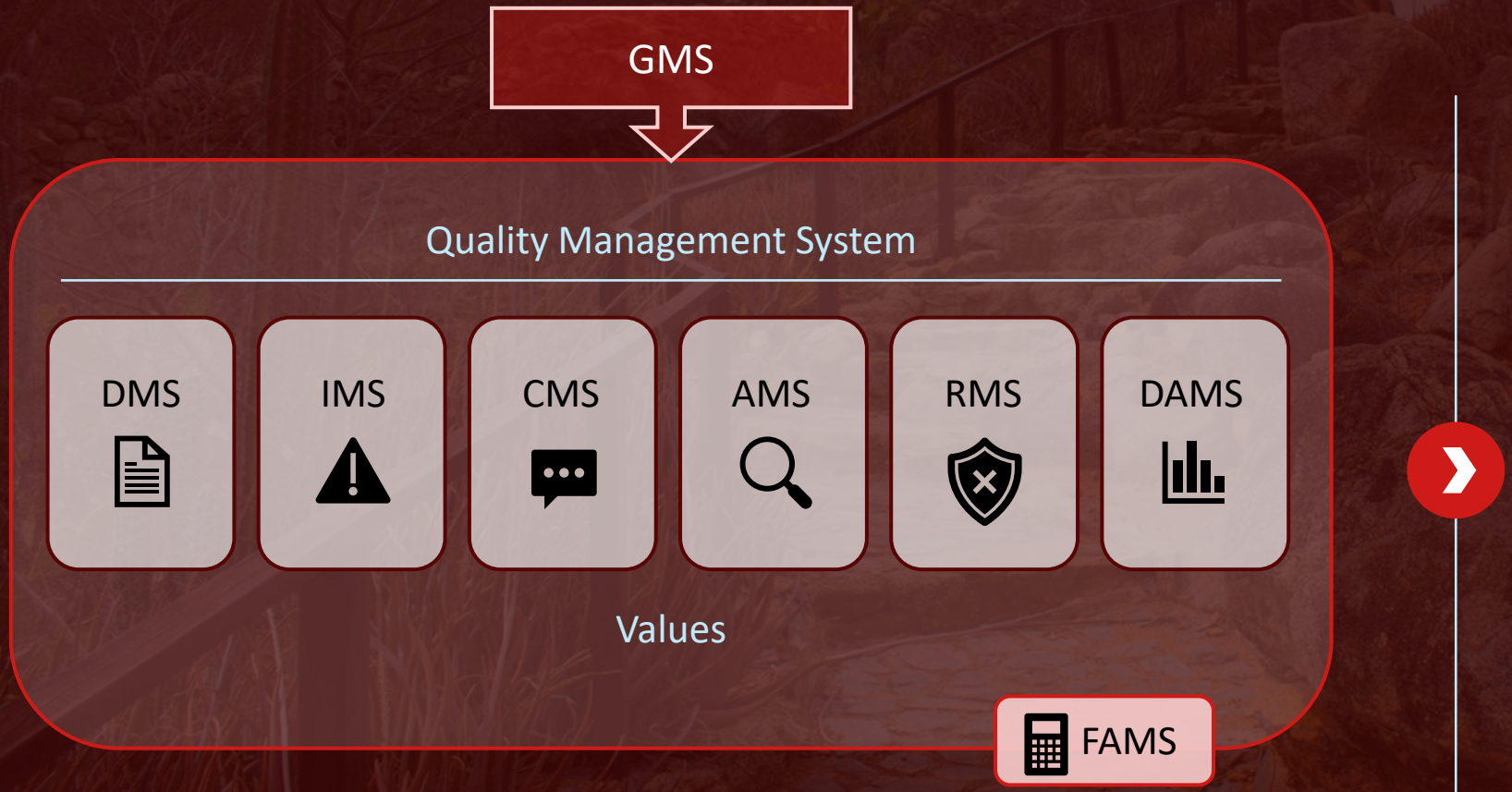


‘Strategic discomfort’
Wien, 2024

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The traditional view

RMS is one component of the broader QMS.

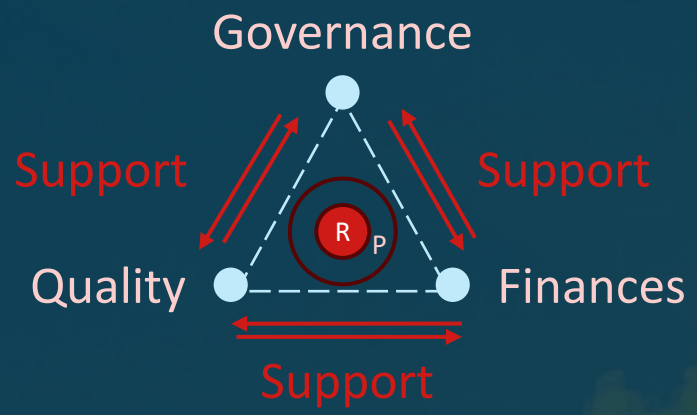


But is managing these systems enough?

‘Long-Term Care’
JCI, 2024

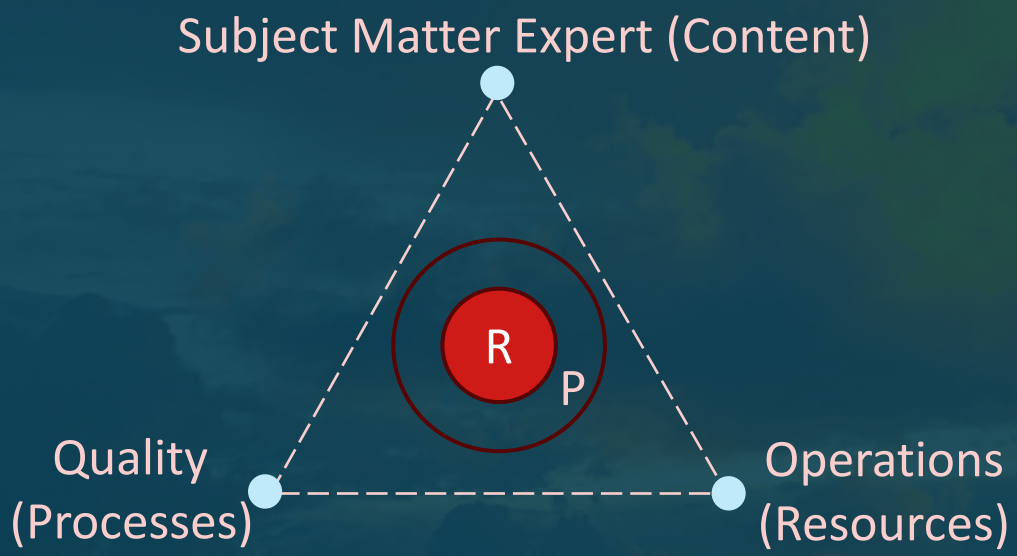
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1 The foundation

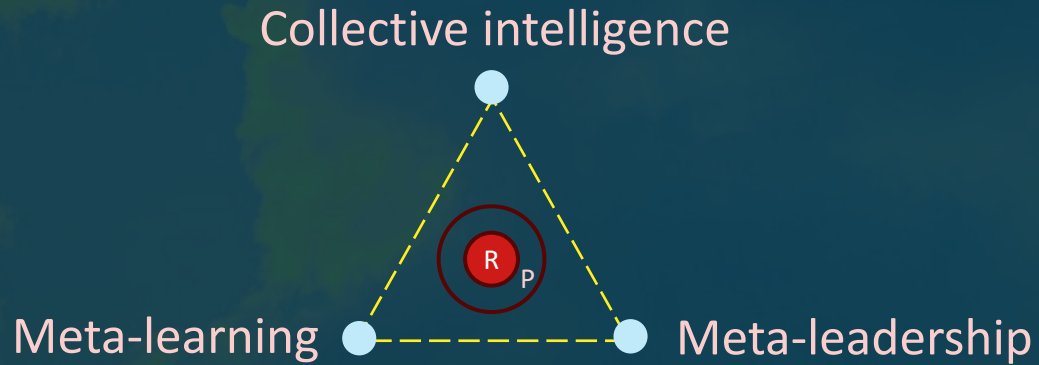


From silos to synergy

2 The walls



3 The roof



Systems build the house
but …
what makes it a home?

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The intelligence is in the interaction



What allows collective intelligence to emerge in an organization?

‘Swarm Intelligence’
Marcus, 2019

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It boils down to learning

Individual learning *can* become **team learning** and
team learning *can* become **organizational learning.**



Experience gives us information... but
sensemaking turns experience into learning.

'Sensemaking processes'
Hodges, 2019

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Learning requires engaging with risk

Development occurs in stages:

- Change is rarely linear
- Transitions create uncertainty (and often feel like a crisis)



‘Development ladder’
Pont, 2012

Organizations learn through both guided and unguided ‘disruption’.

Growth and development are not the same.

‘Strategic discomfort’
Wien, 2024

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When ‘flirting with risk’ became real

3

207

267

To protect the future, we had to flirt with risk

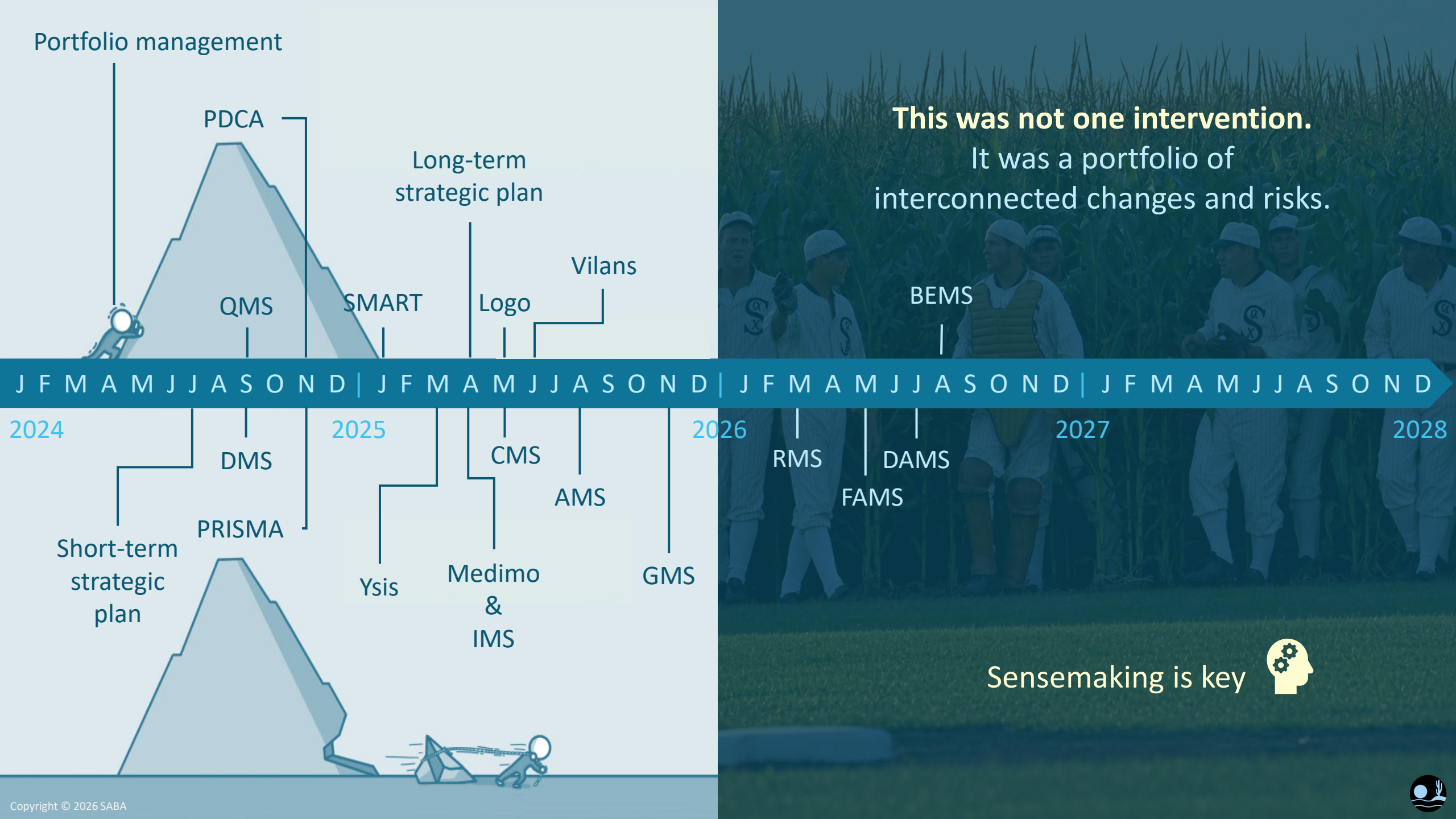
- Difficult decisions
- Rapid change = discomfort
- A ‘stress test’ for the entire organization

Pressure doesn't change behavior.
It reveals it and exposes the culture underneath.

Flirting with risk is like playing with fire
- Sometimes you succeed
- Sometimes you get burned

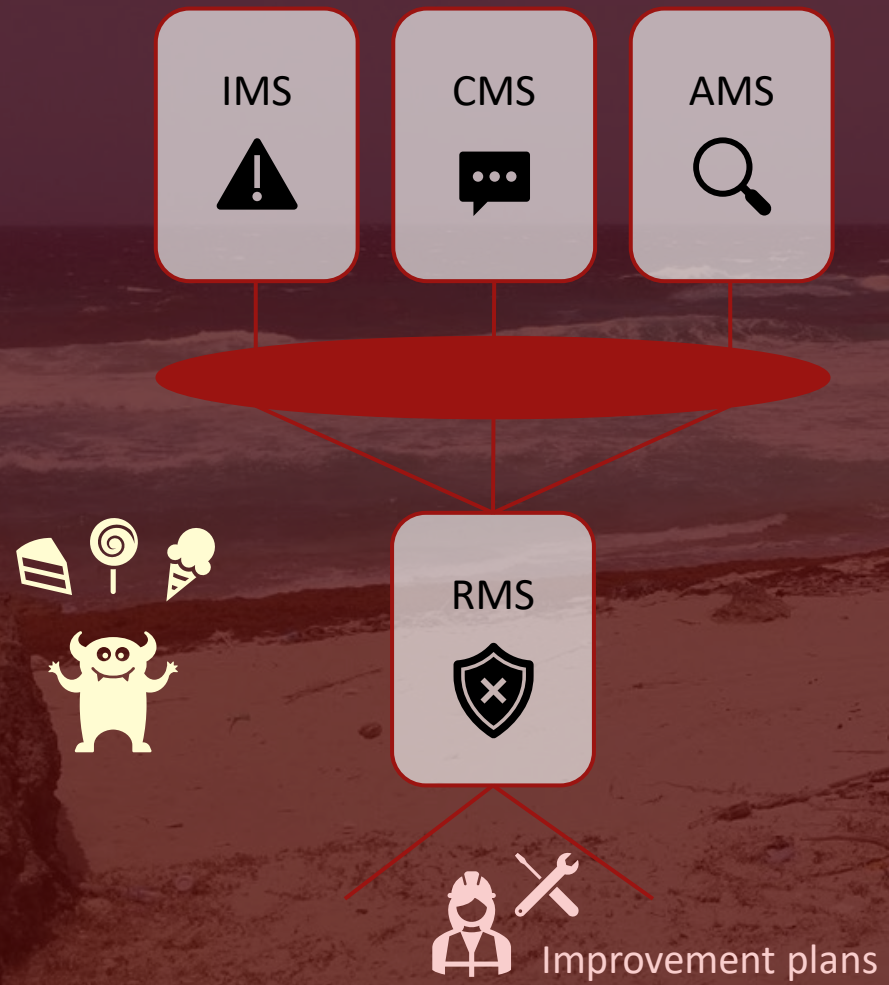


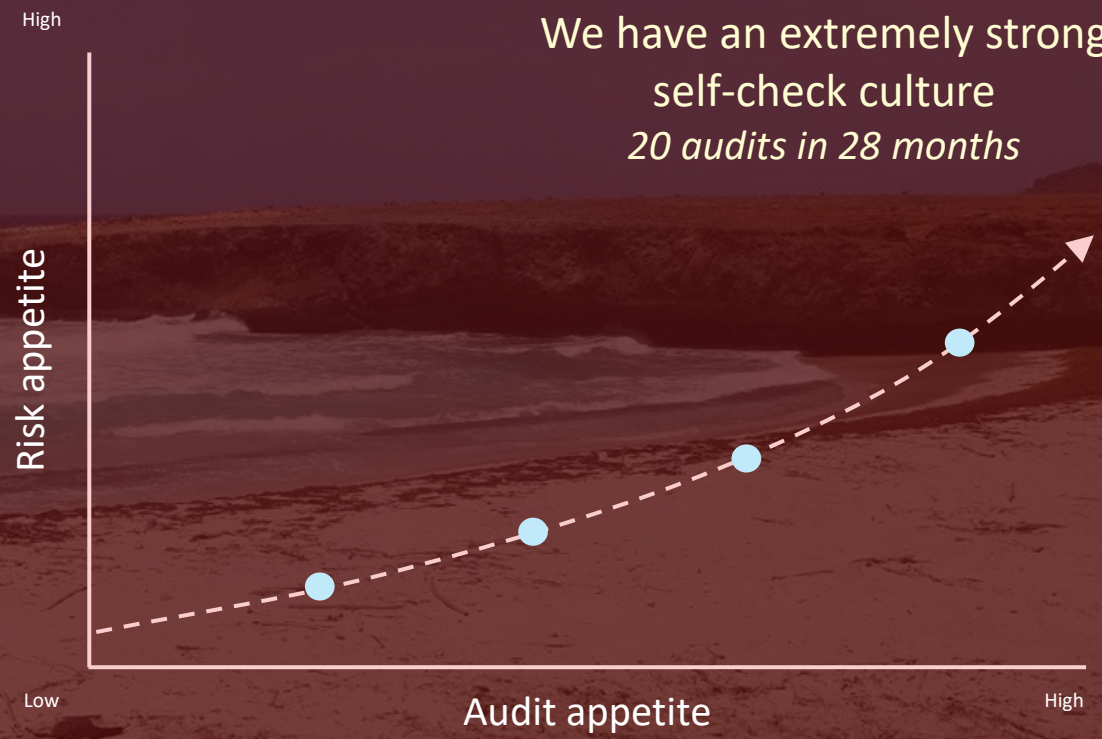
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The RMS monster is continually fed with information





We have an extremely strong self-check culture

20 audits in 28 months

Feeding the system is not the same as learning from it.

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Maslow’s hierarchy of needs

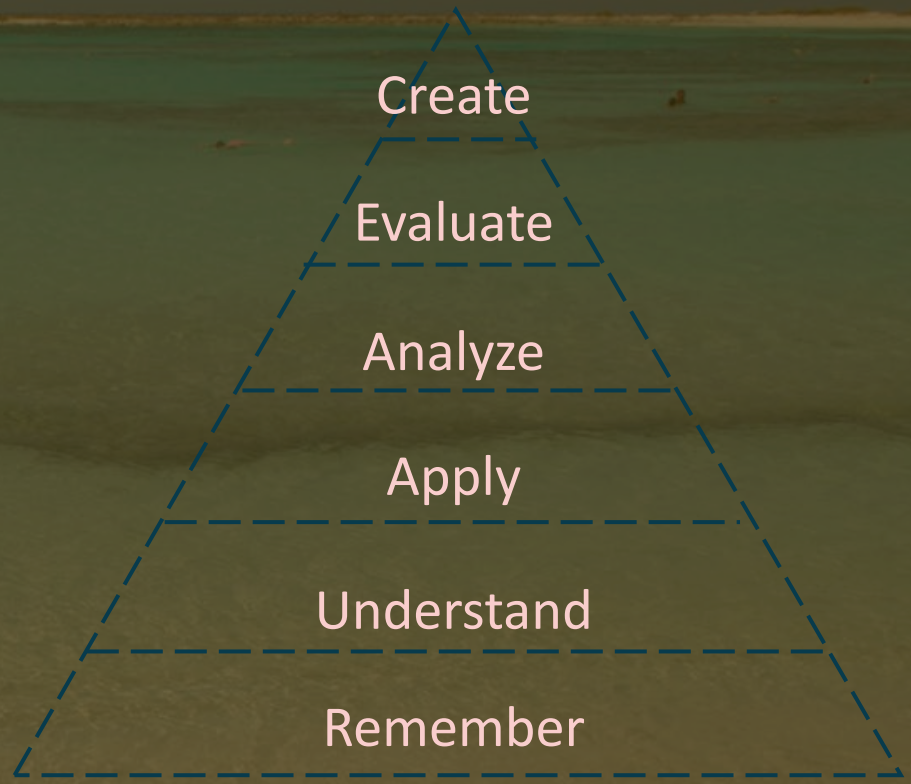


Condition for learning



Psychological safety

Bloom’s taxonomy



Depth of learning

Remove all risks!?

‘Deeper learning’
Fregni, 2018

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Reactive

Prospective

Predictive

Near-misses
Incidents
Complaints

Incidents
Complaints

Serious
incidents

Soft signals

Identify risks

Forecasting













Learning from the past

Learning in the present

Learning ‘from’ the future

Create a safer tomorrow

‘Predictive reliability’
Griffith, 2019

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Where do we go from here?

Risk management should not be the destination

Our challenge is not to avoid risk, but to build the capability to learn and grow through it.



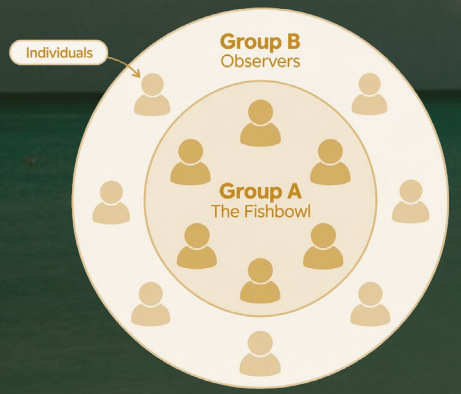
Risk provides information from both failures and successes.

Information alone isn't learning.

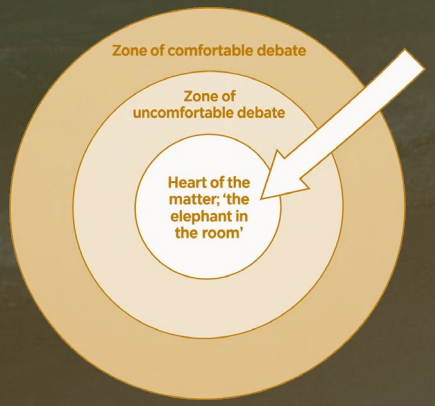
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Make sense

Listen
'Fishbowl'



Challenge
'ZOUD'

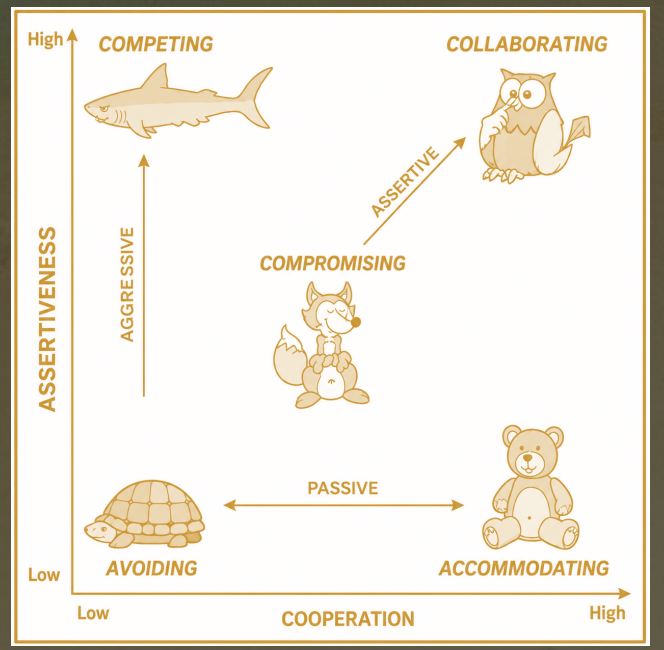


Adapt

Understand
'Willingness × Ability to change'

	Can change	Can't change (yet)
Will change	Players 🚀	Spectators 👀
Won't change	Cynics 🤔	Sleepwalkers 😴

Navigate
'Conflict handling'



Reflect

Look back

What went well?
What didn't go well?
What should we do differently?

'Organizational change'
Hodges, 2025

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Systems enable, but learning transforms

But what we build must make sense to the people who live in it.

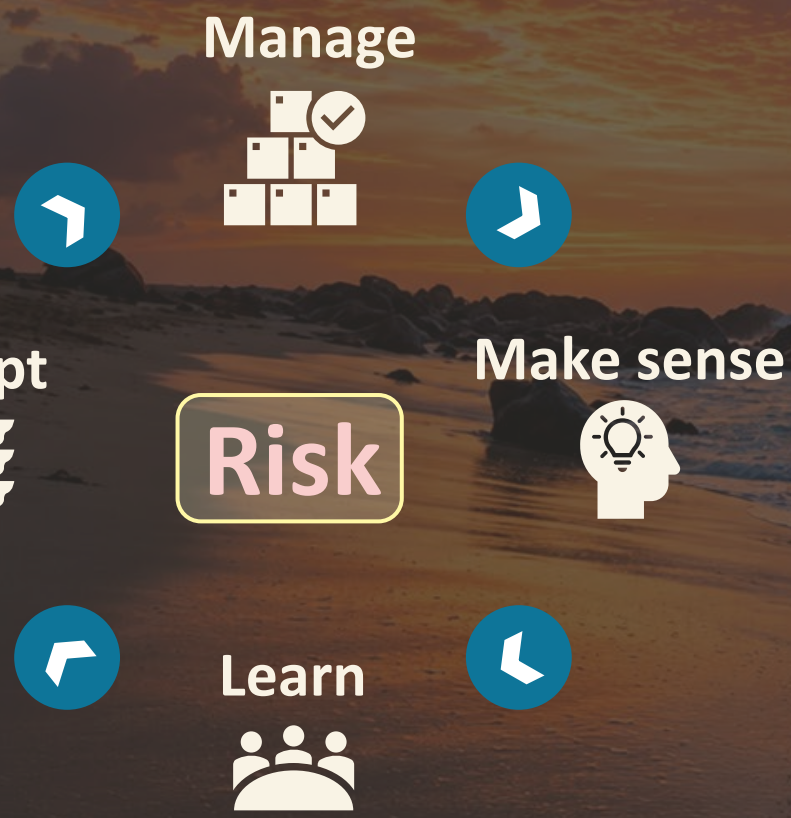
- Does this create value for our patients? High-value care
- Do people understand what we are asking them to do? Health literacy
- Are we learning from everyday practice? Organizational learning



Risk Management 1.0
Compliance
↓
Risk Management 2.0
Compliance, Learning & Adaptation

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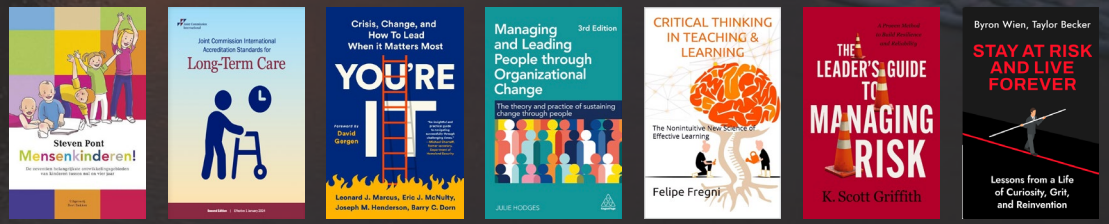
So, flirt with risk... but don't be reckless!



A big thank you to:

- The Management team
- Our staff, residents, and families
- The Supervisory Board
- My formal and informal coaches
- IVA

Intellectual influences



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