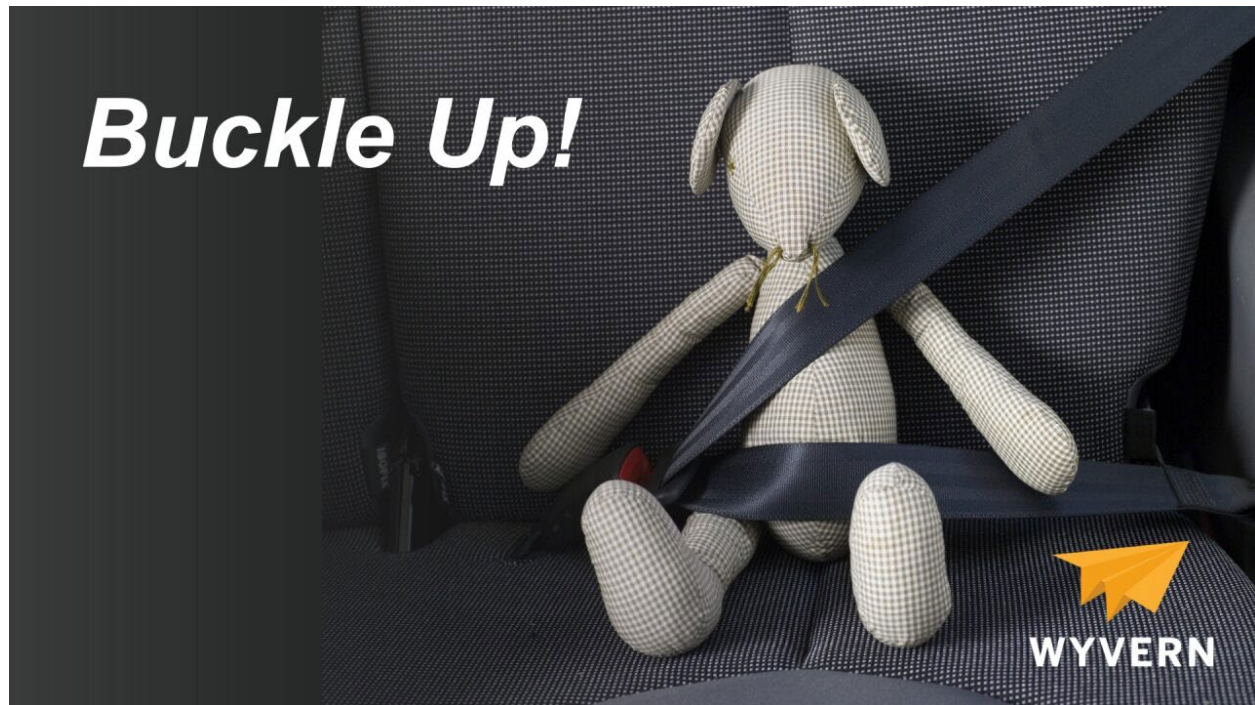


The Power of Attitude



Ajzen described attitude toward a behavior as *“the degree to which a person has a favorable or unfavorable evaluation or appraisal of the behavior in question”* (Ajzen, 1991). In plain terms, it’s whether we think doing something will lead to outcomes we value.

Two ingredients shape this evaluation:

- **Behavioral Beliefs** – what we expect will happen if we act.
- **Outcome Evaluations** – how much we care about those outcomes.

Put the two together, and you get the strength of a person’s attitude toward the action.

This plays out in everyday life. Take wearing a seatbelt:

- Someone who believes seatbelts prevent serious injury (belief) and who values personal safety (evaluation) will have a strong intention to buckle up every time.
- Another person might believe seatbelts save lives but dislikes the discomfort or sees them as unnecessary for short trips. Because they don’t value the outcome as much in that context, their intention weakens.

Ajzen and others have shown that these attitudes explain a significant share of why people intend—or fail—to act. In fact, studies across health, education, and workplace behavior suggest attitudes alone often account for 30–40% of the variation in intentions.

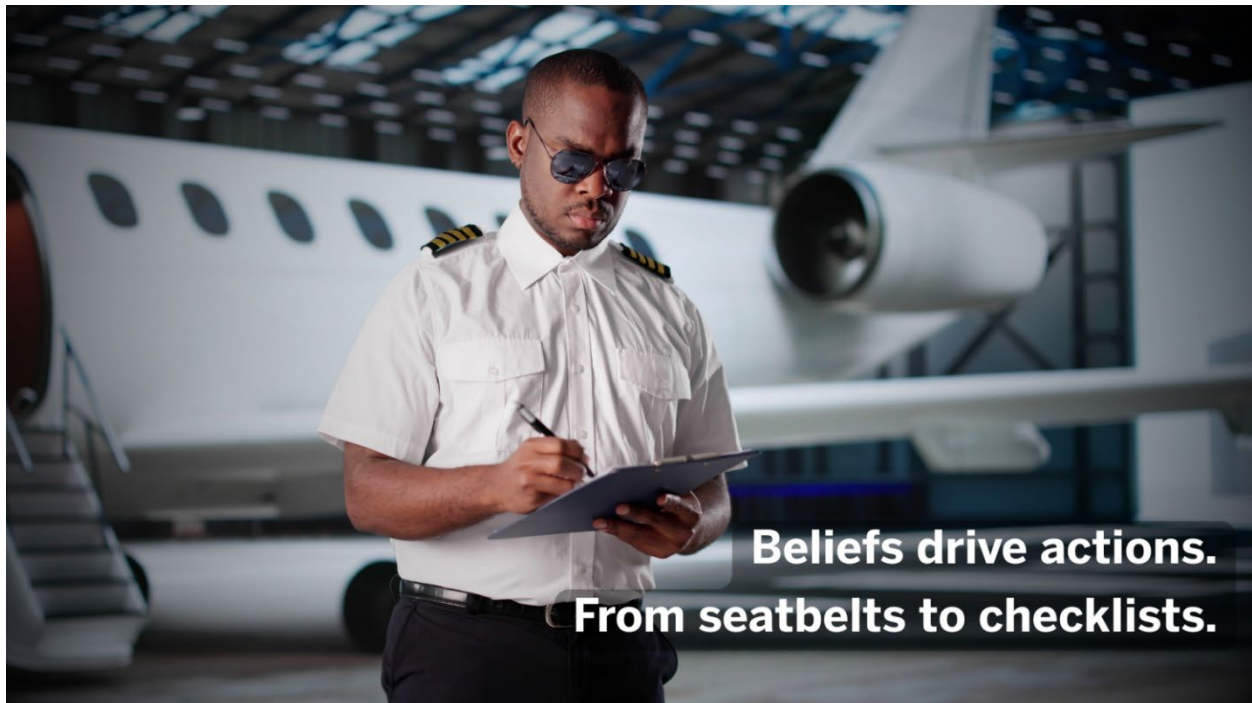


This distinction becomes especially important in aviation. A professional may fully support “safety” in general, yet still downplay a specific action like running a checklist. That’s why Ajzen emphasized that **specific attitudes toward a behavior** are more powerful predictors than broad values.

Consider two pilots, side by side in the flight deck:

- One believes checklists prevent error, keep the crew aligned, and protect lives—and those are outcomes they value deeply. Their intention to follow the checklist carefully is strong.
- The other knows checklists help, but prioritizes efficiency or appearing confident. The benefits are recognized but undervalued, and the intention weakens.

Both operate under the same rules. The difference lies in how they evaluate the consequences of the specific behavior in front of them.



Ajzen also stressed what he called the **principle of compatibility**: the closer the question about attitude matches the specific behavior, the stronger the prediction. In other words, asking a pilot, “Do you believe in safety?” tells us little about whether they will thoroughly run a checklist. But asking, “Do you believe the before-takeoff checklist prevents mistakes?” is directly tied to intention—and therefore far more predictive.

Decades of research back this up. Across industries, from health to corporate compliance, specific attitudes consistently emerge as a direct predictor of intention. This means in aerospace, even the smallest behaviors—completing a shift handover, documenting a minor maintenance discrepancy, or reviewing an operational bulletin—are shaped not only by the rulebook, but by the personal evaluation of that single action.

Reflection for Readers:

Think about one safety routine you repeat every day. Do you approach it because you believe it prevents error, because it reassures your team, or because it simply feels mandatory? Your answer reveals a lot about the attitude behind your action.

Where do these attitudes originate? In Part 3, we’ll look at how past experiences, training, and organizational culture shape the way aerospace professionals evaluate safety behaviors.

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