

*“ Communication without  
understanding is just noise ”*

The R.E.S.P.E.C.T.  
principle of communication

# HOW IMPORTANT IS COMMUNICATION IN AVIATION SAFETY?

- Lack of data about communication / language issues
- No **global** reporting system
- **Just Culture** – confidentiality & anonymity / non-punitive
- *‘I avoid as much as possible to fill safety reports because I fly in a very punitive and arbitrary country’ - PILOT, COLOMBIA*
- *‘Such safety reports are never put to good use. Rather it is taken as poor communication of the reporting individual’ – PILOT, INDIA*
- Communication is a factor in 70% of incidents / accidents

# HOW IMPORTANT IS COMMUNICATION IN AVIATION SAFETY?

- 1977 – Tenerife runway collision - 583 fatalities
- 1990 - Avianca B707, runs out of fuel - 73 fatalities
- 1995 - American B757, crashes into a mountain in Colombia - 159 fatalities

## Other examples:

### **BRITISH AIRWAYS (2008) – LONDON**

- Boeing 777 landed short of the runway due to engine failure.
- All passengers and crew survived.
- Cabin crew members were praised for their professionalism and efficiency in evacuating passengers.

### **US AIRWAYS (2009) - NEW YORK**

- Airbus A320 ditched into the Hudson River.
- Cabin crew acted swiftly to evacuate passengers onto the aircraft's wings and onto rescue boats.

## Other examples:

### AIR CANADA (1983) - CINCINNATI

- DC-9 - emergency landing due to a fire in toilet.
- 23 passengers died.
- Cabin crew were unable to make themselves heard (the PA system failed and the megaphone was not used).
- Passengers remained seated and awaited orders (a phenomenon known as '**Behavioural Inaction**').

## 2024: JAL A350 and a Japan Coast Guard Dash 8

- ATC cleared the JAL aircraft to land on runway 34R
- Coast Guard aircraft was instructed to hold short of the runway
- Coast Guard pilot thought he had clearance to take off
- Two planes collided and caught fire
- Five of the six crew on the Dash 8 died
- Everyone on the A350 survived

## 2024: JAL A350 and a Japan Coast Guard Dash 8

- 18 minutes to evacuate the 379 passengers on the JAL flight
- PA system malfunctioned  
(forcing flight attendants to use megaphones)
- 5 of the 8 emergency exits were unsafe for evacuation



## 2024: JAL A350 and a Japan Coast Guard Dash 8

How did the JAL crew do such a fantastic job?

Passengers did not take baggage with them when leaving the aircraft

- (a) the effectiveness of the safety briefing
- (b) cultural issues in relation to following instructions
- (c) JAL's policy of allowing 20kg of free checked baggage



Safety Video:



Safety video:





LAPLAND, FINLAND



# US Flight Attendants





VIDEO	PURPOSE
	Primarily safety
	Safety and promotion / marketing
US Flight Attendants	Safety and entertainment

# COMMUNICATION – what's the purpose?



- We communicate differently according to the situation
- Pilots and controllers – radiotelephony
- Transfer information from one party to another
- 'FASTAIR 345 - CLIMB TO FL 330'



MOTIVATE

*'We can do this!'*

PERSUADE

*'I suggest you Climb to FL 330 ...  
what do you think?'*

BE POLITE

*'If it's not too much trouble would  
you mind ...'*

## CABIN CREW

- SAFETY BRIEFINGS Explain safety / emergency systems
- IN-FLIGHT ANNOUNCEMENTS Updates about weather / flight status / connecting gates
- CUSTOMER SERVICE Address customer concerns (seating / meals / entertainment)
- EMERGENCY PROCEDURES Maintain order, guide passengers to safety
- TEAM COORDINATION Other cabin crew / flight crew / ground staff
- LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE Ensure effective communication and accessibility for everyone
- CONFLICT RESOLUTION Maintain a safe and peaceful cabin environment

# R E S P E C T

R	REPHRASE	If there is confusion, don't just repeat; rephrase using different words	
E	EMPATHY	Try to put yourself in the position of the other person. Is English their first language?	
S	SMILE	Body language can have different meanings ... but a smile is universally understood	
P	PAUSE	Pause and speak slowly to give the listener time to process	
E	EMPHASISE	Emphasise key information	
C	CLEAR & CONCISE	Speak clearly and be concise. Less is often more	
T	TWO-WAY	Communication is a shared responsibility. Listen actively and adjust your language	





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*How well we communicate is not  
determined by how well we say things  
but how well we are understood*

Andy Grove – co-founder, Intel Corporation

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