

CRISP Pulse

Methodology and Framework Reference

The research foundations of the CRISP communication framework

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The Problem with Safety Communication

Most organisations have safety systems. Very few have safe communication.

The gap between a safety procedure and the behaviour it is supposed to produce is almost always a communication gap. A worker who does not follow a procedure is not necessarily reckless. They may never have understood it. A supervisor who fails to spot a hazard is not necessarily unaware. Nobody created a conversation in which they felt safe raising it. A leader who believes their team is performing well may simply be the person their team has learned not to challenge.

Communication in high-risk environments tends to be treated as a soft skill. Something that some people have and others do not. The research does not support that view. Communication is a set of behaviours. Behaviours can be observed, measured, and changed. What has been missing is a framework precise enough to do that work.

The cost of ambiguous communication is not abstract.

Health and safety and human factors guidance identifies communication as an important influence on how information is understood, how decisions are made, and how people respond to risk^[1]. Research across aviation and healthcare describes the same practical problem: preventable events can develop when important information does not travel, is not understood, or is not acted upon^[2,3]. Technical systems may be present while communication still fails.

CRISP was developed to give safety professionals a precise, research-informed tool for understanding and improving the quality of communication in their environment. Not communication in general. The specific behaviours that determine whether a message lands, whether it changes anything, and whether the people around a leader feel safe enough to tell them what is actually happening.

Full citations on page 8

Not More. Better.

The answer to most communication problems is not more communication.

Most organisations already communicate constantly. Briefings, toolbox talks, emails, signage, procedures, updates, meetings. The volume is rarely the issue. What gets lost in the noise is the quality of what is being said, the precision with which it is being delivered, and whether the people receiving it are in any position to act on it.

The instinct, when communication fails, is to add more of it. Another procedure. Another awareness campaign. Another layer of training. This approach assumes the problem is a deficit of information. In most cases it is not. The information exists. What is missing is the clarity to make it land, the intent to make it purposeful, and the conditions in which the people receiving it feel safe enough to respond honestly.

CRISP is not an addition. It is an examination.

The framework does not ask organisations to communicate more. It asks them to look at what they are already doing and establish whether it is working. Whether the briefing that has been delivered every Monday for three years is producing the behaviour it was designed to produce. Whether the language used in safety conversations is the language of the people being asked to change their behaviour, or the language of the system asking them to. Whether the silence after a safety message means agreement, or simply means nobody felt safe enough to say otherwise.

These are not questions about compliance. They are questions about communication. And they are answerable. Not through instinct or assumption, but through the kind of structured, evidence-based examination that CRISP was designed to provide.

The goal is not a workforce that has been told more. It is a workforce that has genuinely understood, genuinely agreed, and genuinely feels heard. That shift does not require more communication. It requires better communication from the people who already have the attention of the room.

The CRISP framework draws on practical psychology and direct observed experience of how communication breaks down in the real world. Each dimension addresses a specific and identifiable failure point. Not a general weakness, but a precise location where messages stop working and behaviour stops changing. CRISP is a proprietary, research-informed developmental framework. It is not presented as a standardised psychometric or diagnostic test.

ABSTRACT

The CRISP framework is a five-dimension model of professional communication developed to close a persistent gap in safety culture practice. Research in high-reliability organisations consistently identifies communication failure as a primary causal or contributing factor in workplace incidents^[1,2,3]. Yet most communication training in safety contexts remains focused on transmission rather than reception. On what is said rather than what is heard, understood, and acted upon. CRISP was developed to reframe that orientation. It measures the quality of communication from the perspective of impact rather than intent.

THE CRISP FRAMEWORK

CRISP is an acronym representing five dimensions of effective professional communication. Clarity, Refinement, Intent, Simplicity, and Probing. Each dimension is informed by an established body of research and addresses a distinct failure mode in how safety-critical communication can break down. Together they provide a structured picture of what it means to communicate in a way that changes understanding, decisions and behaviour.

THE FIVE DIMENSIONS

C	Clarity	Is this unmistakable?
R	Refinement	Is anything here unnecessary?
I	Intent	What outcome am I aiming for?
S	Simplicity	Will they understand first time?
P	Probing	Do I want agreement or insight?

Research foundations for each dimension are cited in full on page 8.

Clarity, Refinement and Intent

C Clarity

Is this unmistakable?

Clarity addresses the gap between intended and received meaning. The mind does not receive a message the way an inbox receives an email. It constructs meaning from available context, inference, and prior experience^[4,5]. In safety environments, that construction process is regularly distorted by time pressure, cognitive load, and the distance that hierarchy creates between people. Miller's foundational work on working memory^[6], updated by Cowan^[7], establishes that even clearly intended messages exceed processing capacity when they are poorly structured. The brain stops absorbing and starts coping. What arrives is not what was sent. Clarity in the CRISP model measures the degree to which a communicator takes responsibility for received meaning rather than transmitted meaning. The question it asks is not 'Did I say it clearly?' It is 'Did it land?'

R Refinement

Is anything here unnecessary?

Refinement addresses the discipline of editing. The active removal of what does not serve the communication rather than the passive accumulation of what might. Cognitive load theory^[8,9] establishes that extraneous information imposes a measurable processing cost on the receiver that reduces both comprehension and retention. In a safety briefing or incident report, that cost is compounded by time pressure and the competing demands on attention that every working environment creates. Cialdini's research on pre-suasion^[10] adds a further dimension. The information delivered immediately before a key message primes the frame through which the receiver interprets what follows. Unrefined preamble does not merely delay the point. It actively works against it. Refinement measures whether every element of a communication earns its place.

I Intent

What outcome am I aiming for?

Intent addresses the degree to which a communicator is clear about the specific behavioural outcome they want before they open their mouth. Speech act theory^[11,12] distinguishes between what is said, what is meant, and what is actually produced in the world as a result. Safety communication routinely fails at that third level. A message is sent and understood but produces no behavioural change, because the communicator had not defined what change was required before they spoke. Fogg's Behaviour Model^[13] and subsequent work in behaviour change science establish that specific, proximal, and personally relevant prompts are significantly more likely to produce action than general information. Intent measures whether a communicator knows what they want before they speak, and whether they check whether they got it afterwards.

Simplicity, Probing and Scoring Methodology

S Simplicity

Will they understand first time?

Simplicity addresses the accessibility of communication to the intended receiver rather than the originator. Processing fluency research^[14] demonstrates that messages perceived as easier to process are assigned greater credibility, remembered more accurately, and acted upon more reliably. Bernstein's analysis^[15] of elaborated and restricted communication codes established that professional environments tend toward elaborate language that presupposes shared background knowledge. In a multi-disciplinary safety environment where role, experience, first language, and cognitive load vary widely, that presupposition carries significant risk. Plain language research in regulated industries^[16] consistently demonstrates that simplified communication reduces error rates and improves comprehension across all literacy levels without reducing the communicator's authority. Simplicity measures whether a communicator designs for the receiver's comprehension or their own.

P Probing

Do I want agreement or insight?

Probing addresses the communicator's capacity to elicit honest, useful information from others, and the degree to which their communication style creates or forecloses that possibility. Edmondson's research on psychological safety^[17,18] demonstrates that people in environments where speaking up feels unsafe are significantly less likely to report concerns, raise near-misses, or challenge decisions. The consequences for operational safety are direct and well-documented. Zohar's supervisor communication studies^[19,20] establish that the specific language patterns a supervisor uses in day-to-day interaction are the primary predictor of safety climate, independent of any formal safety management system. Reason^[21] and Hollnagel^[22] both identify the failure of information to travel upward as a systemic risk factor. Workers hold knowledge of system vulnerabilities. That knowledge stays with them because nobody created the conditions in which sharing it felt safe. Probing measures whether a communicator creates those conditions.

SCORING METHODOLOGY AND SCORE BANDS

CRISP Pulse uses four related assessment and analysis methods.

Practitioner is a developmental self-assessment covering all five CRISP dimensions. Responses are scored using a proprietary method that accounts for positively and negatively framed items and differences in the composition of each dimension. Results are presented as dimension profiles and an overall developmental position.

The System is an organisational communication survey covering the same five dimensions from a team or workforce perspective. Responses are aggregated and presented as dimension-level results. There is no universal response threshold, so results from small or unrepresentative groups should be interpreted with appropriate caution.

Deep Read Pattern applies a proprietary rules-based analysis to written communication. It identifies observable language patterns associated with the five CRISP dimensions and presents these alongside evidence-confidence information.

Deep Read AI adds contextual interpretation, likely receiver impact and practical coaching prompts. AI-generated findings require human review, and any external processing is explained in the current CRISP Pulse privacy policy.

These methods share the CRISP framework but use different evidence sources and scoring approaches. Their results should not be treated as directly interchangeable. CRISP Pulse is a developmental communication framework rather than a psychometric or diagnostic instrument.

Disconnected

Unaware

Awakening

Practising

Capable

Confident

The Six Communication Bands

CRISP PULSE DEVELOPMENTAL BANDS

CRISP Pulse uses six developmental bands to describe communication practice. Each represents a distinct and recognisable pattern of behaviour. They are not fixed traits. They are current states. And current states change.

Disconnected

Communication is happening. Connection is not.

At this level, communication is largely unreflective. Messages leave but rarely land as intended. The gap between what was said and what was understood is wide, and largely invisible to the person creating it. Feedback is absorbed as confirmation rather than information. People around a Disconnected communicator have quietly learned to compensate. They seek clarification elsewhere, interpret generously, and work around rather than with the communication they receive. The communicator is usually unaware this is happening.

Unaware

Something is not working. The cause has not yet been found.

There is a growing sense that communication sometimes fails, but the reason tends to be located in the listener rather than the message. The Unaware communicator has instincts about what good communication looks like but applies them inconsistently. The principles surface when stakes are obvious and recede when they are not. Under pressure, quality drops. People generally get the gist, but on important matters the detail gets lost and the right outcome is rarely guaranteed.

Awakening

The gap between intent and impact has come into focus.

Something has shifted. The Awakening communicator has started to see the gap between what they intend to communicate and what actually arrives. They are beginning to edit, to question habitual patterns, to notice when a conversation has not produced what they expected. The instincts are present. The discipline to act on them consistently is still developing. This is a significant moment. Awareness is the precondition for everything that follows.

Practising

Good habits are forming. Consistency is the next frontier.

The Practising communicator applies the right principles more often than not. They prepare before significant conversations. They edit before they send. They are beginning to create space for honest dialogue rather than simply transmitting. Real strengths are emerging, and the communicator is aware of where the remaining gaps are. People around them notice the improvement. The task now is to close the distance between their best communication and their default communication.

Capable

Communication is a consistent professional strength.

At this level, communication is deliberate across most contexts. The Capable communicator prepares with purpose, delivers with precision, and creates conditions in which honest dialogue is genuinely possible. At this level a communicator is likely known as someone who communicates well. People leave conversations knowing what is expected. Problems surface early. The question at this level is no longer personal improvement. It is whether this capability is being used to raise the standard around them.

Confident

The standard is set. The work now is cultural.

Confident communication is rare. At this level, clarity, refinement, intent, simplicity, and the capacity to invite honest dialogue are not practices to maintain. They are defaults. The Confident communicator operates with a precision that others notice even when they cannot name what they are noticing. Conversations are efficient. Messages land. People feel heard. The development work at this level is not personal. It is systemic. The challenge is to embed what has been built individually into the culture and expectations of the environment around them.

References

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You have read the research. You understand the framework. The question now is what you do with it.

CRISP Pulse is available through three connected products. Each begins with a different evidence source, but all apply the same five communication dimensions.

The Practitioner Start with yourself.

A personal audit of how you communicate. 35 reflective questions across five dimensions. A scored profile with specific actions built around where you actually are.

For individuals ready to examine their own communication honestly.

The System Deploy across your team.

An organisational communication pulse for teams, sites or functions. Aggregated scores, dashboards, reports and action planning.

For leaders who want a structured picture of communication across a team.

Deep Read Analyse real communication.

Pattern and AI analysis of written communication and transcripts. Evidence, receiver impact, coaching and meeting intelligence.

For people who want to understand how real communication is likely to land.

To find out more or to purchase, visit tpsafety.co.uk/crisp-pulse

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