

Beyond the Checklist

The Human Element in Aviation Safety

Scott D. Arnold | October 20, 2026 | 2:30 PM



BEYOND THE CHECKLIST

The Human Element in Aviation Safety

Human factors • Communication • Leadership • CRM

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SAFETY

isn't owned by one person.

The Plan vs. Reality.

The plan is rarely the problem.

The UNEXPECTED is.

PLAN > PEOPLE > PRESSURE > CHANGE > RESPONSE

- ▶ Time Pressure
- ▶ Distraction
- ▶ Fatigue
- ▶ Workload
- ▶ Passenger Demands
- ▶ Conflicting Priorities

The Checklist.

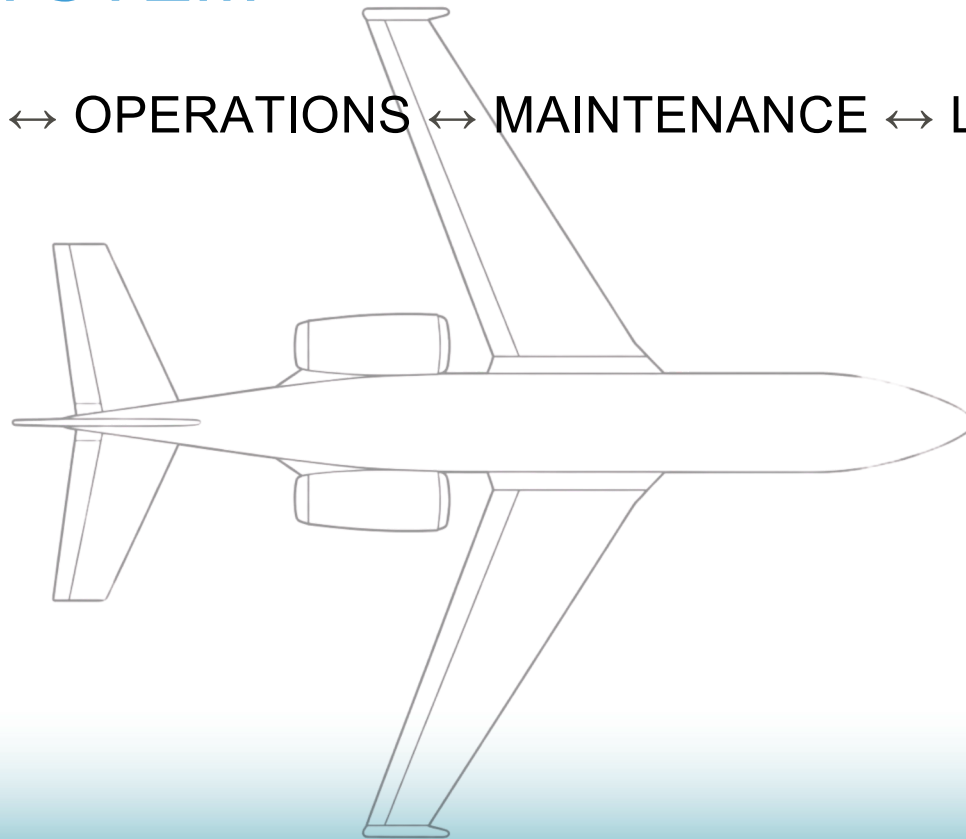
The checklist tells us what to do.

It doesn't tell us what someone is thinking.

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THE SAFETY SYSTEM

FLIGHT DECK ↔ CABIN ↔ OPERATIONS ↔ MAINTENANCE ↔ LEADERSHIP



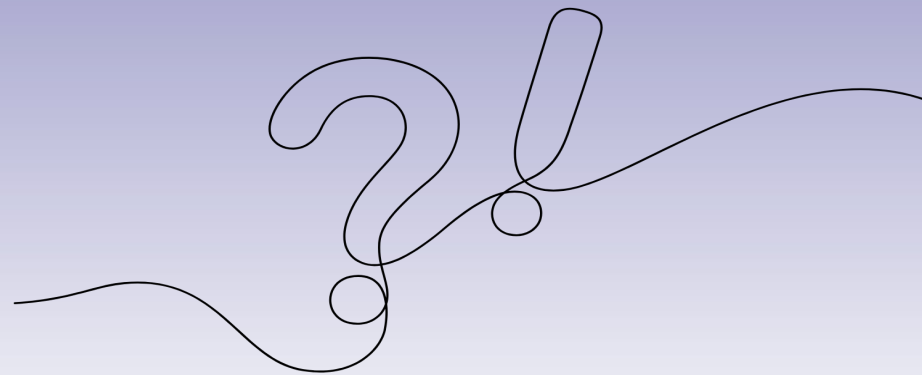
What the checklist can't see.

- Assumptions
- Workload
- Distractions
- Pressure
- Fear
- Misunderstanding

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SCENARIO QUESTION:

Who sees the risk?



Who sees the risk?

**The person who sees it first isn't always
the person with the authority to act on it.**

A light gray, hand-drawn scribble consisting of several loops and lines, positioned behind the text block.

Authority isn't the problem.

An unhealthy authority gradient can be.

TOO STEEP

*"That's not
your call."*

HEALTHY

*"Tell me what
you're seeing."*

TOO FLAT

*"Who's making
the decision?"*

Communication isn't just talking.

Communication = Information + Understanding + Action



"It looks like we may have some turbulence ahead."

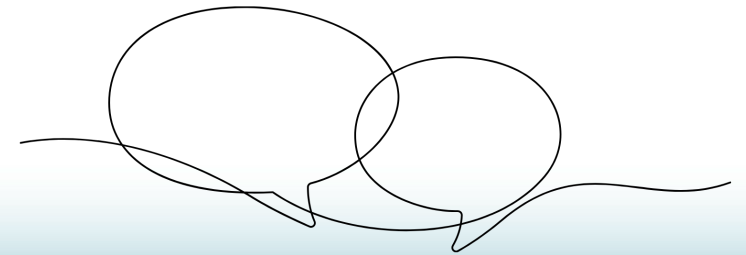
"A little turbulence – nothing significant."

-or- *"You need to secure the cabin now."*

**Different understanding
→ different response.**

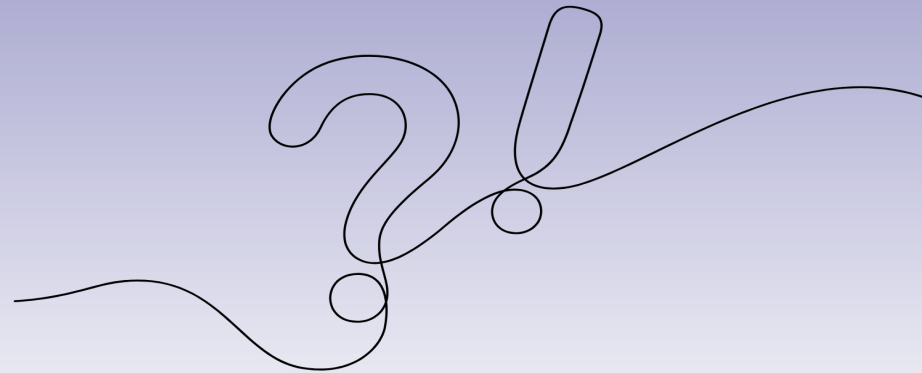
OBSERVE → CONCERN → ACTION

1. OBSERVE *“I’m noticing ...”*
2. CONCERN *“My concern is ...”*
3. ACTION *“I recommend ...”*



SCENARIO QUESTION:

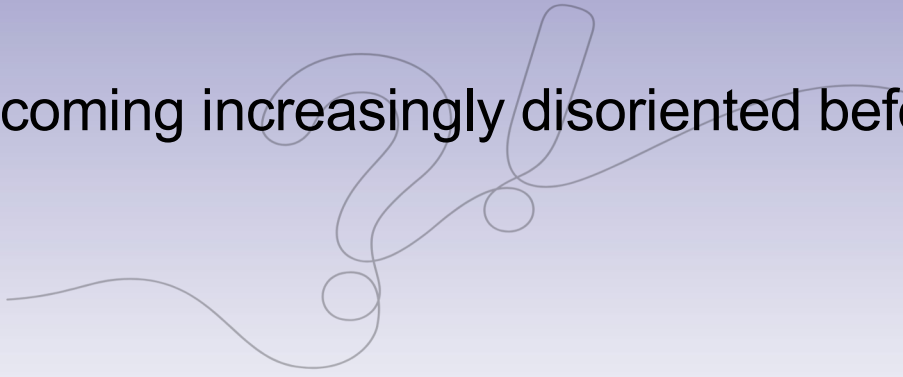
How would you
communicate the concern?



SCENARIO QUESTION:

How would you communicate the concern?

A passenger is becoming increasingly disoriented before departure.

A decorative line art graphic consisting of a large, stylized question mark and exclamation mark intertwined with flowing, wavy lines, positioned below the scenario text.

When CRM becomes real.

CRM is **not**:

- ✗ A Checklist
- ✗ A Lecture
- ✗ “Being Nice”
- ✗ Just for Pilots
- ✗ Just for Emergencies

CRM is:

How people use available resources to manage risk together.

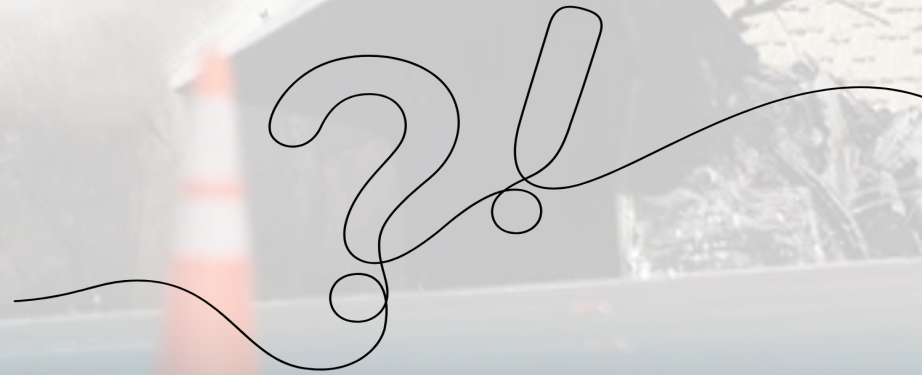
When training kicks in.

Sometimes you don't have
all the information.

But you must recognize the risk anyway.



What allowed her to make these decisions?



TRAINING

TRAINING

+

Situational Awareness

Decision-Making

Confidence

Knowing CRM
is important.

**Applying CRM when
it matters is what makes
it valuable.**

Was this a **pilot** Issue?

Was this a **cabin** Issue?

Was this an **operations** issue?

or

A TEAM ISSUE

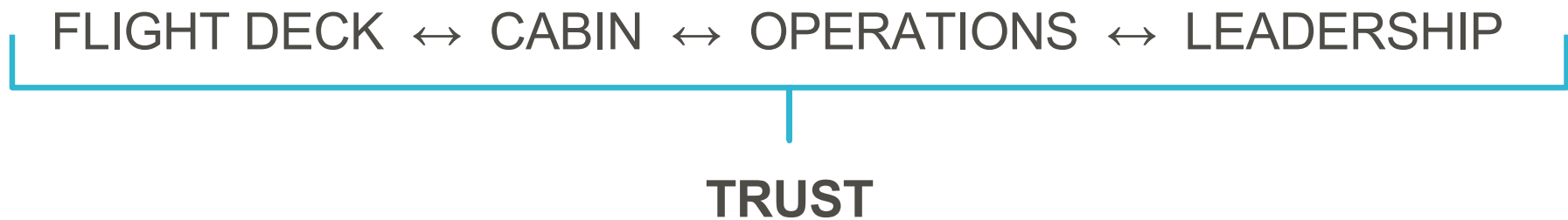
*CRM begins when we stop asking whose problem it is –
and start asking how we solve it together. **That's CRM.***

Speaking up is only half of CRM.

The other half is:

Creating an environment where people can speak up ...
and where the person receiving the information – actually, listens.

THE HUMAN SAFETY SYSTEM.



The strongest safety cultures don't depend on one person getting everything right.
They build systems where people help each other get it right.

Cabin Crew are part of the Safety Team.

Cabin Crew $\neq$ Just Service

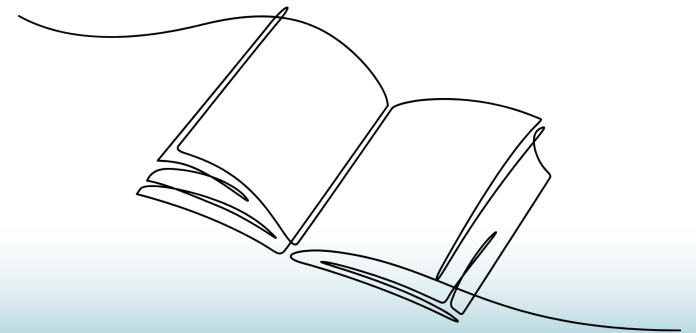
SERVICE creates the passenger experience.

SAFETY protects the passenger.

CRM connects the people responsible for both.

So, how do we **train** this?

EDUCATION MATTERS



A new approach to CABIN SAFETY education

Cabin Safety Management 5-Course Curriculum

- CRM for Cabin Safety
- Communications and Briefings
- Pre-Flighting and Usage of Emergency Equipment
- Types of In-Flight Incidents and Emergencies
- Cabin and Passenger Emergency Preparedness

Complete all five → Receive ERAU Cabin Safety Management Accreditation

Cabin Safety Management Courses



The cabin IS part of the operation.

It's not enough to train cabin crew to be safety-minded.

The operation must **integrate them into the safety system.**

THE CHECKLIST IS THE START.

The entire team is the safety system

Speak up.

Listen up.

Back each other up.

Learn from what happens.

What will you do differently – starting tomorrow?



Thank you.
Questions?

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