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# End of the recyclable cycle.

In the last 10 years, I have been working with consultancy, information risk management and more recently with governance, risk and compliance. After a long time studying the subject, and learning and supporting the development of new approaches and following the movement of the market, clients, suppliers and professionals that get things rolling, I had the feeling that we are walking in circles. I mean, that we are living in cycles in almost everything we do, which also includes risk management. Everything seems to repeat itself, year after year, with small variations. You have information that requires a certain level of privacy. There are people who want to try and obtain information and use it for their advantage. Moreover, between them both, there are ways of manipulating, storing, transporting and deleting information (the variables of an equation), which have flaws and represent a “board” in the cat and mouse chase game. Also as a third player, we have suppliers that seem to have a good understanding of the rules of the game and try and give the mouse the most efficient means of protection from the cat. As if this was not enough, most of the mice do not have a well-defined vision of what should be protected, of their value or importance, and don’t even know the potential creativity of cats, which ends up creating a dilemma for suppliers: think about sustainability and spending great effort trying to convince the mouse of the importance of a structured solution, or simply think about the present and offer an immediate solution with a rapid response and doubtful continuity? As the client is always right, it looks like the mice have the answer. Maybe due to the nature of the mouse itself, which needs to survive the attacks of the cat, day after day without a lot of future planning, it ends up choosing the easy way out and what is instinctively appropriate. By the way, any similarity between the mouse and the board, and the executives and their volatile roles and their competitive companies is not mere coincidence. What occurs, therefore, is that we are walking in circles adopting short-term measures that are only efficient until the end of the cycle, but reveal themselves as perishable and unsustainable when variations arise, and then, a new cycle begins.

I see companies with attractive progressive discourses that show no interest in innovating, developing new knowledge, researching for today and planning for tomorrow, in a more structured way. Maybe it is a silent imposition of the market, the pressure of capitalist stakeholders accustomed to overnight operations, or even an unconscious action. Nevertheless, whatever the reason, I do not think it is coherent with the desire of ‘growing up’ and becoming an ‘adult’ company.

The error seems very clear to me. If they had to go fishing in a lake where there is only one type of fish, they would prefer to invest less time and money analysing the current situation and would exclusively teach anglers to catch *that* kind of fish. Instead of going beyond, assessing the current and future situation and then investing in structured solutions that provide real anglers with the appropriate knowledge for the present, but also ready to react, adapt and expand their abilities to new lakes, fish and conditions. Finally, prepare the

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company for the build-in-block model where maturity is gained every time a new step is taken, or every time there is a new “block” of experience.

It is possible to notice this mistaken behaviour in various initiatives. Content filter solutions, development of software and identity management, for example, made and remade with the lowest ratio of reutilization. Risk analysis solutions that simply deliver a portrait frozen in time without being connected to something larger and continuous that can re-feed an integrated management process. Solutions for incident management operated in silos that spill a colossal amount of information without sufficient connection so that learning can be extracted. User training solutions that treat them as temporary assets without envisaging the building of a solid risk culture. And, also solutions of compliance and *assurance* that reinvent the wheel at each new requirement and end up creating an irrational superposition of *frameworks*, controls, tests, monitoring and consequently the effort to maintain them.

I do not know if I am oversimplifying something that in practice is a lot more complex. However, I have noticed in the last few years an almost theatrical and surreal atmosphere in the numerous relationships between client-supplier. On the one hand, someone with a budget and the desire of immediately ‘stopping a haemorrhage’, as if it were their only problem. On the other hand, the supplier with a more comprehensive view of the board, but also motivated by an uncontrollable desire of fulfilling their role as salesman and offering something that fits perfectly with what was requested, even though it was not a definite solution. To make matters worse, all of this happens in an atmosphere where there is a false sense of satisfaction. On the one hand, the client pretends to be satisfied with the solution, and on the other hand, a supplier pretends to have offered the best, even though both of them recognise the “farce” deep down and continue motivated to go on, in meeting their immediate needs without being concerned about the continuity and the long-term path of the company. In fact, they seem like corporate teenagers only thinking about the weekend programme and not concerned with the day after. As a result, we see a generalized loss of money, time, competitiveness and trust. This is all that a serious company, interested in the continuity and development of their business does not desire.

If we really live in cycles, we need to close the cycle of recyclable solutions soon, and start something structured and sustainable that can be accumulated year after year, thus, contributing towards the increase of maturity with which the companies manage their information technology assets, risks, compliance, reputation and their future. Paraphrasing the famous English poet and playwright, William Shakespeare, the best way of foreseeing the future is to invent it!

Next month, I will start speaking about COBIT - Control Objectives for Information and related Technology and how to use a common language to simplify and reduce the duplicate efforts that lead to compliance with market regulations and standards.

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