

ERM Reimagined: Insights from the Spring 2025 Enterprise Risk Management Summit

*St. John's University Maurice R. Greenberg School of Risk Management
Center for Excellence in Enterprise Risk Management*

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The Resiliency Imperative: What 2025 Revealed About ERM's Evolution

The Spring 2025 ERM Summit at St. John's University brought together risk leaders, consultants, and academics to address a fundamental challenge: how to transform enterprise risk management from a compliance-driven "check-the-box" exercise into a strategic enabler that adds tangible value to decision-making.

The urgency of this transformation has never been clearer. Survey data from the summit indicated sobering gaps in current ERM effectiveness:

- Less than half of surveyed companies gain real-time insights from their ERM processes
- Only 21% successfully align risk management with strategic planning
- Most organizations struggle to operationalize risk appetite beyond high-level statements

Yet against a backdrop of unprecedented geopolitical uncertainty and AI disruption, organizations that successfully reimagine their ERM approach are finding new pathways to executive engagement, cultural adoption, and strategic impact.

This report synthesizes the key insights, proven practices, and emerging strategies that materialized from candid discussions with risk leaders who are successfully navigating this transformation.

2025 Summit Trends: The Future of Enterprise Risk

TREND 1

From Check-the-Box to Strategic Enabler: Framing ERM as Business Resiliency

A dominant theme was the need to consciously reframe ERM's purpose and language to resonate with business priorities. The term "Business Resiliency" emerged as a powerful pivot, positioning the function around helping the organization understand, prepare, and respond to disruptions.

- **Shifting Perception to Gain Buy-In:** As one leader noted, the change in the perception of ERM is how you gain buy-in and expand capabilities. The goal is to make risk management an enabler that adds value, a topic that comes up in everyday conversation, especially in industries where ERM is not mandated. Success stories included project teams proactively requesting scenario analysis sessions and the resilience team being the first call during a major problem.

TREND 2

Mastering the Art of Risk Appetite: Moving from Statement to Action

While risk appetite is a hot topic driven by boards and C-suites, leading organizations are discovering that the real value lies not in perfecting enterprise-level statements but in defining appetite at specific risk levels with clear understanding of trade-offs.

- **The Resource Constraint Reality:** Effective risk appetite frameworks help leadership make informed choices about resource allocation. ERM's role can be to frame resource requests and clarify the residual risk exposure that comes with investment decisions.
- **Addressing Qualitative Risk Challenges:** Organizations are leveraging Key Risk Indicators (KRIs) to enable meaningful risk appetites for qualitative risks like litigation, reputation, safety, and regulatory compliance—areas where traditional metrics fall short.
- **Communication Over Complexity:** Rather than complex dashboards, successful programs focus on providing context and narrative around risk appetite performance, helping leadership understand what the data reveals about their risk position.



TREND 3

Navigating the Unprecedented Risk Landscape

Experts highlighted a world of continued uncertainty, labeled a "G-Zero World," where no single nation has the desire and means to lead globally. This fragmentation, coupled with the rapid pace of AI development outpacing governance, creates a risk environment of unparalleled connectedness and complexity.

- **From Awareness to Action with Advanced Tools:** The Summit moved beyond acknowledging these risks to strategies for action. Recommendations included using advanced ERM tools like war gaming, scenario analysis, and red teaming to test cross-functional resilience. The imperative is to separate signals from noise in headline-driven news cycles and ensure boards are deeply involved in strategy discussions affected by these macro risks.
- **Critical Questions for Today's Risk Leaders:** In today's volatile global landscape, risk leaders must be equipped to address fundamental questions that have become increasingly complex and urgent:
 - How frequently should models and assumptions be retested in this volatile environment?
 - What de-risking or reallocation strategies are appropriate for global companies facing increased anti-American sentiment?
 - How can organizations maintain focus on material risks while avoiding paralysis from information overload?



The Summit speakers revealed two top risks reshaping the global business environment:

1. **G-Zero World Leadership Vacuum:** No single country or bloc has both the desire and means to provide clear global leadership, creating a more fractured world with "every man for himself" mentality and greater reliance on hard power.
2. **AI Governance Gap:** AI technology development is rapidly outpacing governance efforts, with whatever safeguards existed being systematically eroded while geopolitical tensions hinder international cooperation on AI safety.



How ERM Leaders Drive Action: Key Strategies that are Working

Leveraging Advanced Analytics and Technology

- Real-Time Monitoring Capabilities:** Organizations are implementing ERM KRI dashboards for ongoing monitoring, establishing quarterly geopolitical risk "heatmaps," and developing risk interdependency modeling to understand connected threats.
- Strategic Risk Analysis:** Leading programs are moving beyond qualitative assessments to incorporate strategic risk analysis, enabling more sophisticated resource allocation decisions and clearer communication of risk exposure.
- AI Integration and Assessment:** Forward-thinking organizations are increasing AI usage in risk processes while simultaneously conducting risk assessments of their artificial intelligence control environments to ensure responsible implementation.

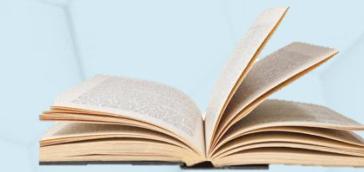
Revolutionizing Engagement Through Strategic Integration

- Getting Ahead of Emerging Risks:** Organizations are achieving significant ERM wins by proactively addressing supply chain vulnerabilities, establishing cross-functional VP-level Risk Councils, and integrating emerging risk assessments into strategic and operational decision-making.
- Routine Departmental Integration:** Rather than limiting risk discussions to annual exercises, leading organizations are getting departments to build ERM conversations into routine meetings, making risk consideration a natural part of business operations.

How ERM Leaders Drive Action: Key Strategies that are Working

Building a Resilient Risk Culture

- **Training and Development:** Organizations are investing in comprehensive training and functional risk assessments to embed risk thinking throughout the enterprise, recognizing that cultural change is essential to moving beyond compliance mentality.
- **External Expertise Integration:** Successful programs increasingly leverage outside experts to speak with project teams on emerging risk assessments and provide specialized insights to Risk Councils.
- **Benchmarking and Competitive Intelligence:** Organizations are benchmarking risk practices against peer groups and competition through analysis of annual reports and industry best practices.



Enhancing Communication to Tell the Risk Story:

ERM leaders must become master communicators. This involves moving beyond complex dashboards to provide clear context and narrative. Tactics include:

- **Publishing a "Risk Roundup" Newsletter** to highlight emerging risks, share insights, and remind the business of available tools.
- **Reframing Questions** from "What could go wrong?" to "What do we have to get right?" to identify critical vulnerabilities.
- **Building Strong Relationships** with "neighboring functions" like Strategy, Finance, and Audit to find shared goals and collaboration opportunities.



The Path Forward: Building a Resilient Organization

ERM is uniquely positioned to lead the charge toward integrated, strategic risk management. This is due to its enterprise-wide perspective and mandate to connect disparate risk dots.

Where should you start? Summit consensus advised beginning with focused, collaborative initiatives.

- 1. Partner with a Forward-Leaning Business Unit:** Co-develop a pilot to map strategic goals against emerging risks using a new unified taxonomy. Demonstrate tangible value and use it as a blueprint for expansion.
- 2. Operationalize One Piece of Your Risk Appetite:** Select one high-priority, qualitative risk (e.g., reputation, talent) and work with a business unit to define meaningful metrics and tolerance levels. Use this as a model.
- 3. Educate and Communicate Relentlessly:** Host workshops to socialize new tools and taxonomies. Showcase success stories from pilots to secure executive buy-in and shift the cultural perception of ERM.

The journey forward is one of partnership, enabled by technology and a common language, centered on building an organization that is not just protected, but prepared.

The ERM Summit: Where Vision Meets Collaborative Action

The 2025 ERM Summit made it clear that the future belongs to organizations that treat risk management not as a regulatory burden, but as a source of competitive advantage and resilience. By reframing their role around business resiliency, mastering risk appetite, and empowering the organization with tools and a common language, ERM professionals can transition from reporters of risk to architects of the future.

As we move forward, committing to this integrated approach will empower ERM leaders to earn a seat at the strategic table, champion organizational agility, and build trust with executives, boards, and stakeholders.



Appendix A:

Our Best ERM Win has been...

Integration into strategic and operational decision making

Integrating risk appetite into annual planning process

Tangible improvements in the first line of defense

Incorporating risk taxonomies into M&A deal analyses

Securing endorsement/buy-in from Board of Directors and some senior executives

Getting employees comfortable about raising risks and getting business managers comfortable with being risk owners

Establishing true inherent and residual risk ratings

Robust reporting to management and the board

Project teams requesting facilitation of scenario sessions

Launching regional IRMCs (Integrated Risk Management Councils) that meet quarterly to allow for information flow to the Global IRMC

Establishing a Risk Appetite Framework including metrics and an ERM Maturity Model Roadmap; Defining 1st and 2nd Line Roles and Responsibilities

Establishing a cross-functional VP level ERM Risk Council

An Annual Report on ERM

Board confidence in strategy and influencing major capital decisions for key initiative to manage a key risk

Successful buy-in from the Board and Executives on the annual Strategic Risk Assessment approach

Getting ahead of the China pressure in supply chain by reducing exposure

Getting departments to consider building ERM discussions into routine meetings - not just annual

Assisting the business with emerging risks

Recognition of the program throughout the Company and its alignment with other assurance functions, such as internal audit, cyber, third-party risk management, etc.

Implementation of an annual strategic risk assessment across all major sections of the company

Appendix B:

One ERM Practice your Group Started or will be Starting...

Emerging risk sessions + reviews

Calculating residual risk

ERM KRI Dashboard ongoing monitoring; need to embed Risk Appetite in Decision Making

Strategic risk quantification

Quarterly monitoring of Geopolitical Risks in a world "heatmap"

More engagement with Executive Management team

Refine ERM framework and methodology - with the goal of unifying the framework across the entire organization

Risk Interdependency modeling

Establishing KRIs for top risks

Increased use "outside experts" to speak with project teams on emerging risk assessments and in general to the ERM Council

Climate Risk Assessment

Interviews for risk assessment and integrating ERM into Audit planning

More AI use

Small group discussions to get ERM built into all levels of the company

Corporate top leader risk surveys

Integration w. strategy and reporting to Sr. Leadership

Risk Description refinement, and enhanced identification of top enterprise risks for the organization to be in line with peers.

Risk assessment over artificial intelligence control environment

Benchmarking risk to peer groups and competition through a review of their annual report.

Training and functional risk assessments

Appendix C: Forward Looking ERM Exercises to Use...

Tabletop exercise annually

Strategic risk assessment

Deep dives, emerging risk discussions

Risk Correlation exercise performed every two years, analyzing the relationship between current top enterprise risks to understand how they might impact each other

Decision support activities, such as game theory and wargaming

BCP assessments, ESG assessments, Financial health monitoring for critical suppliers

Estimating impact from one key regulatory change

Failure Mode and Effects Analysis (FMEA) to understand what technological risks could interrupt business

Risk Analyses & Write-Ups

Risk bow-tie

War Gaming/Game Theory

Scenario analysis and planning (ex: port strikes, tariffs, tax implications), TTE (cyber, quality, natural disaster)

Pre-mortem exercises

Risk scenario workshops

Stress testing and risk assessments for emerging markets and technologies

RDS scenarios

Crisis Scenarios and Modeling exercises

About the Summit Host & Authors

About the Authors



Paul L. Walker, Ph.D.

Professor Paul L. Walker is the Schiro / Zurich Chair in Enterprise Risk Management at St. John's University. He holds a Ph.D. from the University of Colorado Boulder and a BBA from the University of Texas Arlington. Dr. Walker has professional work experience in banking, in public accounting, as an auditing and fraud expert witness, and as a consultant. Dr. Walker has publications in the *Journal of Accountancy*, *Financial Executive*, *Decision Sciences*, *Accounting Horizons*, *Auditing: A Journal of Practice & Theory*, *Management Accounting Quarterly*, and *The Accounting Review*.



Chris Bhola

Recent MBA graduate from St. John's University's Tobin College of Business with a specialization in Enterprise Risk Management. Chris will be starting his career as a risk consultant at EY, where he's passionate about helping organizations—particularly in sports, media, entertainment, and fashion—transform emerging and strategic risks into opportunities.



About the Summit Host

The 2025 "ERM: Going Forward" Summit was hosted by the Maurice R. Greenberg School of Risk Management, Insurance, and Actuarial Science at St. John's University.

Dr. Paul Walker, Schiro / Zurich Chair and Director at St. John's University's Center for Excellence in ERM, leads these Summits as part of his commitment to advancing risk education. Dr. Walker works closely with industry professionals to ensure St. John's ERM program addresses the most pressing challenges facing today's risk leaders and drives the industry forward.

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