



Human Dimensions Quarterly Newsletter Culture, Learning and Risk

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Lead Story June 2012

Complex Safety Systems and Wicked Problems

'Some problems are so complex that you have to be highly intelligent and well informed just to be undecided about them.' - Laurence J. Peter

Problems that are so complex that there seems no solution were termed 'wicked problems' by C West Churchman in 1967. Wicked problems have no stopping rule, no alternatives, involve complex interconnectivity and those seeking to solve the problem are those who are causing it. In 2010 the Safety Institute of Australia commissioned an investigation of the issue producing a 'must read' report produced by Peter Wagner and Associates. The report, Safety - A Wicked Problem brings together the views of twenty of Australia's leading CEOs. You can download the report [from here](#).

I attended the recent Chief Minister's ACT Roundtable on Safety, a collection of all stakeholders in safety in the ACT and no one had heard of this brilliant report. Some of the key findings of the report (executive summary p.3) are:

- The biggest challenge in workplace safety was developing right culture.
- Most CEOs no longer found Lost Time Injury or audit data as helpful for guiding safety performance.
- CEOs felt that the legislative framework was largely ineffective in preventing injuries.
- Whilst supporting harmonization they felt it would have no impact on safety outcomes.
- The community had become desensitized and complacent towards safety.
- Small businesses and sub-contractors had little capacity to respond to the excesses and demands of now an unwieldy safety system.

Ten Insights for Improving Safety Performance

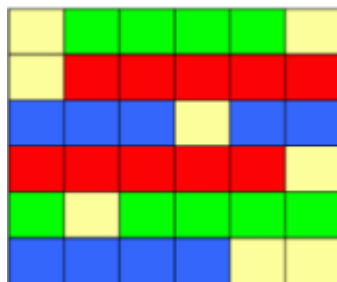
The report includes ten recommendations and speculations about how to respond to the dilemma of *safety as a wicked problem*. Whatever the response we don't need more paperwork rather, new ways of engaging with people. If you are interested in this issue and want more information email Craig at admin@humandimensions.com.

Special Seminars in the West

Rob is visiting Perth 16-20 July

He is presenting a series of lectures, demonstrations, workshops and seminars. If you are interested in booking a workshop session or joining in one of the public seminars please contact him on rob@humandimensions.com or mobile: 0424547115

Puzzle of the Day



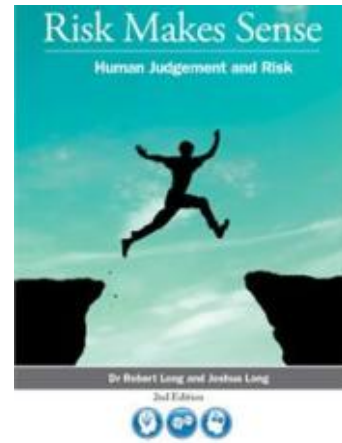
Only take 5 seconds to glance at this set of squares and colours and turn to the end of the newsletter and answer 2 questions.

Book News

Risk Makes Sense



The second edition of Risk makes Sense is now on sale after being sold out, re-edited and reprinted. The second edition is clearly identified by its aqua cover. Please link to the website to order your copy. Bulk orders receive a 10% discount.



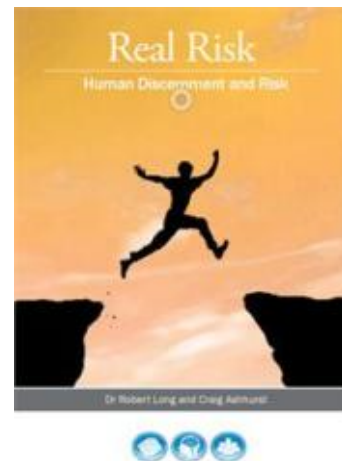
Seminars

Risk Makes Sense Seminars

Contact Rob for your 2 hour seminar which includes debate, questions and answers on key issues in the book.

Real Risk: Human Discernment and Risk

Rob is currently writing his second book with co-author and associate Craig Ashhurst. Craig is currently doing his PhD on Wicked Problems. The book is entitled Real Risk Human Discernment and Risk and tackles problems of risk complexity and what to do about it. Look out for the book in the later half of this year.



Book of the Month

Brain Rules by John Medina is a table top book full of ideas about how to survive, learn and thrive in life. You will understand more how the human brain works but more importantly why we are all so predictably unpredictable. The book is loaded with neat illustrations and stories and tackles the big issues of: attention blindness, memory loss, concentration, desensitization and stress.

Workshops

Psychology of Leadership Workshops

Rob and Craig offer an 8 series set of workshops (8 x 4 hours) on the psychology of leadership. This engaging series is complete with manual, diagnostics, book and interactive presentations. Contact admin@humandimensions.com if you would like more information on the series, referees can be provided.

Latest Research of Interest

Excessive Cleaning

When Pontius Pilot was brought Jesus to make an executive decision he was in a lose-lose situation so he 'washes his hands' of the process and makes no decision (Matthew 27:24). The idea of cleansing self or things is associated with the unconscious belief that cleansing can get rid of risk-taking behavior. This was established by research by Xu and Zwick (Journal of Experimental Psychology: General 2012, Vol. 141, No. 1, 26-30).

Many superstitious practices entail the belief that bad things can be 'washed away'. Experiments by Xu and Zwick showed that people attribute risk differently simply through 'priming' by the washing of

hands.

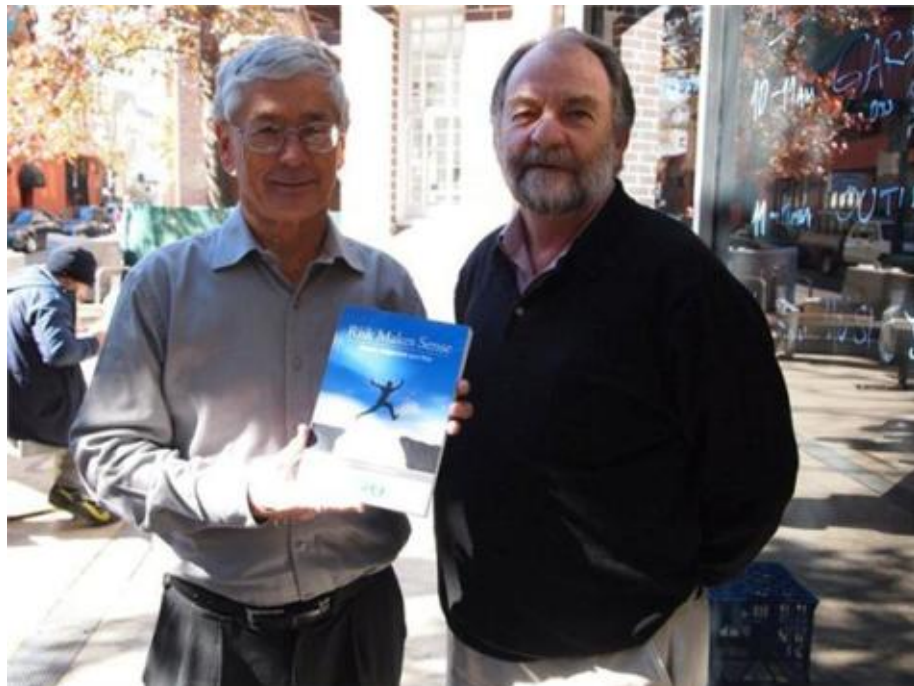
Workplace Images and Language

Research by Cook and Warren (Journal of Neuroscience, Psychology, and Economics 2011, Vol. 4, No. 3, 147–160) shows that the words and images we present to workers do have an effect on behavior. The research shows that the effect of priming images and language is unconsciously absorbed in two distinct parts of the brain. Using low-resolution brain electromagnetic tomography the researchers were able to measure the effect of images and word activate in the brain. So, whilst we are desensitized to many of the things which bombard us daily, there is a cumulative effect. Leaders and managers should be therefore much more conscious of work climate and its effect on people.

Testosterone and Risk

Recent research by Stenstrom and Saad (Journal of Neuroscience, Psychology, and Economics 2011, Vol. 4, No. 4, 254–266) shows strong links between excessive testosterone and financial risk taking, gambling and other impulsive-related pathologies.

News from the Wayside



Many of you would know that my brother Graham Long is CEO and Pastor of the Wayside Chapel, an amazing service to disadvantaged people in inner Sydney. If you ever wanted to have a reality check about risk, just think about what the Wayside does each day and night. www.wayside.com.au The recent opening of their new building has heralded a new era for the service, if you want to know more check out the links: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0aGEKN5Oz_8
<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2012-05-18/the-new-wayside/4021102>

Social Media

Join me on LinkedIn, Facebook (Safety Leadership) or Twitter

When he gets time Rob puts up points of interest and research on Twitter and LinkedIn. You can log into the links by clicking on the images on the front page of the website:
www.humandimensions.com

Rob's Blogs

Rob writes on his own blog (linked to the Human Dymensions home page) but some of you may not know that he also writes extensively for the Health and Safety Risk Management Blog (<http://www.safetyrisk.com.au/>).

Puzzle Questions

1. Which colour appears most frequently in the picture?
2. Which colour appears the least frequently in the picture?

How did you go?

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