

‘Risk Doctor’ wins world renown

Petersfield’s global expert in risk management has received two international awards



David Hillson, known worldwide as ‘The Risk Doctor’, has won the inaugural award as “Risk Personality of the Year” for 2010. This award, by the Institute of Risk Management (IRM) and Risk Management Professional magazine, honours the individual who contributes most to improving risk knowledge and standards, promoting the message of strong risk management, and inspiring their peers.

In the words of the judges Dr Hillson is “a larger-than-life character, who has become a well-known brand”. His other award is a fellowship of the Project Management Institute, the PMI’s highest individual honour and the only one awarded in 2010.

Having moved to Petersfield with his wife Liz more than 30 years ago, he became involved in risk management in 1983 while working at Ferranti in Portsmouth. “The company was instructed by the MoD to use risk management in a £30 million defence contract; but we didn’t know much about it, so I was detailed to try it out.” The project was a big success, and David Hillson was on the road to becoming ‘The Risk Doctor’.

In 1993 he left Ferranti and after working for two specialist consultancies he set up his Risk Doctor consultancy, which now has 20 expert partners across the globe. Risk management may sound like a dry and cerebral subject but this is a “larger-than-life” discipline which affects everybody.

“Every client is different,” David said. “The core message is that the future is uncertain, but we can do something about it.

“To succeed we have to deal with uncertainty. While uncertainty is a threat it also offers opportunities, and risk management is all about using and exploiting that. I provide the forward-looking radar to look into the future and help people take appropriate action.”

He defines risk as: “Uncertainty that matters. All other definitions are variations on this phrase (usually with more words!). So all risks are uncertain because they may never happen (though not all uncertainties are risks), and all risks matter because if they happened they would have a material effect on achievement of one or more objectives.”

David Hillson has a scholarly and softly spoken manner, but he exudes great warmth and wit. A man of the world, he has worked in 43 countries and on every continent except Antarctica, providing support to clients in all major industry sectors.

“ All risks matter because if they happened they would have a material effect on achievement of one or more objectives ”

As well as giving strategic advice to corporates, he is interested in applying the risk management approach to communities, for example in developing entrepreneurship in local community groups. His clients range from corporates such as BP and NASA to a township in South Africa and a village community in Ghana. “When I undertake a big job I try to make sure that I also meet local people and see what I can do on the ground.”

Married for 32 years, David and Liz have two daughters who were raised in Petersfield – one is a biochemist in Cardiff, the other a



David Hillson (centre) receives the “Risk Personality of the Year” award from actor Chris Barrie (Rimmer in *Red Dwarf* and Mr Brittas in BBC TV’s *The Brittas Empire*) at a gala dinner in London with Steve Good, Marketing Manager of Risk Management Professional magazine, on his right

children’s nurse in Sydney. His interests outside risk management include active participation in Christianity, music, the community, and travel.

“We came to Petersfield in 1979 to start a new community-based Christian church, which has become an active part of the faith community in the town,” he said. “We are now working with a new church in Greatham that was started four years ago.”

As well as his work in local churches, he is also a much-published author on risk management – with eight major books and over 100 journal papers and articles. And he is a keen musician having trained on brass instruments at Trinity College of Music in London. He has switched to the keyboards and plays in bands at weddings and gigs.

“I would love to become a better jazz pianist, but you need time to practise,” he said with a wry smile. “And I want to travel more, especially in South America.”

The Risk Doctor, www.risk-doctor.com

