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1. Risk Reporting – Seven Key Tips

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Risk Reporting – Seven Key Tips

We all need to write reports from time to time. For many of us our audience finds risk management a concept that is hard to understand. Reports are formal corporate documents that often have to fit into a corporate template. It takes skill and experience to draft a report with just the right tone and level of detail to relay your message the way you want to while making it understandable to outsiders. Within templates we are able to choose our words, phrases and the order of the ideas to convey our message.

Below I have listed seven key ideas to keep in mind when writing your report.

1. Know your audience. Do they have any particular interest, knowledge, or views about risk management? If they do, and you know what those biases are, then you have a great start in knowing what to include or leave out of the report. You also need to predict how the contents and style of the report will affect their view of your work and how the readers will perceive you professionally based on the quality and complexity of your writing.
2. Know why you are writing the report. Is it because someone has a question that they want answered? Or is it because you have something you want the reader to know? In either case, think about the information from their point of view. For senior management or elected officials remember that they already have plenty of reading to do. They will not want to see anything irrelevant or unrelated to the main topic. Stick to the subject. For other departmental managers or one of your peers you need relay the particulars most relevant to them and how risk management concepts' interact with their operations. I.e. A "What's in it for them?" point of view.
3. Remember that people have different learning styles. Some report processes let you supplement the written report with an oral outline. Those situations allow you to address the needs of oral learners. Otherwise, you need to address all learners as much as possible through written and visual methods. This is when photos, charts and diagrams are inserted to supplement the text. Well-placed and carefully

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though-out these visual aids help readers more quickly understand the concepts you describe.

4. Report length should be less than five pages. Executive summaries are used to convey only high-level finds and recommendations. Even when writing technical reports you should keep the executive summary to less than five pages. When including recommendations, they should be succinct and preferably numbered for easy reference. Only the people who will implement a plan should need to read any more than that.
5. What else can, or should, you include? Whenever possible include relevant examples or stories that give a human face to dry facts. In a report of loss history, for example, you supplement charts by focusing on one or two claims that would be of special interest to readers. You can predict their level of interest based on the high cost of the chosen claims, the type of injuries incurred or because of the unusual events that caused those losses to occur.
6. Your report is a corporate document and subject to your corporation's retention policies; it may be posted on the intranet for public view. Whatever you say in the report may be read for a very long time. Any unwise statements may come back to haunt you. Avoid making comments hastily or without sufficient care. Also, if you have insufficient data to support your view, be sure to tell readers that you are stating an opinion and not facts.
7. When reading our own text we tend to see what we are thinking, and intending to say, rather than what is actually on the page in front of us. Always run spell-check and proof-read your work. After checking your spelling, grammar, etc., have someone else proof-read it for you. It is always easier to find areas for improvement in someone else's work than it is your own.

Use these few steps to help you produce a concise, persuasive report that makes the best case for your desired outcome.

To quote Nathaniel Hawthorne:
"Easy reading is damn hard writing."

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