

An Auditor's Current View on Risk With a Corresponding Audit Strategy

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The Auditor's Situation

- In many organizations, mainframe computers remain in the infrastructure, but individuals (management and staff) with an understanding of mainframes are becoming harder to locate
- Audit teams struggle to engage qualified staff to evaluate controls around mainframe processing (especially as controls extend from the mainframe to other platforms)
- Newer application architectures utilize access paths to the mainframe that are not familiar to both auditors or system operations staff

Factors Influencing Audit Risk

- Lack of qualified auditors
- Simplistic audit plans that focus on controls at the LPAR level
- Audit approaches that artificially segregate the audit teams by disciplines and by information system technologies
- Audit approaches that rely on analysis of static information and reports in isolation from other sources of information

Factors Influencing Control Risk

- Installing software and defining system configurations without understanding them
- Allowing application developers and COTS vendors to dictate system configurations
- Combining new application architectures into existing environments that support aging business processes requiring significant end-user access
- Moving identification and authentication controls out of the mainframe environment

Audit Strategy - People

- Focus on the basics: who owns what, who makes decisions and who monitors compliance with policy?
- Use the strengths in the audit team – do not exclude the non-mainframe audit crew or the financial auditors
- Leverage as much as possible from observations and interviews – don't limit attention to just accounting or business processes – insist on being shown how the systems support what is being observed/discussed

Audit Strategy - Technology

- Audit from the application user interfaces back to the processing and data – across organizations and platforms – wherever the interfaces call processes or send/request information
- Identify the exact source(s) of reports used by business processes
- Find the important data and processing in the batch environment by working through the production scheduler systems

Audit Strategy - Innovation

- Use time series analytics – focus on what is changing
- Compare dynamic and static data – what is creating logs compared with what can create logs
- Observe system operations – help desk, access control administration, database administration, network administration, application administration