



Risk Maturity Now!

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Risk Maturity Now! Mr. Yuk Says Less Risk Metrics can be More (and don't drink bleach)

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I would like to start the article by saying that I am not against advanced metrics for any type of data. I do think that in project management we often pretend to put out advanced metrics when we do not have a grasp on the basic and core data. My friend Mr. Yuk and I will try to explain why we believe that “Less is More” can apply to advanced project metrics as well.

I am addressing this issue because it seems the whole industry is going towards more convoluted reports. We need to address the big issues in a simple way. You can tell kids every issue in the world about not getting injured around the house but a simple sticker and a scary Mr. Yuk actually was a more powerful danger sign. If you tell any smart person on a project the list of things that will be bad and probably happen, then they'll make the right decisions. The metrics are bad but the noise sometimes distracts from the most important message. We keep getting bigger metrics but projects are failing at an increasing rate because we aren't doing the basics.

People also seem to think getting all of their important projects out of MS Excel and into a database for programme and portfolio analysis would take an act of God. If you start with a list of risks and do a probability and impact only it will at least give visibility to all of the threats to the entire organization. It is like putting a Mr. Yuk sticker on something dangerous so the child knows immediately that it is an issue. Managing billions of dollars of money in Excel spreadsheet is dangerous and organizations are getting bitten by this currently. We need to see the big issues quickly and clearly so we can act.

Introduction to Risk Manager Mr. Yuk:

First of all I would like to introduce Mr. Yuk for those who do not know him. I have known Mr. Yuk since I was a small child. He is the one that stopped me and many children from drinking cleaning chemicals from under the kitchen sink.

Here is Mr. Yuk:

Mr Yuk was actually born in Pittsburgh in 1971. He saved a lot of hospital visits and many lives.

He was also a big TV star:

All kids knew if they saw a Mr. Yuk sticker, do not put it in your mouth. This was our risk metric and there was never confusion.

We did not need this list of information to raise awareness:



What Happens If You Drink Bleach

Tissue burns in your mouth esophagus, and stomach.
Nausea, chest pain, lowered blood pressure, delirium, coma, potentially death.

What To Do If Someone Drinks Bleach

Contact Poison Control
<https://www.poison.org>
1-800-222-1222

Drink a small amount of water or milk immediately if the person is conscious, not having convulsions, and able to swallow.

How to Disinfect Water With Unscented Liquid Bleach (CDC Guidelines)

If tap water is clear:

1. Add 1/8 teaspoon (8 drops or about 0.75 milliliters) bleach to 1 gallon (16 cups) of water.
2. Mix well and wait 30 minutes or more before drinking.

If tap water is cloudy:

1. Add 1/4 teaspoon (16 drops or 1.5 milliliters) of bleach to 1 gallon (16 cups) of water.
2. Mix well and wait 30 minutes or more before drinking.

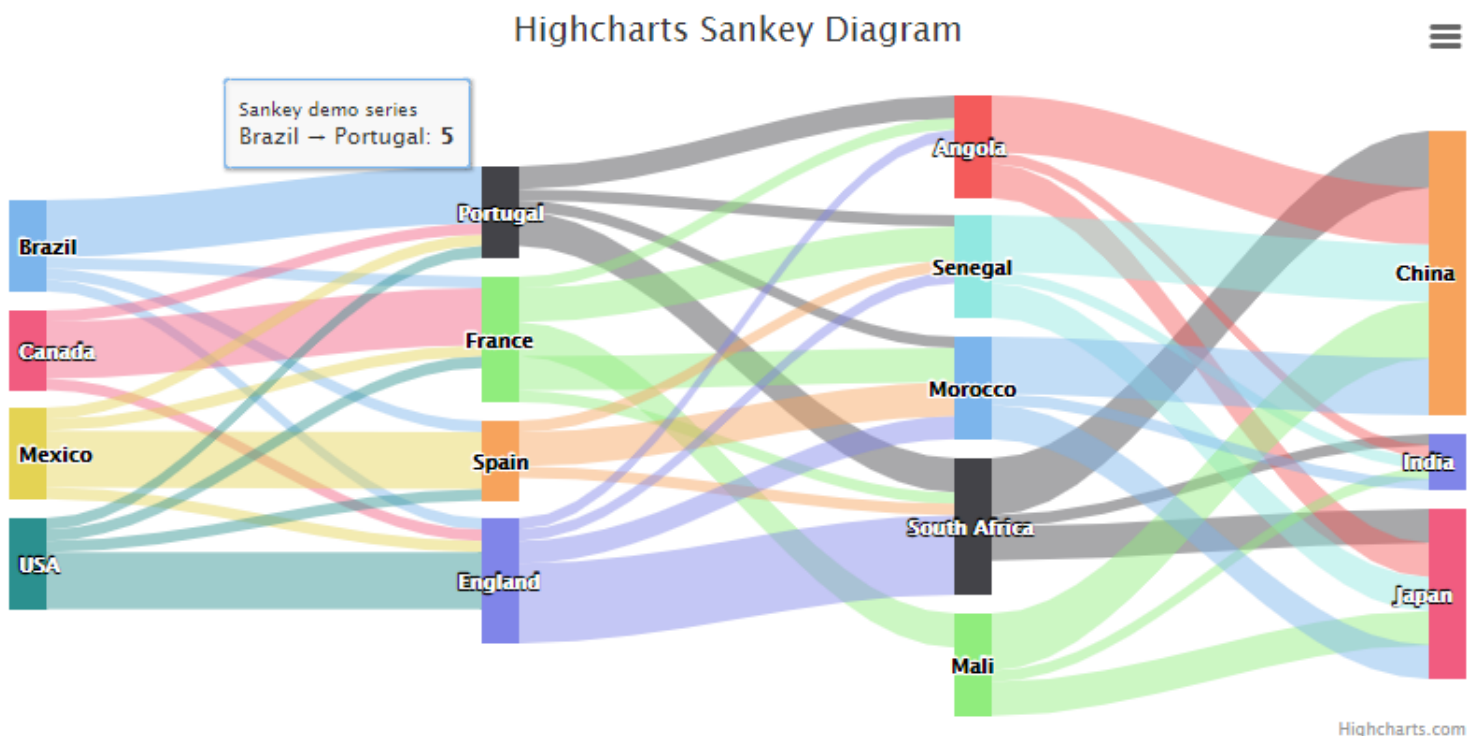
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It is not bad information and it can be very important, however as a preventative measure this did not speak to the target audience. But when Mr.Yuk says, “Don’t drink bleach kid” it worked. When Mr. Yuk talks, people listen.

In programme and project management we often use metrics that confuse the user and take massive amounts of time to generate. The information overload may confuse people and make them think you have a good handle on the data but often we’re hiding that we do not have a clue, we do not want people to understand, or we want to bill more hours.

Mr Yuk vomited when he saw the chart below:

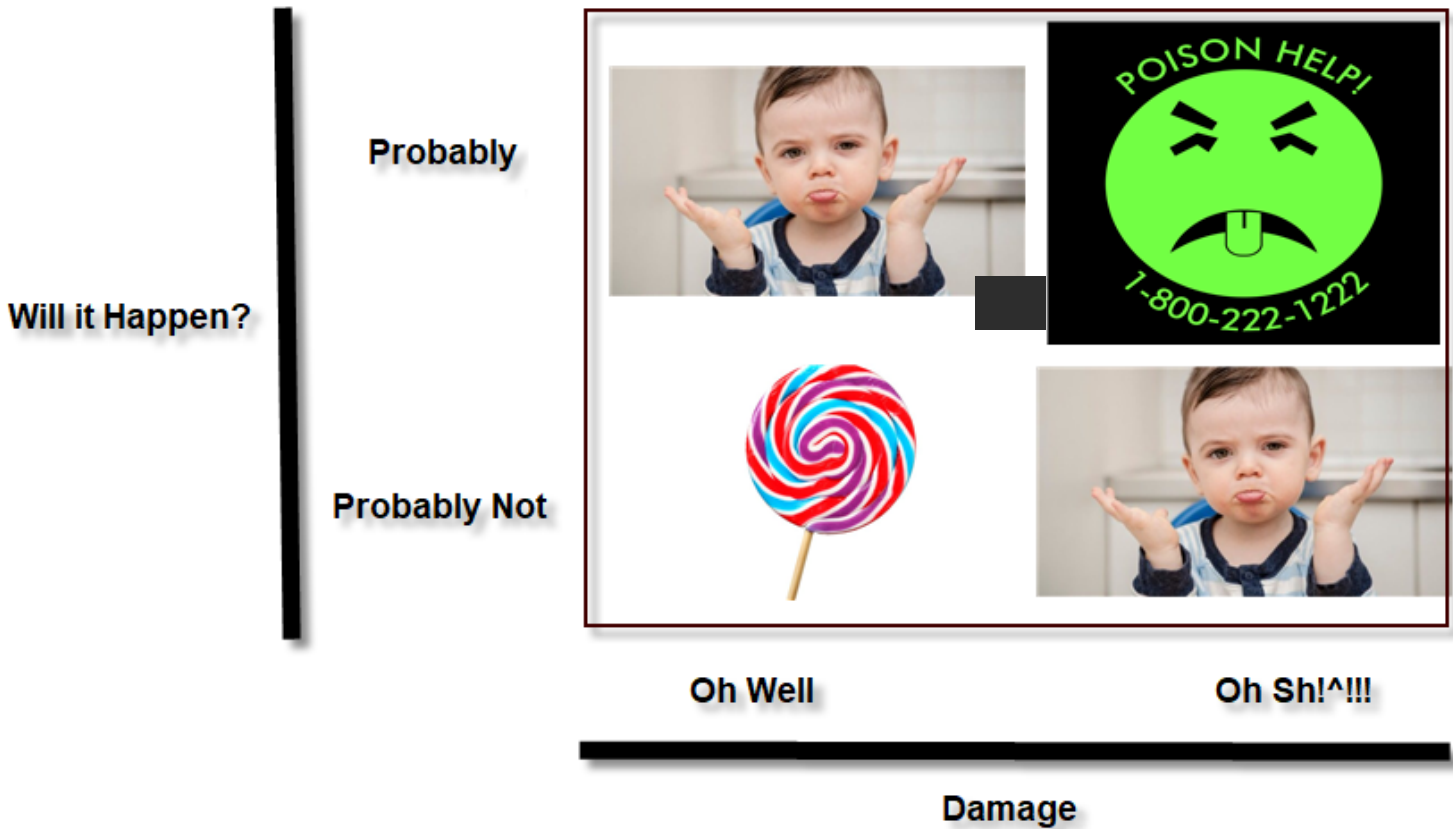


It is not bad information, however it is so busy and complicated that Mr. Yuk had a seizure and we do not know if we can drink bleach or not. It would be nice to have a graphic that we did not have to explain and that did not confuse the average viewer. It looks like it is saying something important but will people take the time to understand it? We email important people with bullet points because they are busy. Tell them the important info in a chart the same way so they know to act and do not miss the message

I have developed a 2 by 2 matrix to help people report. If you did this on every project, then you could roll the data up to the programme and portfolio level easily as well. Probability is on one axis and Impact is on the other. Typically people use red, amber, and green for showing risk, however I will use emojis so that children or your employees that act like children will understand without any explanation.



Risk Matrix that is fit for purpose for all portfolios, programmes, and projects:



Quick explanation from Mr. Yuk:

- If something is probability going to happen and you're going to say Oh Sh!^!!!, then you should mitigate because your project is about to drink bleach.
- If the kid looks confused, then you should do more analysis to see if the item should be addressed.
- If you get a lollipop, then enjoy and don't waste too much effort on this threat

Conclusion

Projects might stop drinking bleach and save a lot of time on hospital visits if we let Mr. Yuk simplify our strategy. If you do not work to make your audience gain visibility to the issues in a simple and powerful way, then Mr. Yuk and I will see you at the hospital.

Get visibility of your data, make it fit for purpose and DON'T DRINK BLEACH!!!!!!!!!! Smart people on these projects know what to do with a ranked list of risks with the noise filtered out whether we have any metrics or not. Add the advanced metrics once you have the basics covered. We should walk before we run as an industry.