

Confessions of a Risk-Taker



By Erin Gloeckner

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As an employee of the go-to organization for advice on any and everything risky, I realized that some people probably assume I'm a professional worrywart. You probably wouldn't be surprised if I told you I constantly fret over danger, like Ben Stiller's risk analyst character in *Along Came Polly*. Well here's the truth: I am a germaphobe. I wash my hands twenty times a day, and I worry about contracting pinkeye. I worry about my long-distance relationship. I worry about whether I have visible sweat rings. But, I do a lot more than worry. I am a spontaneous, adventurous woman; I enjoy taking risks for the reward that risk-taking promises. Last year for Christmas, I took my boyfriend skydiving. We jumped tandem, attached to instructors on harnesses, from 14,000 feet in the air. When I tumbled out of that plane, screaming like a banshee, I realized that I was not a professional worrywart after all. I am a hardcore risk manager who knows that many risks are worth taking.

As the year comes to an end, I hope you are giving some thought to the risks that make you fearful, and the risks you happily embrace. Have your fears held you back from experiencing the extraordinary? We too often forget that the entire point of risk-taking is to reap positive outcomes, or that risk-taking itself can be a powerful avenue to personal growth.

As a New Year's resolution, I invite you to create a "Risk Bucket List" of the risks your nonprofit plans to take in 2013. Instead of focusing solely on the downside risks you hope to avoid (e.g., litigation, injured clients, disgruntled funders, etc.), why not focus on the opportunity to create a meaningful CEO succession plan, collaborate with a brand new partner, or finally confront a board member whose actions are causing more harm than good?

A recent addition to my *personal* "Risk Bucket List" is to complete the 10 mile "Tough Mudder" race, which includes 20 grueling military-style obstacles. My race is in April, so start worrying! I'm going to worry my way to the finish line and celebrate with a Spartan victory scream and an ice cold beer.

Erin Gloeckner is a former NRMC employee.