

What You Said vs. What They Heard: The Safety Gap



BASS 2025 – Morning Session Recap

Global Safety Challenges: How Do We Speak the Same Language?

Safety doesn't start with systems. It begins with understanding.

At the 70th Annual Business Aviation Safety Summit (BASS), Session 1, led by respected industry voices Terry Yeomans (IS-BAO Program Director) and Andrew Karas (NBAA Manager, Safety & Flight Operations), asked a pivotal question:

In a complex global environment, how do we ensure we're truly speaking the same language when it comes to safety?

Their message was clear: communication is a critical enabler of safety, and our greatest source of vulnerability when done poorly.

Listening vs. Replying

The session opened with a challenge we all recognize:

- We often listen to *reply*, not to *understand*.
- We speak *at* each other rather than *with* each other.

- And many of us never learned how to actively listen in the first place.

These habits shape how teams operate under pressure and how easily warning signs can be missed.

Mehrabian's 7-38-55 Rule

Citing Dr. Albert Mehrabian's research, the speakers reminded us that communication is mostly *non-verbal*:

- 7% = Words
- 38% = Tone
- 55% = Body Language

When safety depends on clarity and consistency, the way we speak often matters *more* than what we say.

Red Talk vs. Green Talk

In safety culture, how we communicate defines whether people feel empowered or silenced.

 Red Talk	 Green Talk
"I heard you the first time."	"Thanks for the reminder."
"Don't you think I know what I'm doing?"	"Thanks for backing me up."
Embarrasses or punishes	Reinforces and respects
Green Talk builds trust.	Red Talk erodes it.

Green Talk builds trust. Red Talk erodes it. And trust is the true backbone of high-performing safety teams.

Why Aerospace Professionals Don't Speak Up

While the session explored *pilot communication* in depth, the lessons apply across all aerospace roles — mechanics, dispatchers, cabin crew, safety managers, and more.

Top reasons people stay silent:

1. Fear of damaging relationships
2. Avoiding embarrassment of others
3. Perceived tradeoff: efficiency vs. safety
4. Intimidation by authority or experience
5. Not wanting to be "that person" who challenges the group

Whether you're a four-stripe captain or a technician on the ramp, psychological safety is essential. Without it, mistakes go unreported, assumptions go unchallenged, and risks go unmanaged.

"I don't want to be the 'four stripes knows it all' type of captain."

— Anonymous quote from peer-reviewed research on silence in aviation crews

The Feedback Disconnect

Two provocative questions shaped the session's direction:

- Why is it so difficult to get open and frank feedback?
- Why is it so hard to align how you *think* you come across with how others *actually* perceive you?

These questions expose a blind spot in aerospace safety systems that CRM alone hasn't solved.

Rethinking CRM: Peer Feedback in Focus

Presenter Nicolaus Dmoch introduced [RateMyCRM](#), a platform for anonymous, peer-based feedback on:

- NOTECH skills
- Open text questions
- Self vs. peer perception

This approach helps remove ego and rank from the equation, creating space for *genuine behavior improvement* beyond checklists.

CRM Takeaways:

1. CRM has evolved, but individual behavior is still a challenge
 2. Professionals stay silent not due to hierarchy, but to preserve harmony
 3. Traditional behavioral markers may miss the real issues
 4. Peer feedback can unlock honest, useful insights
 5. Aggregated feedback could dramatically improve SMS integration and training validation.
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WYVERN's Perspective

At WYVERN, we know that communication breakdowns don't start in the cockpit — they start in *culture*. Our tools, including Flight Leader Program, Safety Culture Evaluations, and Safety Leader Training, empower leaders to foster open dialogue, build trust, and turn feedback into fuel for continuous improvement.

Because checklists are essential, but without connection, they fall flat.

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