Security Briefs 062 – Risk Assessment Part 7

Script

The Human Factor — Why Risk Assessment Is Never Just a Chart

Welcome back to Security Briefs and our series on Risk Assessment.

We've talked about threat, vulnerability, likelihood, impact, and risk tolerance. You could put all of that into a spreadsheet, assign numbers, and generate a score. Some organizations do exactly that. But risk assessment is never just a chart — because people are never just technical. We are shaped by relationships, emotion, fatigue, culture, leadership dynamics, and spiritual conviction.

How Relationships Shape Assessment

A team with high trust and open communication will assess risk more accurately than a team where certain voices are silenced. When the senior leader's view automatically overrides everyone else's, the group will systematically miss what others see. When people fear appearing uncommitted, they underreport real concerns. On the other side, a team under relational strain may actually inflate threat perceptions because internal discomfort gets projected outward.

Who Is in the Room Matters

Risk assessments are best done in groups — and not just any group. A diverse group sees what a narrow group overlooks. Whenever possible, include different roles, life stages, cultural backgrounds, and genders.

This last point deserves to be said plainly. Inclusion of women in risk assessments should never be token participation, as though someone is checking a box. It is about better discernment and better decision-making. The research is clear: groups that include women consistently make better decisions under uncertainty.

In field security, this matters because women may notice vulnerabilities, social dynamics, harassment concerns, family impacts, cultural expectations, and relational pressures that others may miss. They often notice different threats, weight different vulnerabilities, and read social dynamics that all-male groups routinely miss. A security assessment without women's perspectives will miss what women on your team see every day. That knowledge is an asset. Excluding it is a mistake.

Guarding Against Groupthink

But community can also distort. Groupthink, fear of leadership, conflict avoidance, and dominant personalities can all suppress honest assessment. Fear of disappointing leadership can silence honest concern. A desire to appear courageous can push people to minimize danger. Conflict avoidance can keep teams from naming serious problems. Dominant personalities can overwhelm quieter voices. Spiritual language can even be used to shut down practical questions.

The question is not simply: did we assess as a group? The better question is: did the group actually listen? Did quieter people speak? Were local voices taken seriously? Were women included early enough to shape the assessment — not just invited to agree with it afterward? Did anyone ask, "What might we be missing?"

Underneath all this is the Holy Spirit. How we assess risk is shaped by our prayer life, our sense of God's leading, and our awareness of spiritual warfare. Honest assessment requires a community where people can say, "Here is what I sense the Spirit is saying," and be heard--not automatically accepted without discernment, but not ignored either.

To sum up: risk assessment is a human process shaped by who is in the room, how they relate, and what the Spirit is saying. Diverse groups — including women — make better assessments. Trust is not a soft skill; it is a prerequisite.

Now you know.

Next time, we move from assessment to action.

Episode Summary

This episode explains why risk assessment is never merely technical. It emphasizes group-based assessment, diverse perspectives, the inclusion of women, and the need to guard against groupthink, dominant personalities, fear of leadership, and other human distortions.

Resources:

Woolley, A. W., et al. "Evidence for a Collective Intelligence Factor in the Performance of Human Groups." Science, 2010.

Riedl, C., et al. "Quantifying Collective Intelligence in Human Groups." Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 2021.