

## The long view

Submitted by Kellie Mundell on Thu, 2015-07-30 08:56

When it comes to perceiving risk, our common sense is notoriously unreliable. Statistics show, for instance, that it's around eight times more dangerous to walk home drunk than to drive home drunk and that's a fact few of us would have deduced without the evidence.

You may think, well yes, but unlike drunk driving, the risk is limited to the walker. But that isn't true. Many a driver has swerved into a tree or an oncoming car trying to avoid someone staggering into the road. And of course, most staggering drunks are usually loving and productive members of society. Ambulances and hospitals are always required and those who love them are traumatised by an accident, as are the car drivers, so there's a lot of collateral damage to account for. In short, stats show the cost of drunk walking is far, far greater to the gross domestic product of a country than drunk driving.



So how do we respond to this revelation? Clearly the only thing to do is to relax the drink driving laws so people's chance of returning to their beds safely is maximised. Not a good idea? OK, then we fine people at least as much for walking drunk — reflecting the risk they pose. You'll immediately see an unintended consequence of that. OK, how about providing a free taxi service for all drunks? That too might need a little thinking through.

Obviously there's only one thing to do and that's to ban alcohol altogether so we can live together happily in a safe, progressive, healthier society. Though I've visited several societies that have banned alcohol and I have to say that "progressive" wasn't the first word that sprang to mind. And alcohol prohibition in the US threw up a few interesting unintended consequences of its own, such as Al Capone.

We all like autonomy and choice and we have to work with that, not against it. We have to implement methodologies that work given the way that people actually are not how they should be.

As our politicians so often illustrate with their wrong-headed, tabloid pandering, knee jerk responses, risk management needs objective consideration for the long term, driven by data and for the greater good of all.

Some challenges:

- *Where in your organisation are there rules introduced as a knee-jerk response to an event?*
- *What are the rules that cause more problems through unintended consequences than they solve?*
- *Where are there (obviously over) simplistic rules and regulations based on how people should behave rather than how they do behave?*



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