Live for Tomorrow With an Internal Checklist

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In his book *100 Rules for Living to 100: An Optimist's Guide to a Happy Life*, Dick Van Dyke offers a buffet of funny and memorable insights from a life well lived. I especially loved that each chapter, averaging 2-3 pages, is bite sized and suitable for those times when you need to take a deep breath between hectic moments. The brevity of each rule is also ideal if you enjoy sharing what you're learning—out loud—with a loved one or colleague.

The wisdom in his chapter titled "Don't Live in the Past" invites us to redirect when we find ourselves waxing unpoetically about the good old days. To focus on the future, we first need to live in the 'right now'. Van Dyke suggests using an internal checklist to refocus. He writes:

"What and who are right in front of you, right now?! Grab on, jump in! As soon as I start to feel a sense of quickening, that's my lifeline back to the present."

When it feels as though you are drowning in details and complexity, pause to answer these powerful prompts from Dick Van Dyke's internal checklist.

- What are you going to do today?
- What do you want tomorrow, next month, next year to look like?
- What feels important?
- What still needs getting done?

Better still, bring the sharp minds and endless curiosity of colleagues together to create a motivating team checklist:

- With respect to risk awareness, readiness and resilience: what are WE going to do today?
- With respect to our risk function and evolving capabilities, what do WE want tomorrow, next month, next year to look like?
- Related to risk, what feels most important right now?
- As we step back and reflect on risk management, what still needs getting done?

Last week a nonprofit leader expressed gratitude for our team's simple definition of the word risk: *possibilities*. I shared that despite its simplicity the definition was nearly 29 years in the making. It reflects our team's commitment to learn from every team and nonprofit mission we encounter. Our shift to defining risks as possibilities was inspired by our internal checklist:

- Does it convey hope and optimism as well as worry and concern?
- Can the definition be understood quickly by staff at various levels, with varied backgrounds?
- Does the definition conjure things that haven't happened yet, but could happen in the future?

As I peruse my internal checklist, the common element is **learning**. From a stack of books waiting to be read, to the webinars and conferences I will attend and the new client teams I have yet to meet, the opportunity to learn from and alongside others provides inspiration and energy. It helps me focus on today and lean into tomorrow. What's on your internal checklist?