Risk Management: Changing The Internal Auditor's Paradigm

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Internal auditors assist management and the audit committee in identifying and evaluating key business risks, completing focused audits in high-risk areas, completing special investigations for the board and management and, at times, assisting external auditors with parts of their work on the company’s financial statements. However, both internal and external auditors should collaborate to minimize duplication of effort. Internal and external auditors work in tandem to help management and the audit committee ensure that a company’s financial reports and other information are accurate and that its system of internal control is effective (see Question 40). Internal auditor’s expertise in considering risks, in understanding the connections between risks and governance and in facilitation mean that the internal audit activity is well qualified to act as champion and even project manager for ERM, especially in the early stages of its introduction. As the organization’s risk maturity increases and risk management becomes more embedded in the operations of the business, internal auditing’s role in championing ERM may reduce. It should be clear that management remains responsible for risk management. The nature of internal auditor’s responsibilities should be documented in the internal audit charter and approved by the audit committee. Internal auditing should not manage any of the risks on behalf of management. Risk management: Changing the internal auditor’s paradigm. Altamonte Springs, FL: The Institute of Internal Auditors. Melville, R. (1997). Re-engineering audit: Quality, control self assessment and the balanced scorecard. Management Working Paper, City University Business School. Google Scholar. Risk Based Internal Auditing (RBIA)—Position Paper. Risk management and internal auditing: What are the essential building blocks for a successful paradigm change? International Journal of Auditing, 3, 147–155. CrossRefGoogle Scholar. Standards and Guidelines for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing. London: The Institute of Internal Auditors-U.K., 2004. Google Scholar.
Since the idea of internal auditors focusing on reporting on the effectiveness of risk self-assessment processes maintained by management was still seen by the majority of internal auditors globally as a fringe movement, the IIA continued to position traditional internal audit roles, including completing direct report internal audits, reporting on internal control effectiveness, maintaining audit universes and audit plans, and the traditional curriculum in the Certified Internal Auditor (CIA) designation as the core internal audit paradigm. The core foundation of Internal auditor’s expertise in considering risks, in understanding the connections between risks and governance and in facilitation mean that the internal audit activity is well qualified to act as champion and even project manager for ERM, especially in the early stages of its introduction. As the organization’s risk maturity increases and risk management becomes more embedded in the operations of the business, internal auditing’s role in championing ERM may reduce. It should be clear that management remains responsible for risk management. The nature of internal auditor’s responsibilities should be documented in the internal audit charter and approved by the audit committee. Internal auditing should not manage any of the risks on behalf of management.