

# Ted Bilich

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Risk  
Alternatives  
LLC

Sustainable, well-  
managed  
nonprofits and  
healthy, scalable  
for-profit  
businesses make  
communities  
thrive.



Ted Bilich is the CEO of Risk Alternatives LLC, located in Arlington, Virginia. Risk Alternatives works with nonprofits and entrepreneurial organizations to help them identify and address threats and opportunities, confront challenges, and put processes and systems in place to achieve their goals. Ted's mission is to build stronger communities by helping to build sustainable nonprofits and healthy, scalable small businesses. Ted has more than 25 years of experience counseling clients on risk management and complex business issues.

Before founding Risk Alternatives, Ted was a Distinguished Visiting Professor from Practice at Georgetown University Law Center. At Georgetown, his research focused on complex dispute resolution, preventive law, legal training, risk management, governance, and compliance. Prior to teaching, Ted served for more than 20 years with the Washington DC office of the international law firm of Jones Day. He represented clients in successful high-profile lawsuits and investigations involving securities laws, consumer credit, consumer fraud, mass tort, environmental, and other issues. He also has served on the boards of eight nonprofits, governmental commissions, and bar committees. This includes current service as a commissioner on the Arlington Virginia Economic Development Commission and as a member of the board of trustees and former chair of the Leadership Arlington Board of Regents.

Ted has lectured, presented, and consulted on risk management, board governance, civic engagement, ethics, and numerous other issues. He is the author of three editions of a leading law school casebook on class actions and other multi-party litigation. He received his B.A. in economics, summa cum laude, from Wake Forest University, and his J.D. cum laude from Harvard Law School.

**To book Ted for your next speaking event or seminar, please [click here](#) and complete the short information request form. We will contact you within 24 hours.**

#### Summary of Experience:

- More than 25 years of experience counseling clients on complex business and dispute-resolution issues, including governance and compliance challenges.
- More than 25 years of combined service on non-profit boards, associational committees, and government commissions.
- More than a decade offering risk management training, counseling, and research.
- More than 15 years of experience in teaching, including designing classes, teaching large and small groups, developing active learning environments, and counseling learners to incorporate lessons into their everyday activities.

# Ted Bilich

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## Biography

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**Ted Bilich, CEO Risk Alternatives LLC Arlington VA**

As CEO of Risk Alternatives, Ted's mission is to build stronger communities by helping to build sustainable nonprofits and healthy, scalable small businesses. Risk Alternatives works with nonprofits and entrepreneurial organizations to help them identify and address threats and opportunities, confront challenges, and put processes and systems in place to achieve their goals. Ted has more than 25 years of experience counseling clients on risk management and complex business issues.

Before founding Risk Alternatives, Ted was a Distinguished Visiting Professor from Practice at Georgetown University Law Center. There, Ted focused on complex dispute resolution, preventive law, legal training, risk management, governance, and compliance.

Before Georgetown, Ted served for more than 20 years in the Washington DC office of the international law firm of Jones Day. There, Ted represented clients in successful high-profile lawsuits and internal investigations. He also developed successful multi-party settlements involving businesses, consumers, and governmental agencies, working closely with parties with divergent interests to craft workable agreements.

Ted is a member of the American Law Institute (ALI) and is consulting on the ALI project that is developing authoritative guidance for judges, lawmakers, and lawyers on governance, risk management, and compliance. He also has served on the boards of eight nonprofits, governmental commissions, and bar committees.

Ted received his B.A. in economics from Wake Forest University and his J.D. from Harvard Law School.

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**Ted Bilich, CEO Risk Alternatives LLC Arlington VA**

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Before founding Risk Alternatives, Ted was a Distinguished Visiting Professor from Practice at Georgetown University Law Center. At Georgetown, Ted focused on complex dispute resolution, preventive law, legal training, risk management, governance, and compliance. Before that, Ted served for more than 20 years in the Washington DC office of the international law firm of Jones Day. At Jones Day, Ted represented clients in successful high-profile lawsuits and investigations involving securities laws, consumer credit, consumer fraud, mass tort, environmental, and other issues. He also has served on the boards of eight nonprofits, commissions, and committees.

Ted received his B.A. in economics from Wake Forest University and his J.D. from Harvard Law School.

# Ted Bilich

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## Speaker Introduction

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#### **Ted Bilich, CEO Risk Alternatives LLC**

Our speaker today, Ted Bilich, is on a mission to make communities stronger by growing sustainable nonprofits and healthy, scalable small businesses. Ted has more than 25 years of experience counseling clients on complex business issues. As CEO of Risk Alternatives, Ted helps nonprofits and small businesses identify and address threats and opportunities, handle challenges, and put systems in place so that they can thrive.

Before founding Risk Alternatives, Ted was a Distinguished Visiting Professor from Practice at Georgetown University Law Center. At Georgetown, his research focused on resolution of complex disputes, preventive law, legal training, risk management, governance, and compliance.

Prior to teaching, Ted served for more than 20 years in the Washington DC office of the international law firm of Jones Day. At Jones Day, Ted represented clients in successful high-profile lawsuits and investigations involving securities laws, consumer credit, consumer fraud, mass tort, environmental, and other issues. He also developed successful multi-party settlements involving businesses, consumers, and governmental agencies, working closely with parties with divergent interests to craft workable agreements. Ted also has served on numerous commissions and nonprofit boards, including the Arlington Virginia Economic Development Commission and the Board of Regents of Leadership Arlington, where he served as board chairman.

Ted received his B.A. in economics from Wake Forest University and his J.D. from Harvard Law School.

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#### **Ted Bilich, CEO Risk Alternatives LLC**

Ted Bilich has more than 25 years of experience counseling about complex business issues. As CEO of Risk Alternatives, Ted builds resilient, sustainable nonprofits and healthy, scalable small businesses by helping them identify and address threats and opportunities, instead of being overwhelmed by them.

Before founding Risk Alternatives, Ted was a professor at Georgetown University Law Center.

Before that, Ted served for more than 20 years in the Washington DC office of the international law firm of Jones Day. He also has served on the boards of numerous nonprofits.

Ted received his B.A. from Wake Forest University and his J.D. from Harvard Law School.



## Q & A with Ted

### **Q. What is the biggest risk you have ever taken?**

A. Starting Risk Alternatives. Every start-up is a huge risk. Before starting Risk Alternatives, I had counseled lots of nonprofits and small businesses about various issues. But I had never started a business before. I had been a partner in a huge, international law firm. I had taught at one of the largest law schools in the world. But it's very different to grow an organization yourself, from scratch. The experience has given me tremendous additional respect for entrepreneurs and nonprofit leaders. It's been exhilarating, but frankly also really scary.

### **Q. What are the biggest challenges facing nonprofit organizations right now?**

A. Nonprofits are chronically overextended and underfunded. They are always looking for the next dollar, and they already know where that next dollar is going to be spent. As a result, nonprofits under-invest in infrastructure, processes, and systems. They are so focused on money-in/money-out that they tend to pay insufficient attention to making sure they have core processes in place in finance, operations, compliance, reputation management, sales (to donors, potential partners, and service recipients), and risk management. I use the image of an hourglass. The money comes in from donors up top and flows out to the recipients at the bottom. But too little attention is placed on the middle, on the operational excellence of the organization – the way the money either does or doesn't effectively flow through to ultimate beneficiaries. If too little attention is devoted to that choke point, it inevitably gets clogged.

Nonprofits sometimes believe that because they are doing the public good, they are not held to the same standards of conduct and performance as other organizations. That belief is not only wrong, but dangerous. If a nonprofit is not effective, it will be overtaken by competitors – and yes, nonprofits have competitors. Every donor can give money to a variety of organizations. Every foundation has numerous nonprofits gunning for each dollar. If a nonprofit is not performing at peak effectiveness, it is vulnerable. But even more basically, if a nonprofit commits wrongdoing or acts negligently, no victim is going to care whether the wrongdoer is a 501(c)(3). They will seek compensation, no matter how much “public good” the nonprofit believes it does in a community.

I think there are answers for nonprofits. Nonprofits can take simple steps that dramatically enhance awareness of the threats and opportunities they face. They can make continuous process improvement a standard part of operations. By being more risk-aware and more risk-nimble, they can better serve all their stakeholders. They can serve not only current service recipients, but the host of future recipients that will never receive services if the nonprofit fails. They can better serve donors and funders, who deserve to receive maximum effectiveness out of every dollar. They can attract and retain better, happier employees. They can protect, defend, and enhance their reputations. They can build boards that are thoroughly engaged because they have bought into the threats and opportunities, understand the stakes, and are aligned about how to proceed.



## Q & A with Ted (continued)

### **Q. What are the biggest challenges facing entrepreneurs today?**

A. The best thing about entrepreneurs is that they take risks. The worst thing is that they sometimes take risks blindly. Until entrepreneurs hit their first major hiccup, they tend to think they are invulnerable. Because they make great widgets (whatever their product or service is), they also think that they have a good business. But great products or services do not alone make great businesses. Entrepreneurs need to devote some focus to building resilient, sustainable, sound business models. They need to be aware of the threats and opportunities they face, and they need the humility to be able to ask for and take advice from many different quarters.

All too often, a start-up cruises along or even enters a huge growth period. Everything looks wonderful. But it is unsustainable, because leadership has not put the basic business processes in place to create resiliency. Because the business is actually fragile, when it hits that first hiccup – a bad employee departure, a regulatory snag, a recurrent vendor conflict, the departure of a key person who has too much in her head that was never put on paper – what might have been a minor challenge may instead create a death spiral. Equally sad, the business might overcome the challenge, but because of the experience, leadership may afterwards take a much more risk-averse path. As a result, the business may never achieve its potential.

### **Q. Why is it important for non-profits to adopt risk management processes?**

A. Human brains are amazing computers, but we are flawed. Individually, we make predictable mistakes. We are bad at assessing risks, and we are bad at accepting responsibility. To overcome this, an organization needs to create processes that incentivize team members to improve all aspects of the business. Risk management helps organizations become aware of threats and opportunities. But it also increases team member engagement, because people recognize that they will not be punished for mistakes, but instead are empowered to improve their work environments.

# Ted Bilich

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## Civic and Professional Organizations

During his professional career, Ted has served with, worked with, and counseled many civic, professional, and non-profit organizations including:

- Member of the American Law Institute, where he serves as a member of the Member Consultative Group for the ALI's current project, Principles of the Law, Compliance, Enforcement, and Risk Management.
- Member of the National Association of Corporate Directors.
- Currently serves as a commissioner on the Arlington Economic Development Commission and as a board member and past chairman of the Board of Regents of Leadership Arlington.
- Previously served on the boards of:
  - The Washington Lawyers Commission for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs
  - The Northern Virginia Conservation Trust
  - The Latino Student Fund
  - The Washington Humane Society
  - The Hispanic Bar Association of DC Foundation
  - Member of the DC Bar Litigation Section Steering Committee

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## Images

