Risk Assessment Matrix for SQL Server Upgrades

A couple years ago in my Incident Safety Officer class with the fire department we studied risk assessment for any incident that the fire department may respond to. Since that time I have used a similar risk assessment matrix for SQL Server upgrades, and other big SQL Server maintenance tasks.

The risk assessment matrix as it is used by the Incident Safety Officer with the fire department may make the difference in saving lives, or preventing accidents. The risk assessment matrix can be used by the database administrator to reduce risk and to reduce the risk of being fired if something dos go wrong.

Here is how it works, start with the grid as shown here:

The left axis has probability from low to high, and the top axis has impact from low to high.

Then run through the possible things that could go wrong with the task that you are working on, and determine where they fit in the matrix.

Then focus on mitigating the risk with the things that fall into the high risk block. Keep in mind that the High Probility, High Impact = High Risk items are the items that will get you fired, and the Medium Risk items are the things that might get you fired.

Give it a try next time you are doing a database upgrade, or some type of system maintenance.