

Embracing Old School to Become New School: *Joe Mayo Shares His RIMS-CRMP Journey*



For more than 21 years, Joe Mayo has been a risk consultant to a range of enterprises, from small businesses and Fortune 50 companies to government agencies.

His enthusiasm for the profession is unmatched, as he continually seeks to expand his knowledge base. In 2018, he registered for the RIMS-Certified Risk Management Professional (RIMS-CRMP)

certification course and exam. He took studying very seriously, passed the exam, and earned the prestigious certification. This achievement made Mayo the first risk practitioner to be credentialed by the three internationally recognized risk management credentialing bodies: the Project Management Institute, ISACA, and RIMS.

RIMS sat down with Mayo, the principal of J.W. Mayo Consulting and author of *Chaos to Clarity: The Tao of Risk Management*, to discuss how the process of earning the RIMS-CRMP has enhanced his view of the profession and how it has benefitted his already prestigious career.

RIMS: You were already a risk practitioner and consultant for 20 years. What inspired you to pursue your RIMS-CRMP in 2018?

Mayo: One key thing I like about the RIMS-CRMP is that it's all about being relevant today. I had a somewhat superficial understanding of certain areas of risk management and knew I needed to do more. I always try to make risk management practices and techniques real, tactical, and practical and one of the things that attracted me to RIMS and this certification in particular is the emphasis they place on collaboration with senior stakeholders.

There is a gap in communication between the risk manager, the senior stakeholders, or C-suite and the board. Realizing that was a real epiphany for me and focusing on that communication really got me energized about the RIMS-CRMP.

RIMS: How does the RIMS-CRMP prepare risk professionals to meet the expectations of executive leadership?

Mayo: By providing information and specifically, outlooks. Business owners and leaders don't want to hear about what they already know, they want to learn about what they don't know. That's where risk professionals make their strongest contribution and bring tremendous value to their organizations, by providing information to executive leadership about what will happen. We're talking about six months onward to even five years, because it will likely take organizations that long to prepare for the risk associated with phenomena like blockchain technology and artificial intelligence, for example. This is critical, because by the time a business is incurring those risk events, it's way too late to do anything about it.

So risk practitioners today have to be visionaries and one of the things that I tell people is that you have to imagine the unprecedented.

RIMS: In what other sectors have you found the information and skills from the RIMS-CRMP to be useful or transferable?

Mayo: I also consult for agencies of the federal government and that can be even more important, because you're talking to elected officials. They're the ones whose lenses are fixed on the long term—we're talking 15, 20, or even 30 years down the line. And they are asking questions based on those time-frames. I could see the parallels between government and private enterprise—their leaders are asking the same questions, just on a different timeline.

And when you have people at that level all asking the same question it clearly indicates that there's a gap and the RIMS-CRMP helps fill that gap.

RIMS: What study tips do you have for others planning to take the exam?

Mayo: You have to allocate and dedicate the time. You cannot retain the information with just an hour here or there. It needs to be four hours a week, every week. I studied for probably about six or eight weeks, but I also have 20 years of experience in the field. If a junior- or mid-level person was studying, they need that dedicated, uninterrupted time to read white papers, articles, and books.

I would read two or three of these articles or texts at the same time and try to draw the correlations between them all. This was a practical exercise because a key part of the risk professional's job is to take relevant information and sensibly convey it to people with whom you may have no relationship.

And I'm old school: I turn off the computer and silence the phone and try to read everything in paper form. ■