

TALKING POINTS

Top Reasons Why I Took Risks Escaping Communist Vietnam:

1. First of all, I weighed the costs and benefits of such action. I realized that the risks I took included personal health and safety, financial loss, and even death. Also, the reward for success would be building a new life in a great country. While the risk of failure could be catastrophic, the reward would also be extraordinary.
2. I was in a desperate situation: (a) I had no hope of being employed in a central planned economy or Communist economy, (b) I could be arrested and jailed as a suspected CIA agent, and (c) my wife and I could lose our house and be forced to relocate to the New Economic Zone.
3. I was physically fit to meet the challenges of escaping. I was young (25 years old) and healthy enough. Furthermore, I could not imagine spending the rest of my life (40 long years!) living in a big prison called the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.
4. I also knew that others, especially my peers in similar situations as mine, had undertaken these enormous risks and ultimately enjoyed successful outcomes. This made me more likely to follow suit.
5. In my desperate situation, I focused more on rewards while overlooking the risks. This pushed me toward taking a risk.
6. By nature, I was not a risk-seeking or risk-averse person. Normally, I would take a “calculated risk”, but my situation in Communist Vietnam was far from “normal”. Therefore, I leaned toward taking a risk.

Top Reasons Why I Took Risks in Climbing the Corporate Ladder

1. As I weighed the costs and benefits, it was pretty clear to me that the benefits outweighed the costs. If I was successful, it meant promotions, a higher salary, more fringe benefits, and a corner office... If I failed, the worst would be losing my job, but I was confident I could find another job without much difficulty.
2. I felt excited to venture past the limits of safety in pursuit of a thrilling experience in my career.
3. I was way behind my peers, having spent five years in Communist Vietnam after the fall of Saigon; I had to catch up professionally and financially.
4. I was very confident in my ability to achieve the desired outcome. Therefore, I did not consider some actions “risk-taking” per se. As a comparison, an excellent professional basketball player does not think of “shooting from downtown” as taking a risk. Just do it!
5. I considered most if not all the risks I took in climbing the corporate ladder “calculated risks.”