

"If you want to influence and change behaviour through effective communication then this book is for you. I highly recommend SELLSAFE as a toolkit that can assist you to improve safety and business performance."

Paul Harper, CEO, AMC Consultants

TRANSFORM YOUR SAFETY COMMUNICATION



How to Create
**Targeted
and
Inspiring
Safety
Messages**
for a Productive
Workplace

MARIE-CLAIRE ROSS

TRANSFORM YOUR SAFETY COMMUNICATION

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Advance Praise for Transform Your Safety Communication

“I recommend this Book/Guide to ALL Safety Personnel and Managers alike. It’s very interesting and an easy to read guide that will encourage you to look at the way you communicate in a different light. Well done, Marie-Claire! **A thoroughly enjoyable read** and will now take the place of my dictionary as the most used book on my desk.”

**Michael Carney, HSE Manager Sydney,
StarTrack**

“Simple sound theory backed up with experience, **filled with tips and examples** of the good, the bad, and the ugly of safety communication, finishing with a “how to” guide. For the busy person, the chapter summaries were perfect to get quickly to the practical implementation of Marie-Claire’s marketing knowledge.”

**Rachel Murphy, Health Safety and Compliance Coordinator,
IHBI Queensland University of Technology**

“It is not what you say, but how you say it.” If you want to engage others and change their behaviour through effective communication then this book is for you. This book follows its own message in that; it is engaging, makes you think, and above all gives you a different perspective on how we, as people, see and hear what we want to see and hear. **I highly recommend the SELLSAFE system** as a toolkit that can assist you to improve safety and business performance.”

**Paul Harper, CEO/Principal Mining Engineer,
AMC Consultants**

“Marie-Claire has distilled years of experience, effective marketing practices, wide research and wit into what **should become a safety professional’s best friend**. These are techniques that work and applying them will bring your safety program to life – for me it’s a communications adviser that’s there when I need. This book is written in an easy to digest style with many examples and pictures to back up the content – the book is demonstration that the techniques work. I’m sold on safety!”

**Alistair Camm, HSE Manager,
Pacific Aluminium**

“I found the book **easy to read** and the safety information will be very useful to all working in safety. The information is written in such away that keeps the reader interested. I enjoyed reading this book and the conversation style, as it personalized the information.”

**Vicki Mutton, WHSE Coordinator,
SKILLED SA**

“**Finally, a real communications book written for the safety professional**. Marie-Claire instructs us on a topic in a captivating manner that is essential for any safety professional who has struggled with communicating important safety messages to protect their workforce. I only **wish this book were written 15 years sooner**. I could have certainly used it to develop stronger safety cultures in the companies in which I have worked.”

**Morris Elkins, CSP, CPEA, CPSA,
Certified Lean Six Sigma Black Belt**

“I recommend this work as offering something for every person who cares about effective safety communication. You will find at least one, if not many more, strategies to **transform your communication from ordinary to inspiring**.”

**Tamara Frigot, Regional SHEQ Manager,
Hyder Consulting.**

“The tactics in this book are backed up by science, psychology, and tangible results. **Use the information to help you get buy-in** and agreement on the type of communication approach that is most effective in achieving positive behavioural change and keeping staff safe.”

**Alison Dillon,
Internal Communication Consultant**

“A powerful read. If you ever thought you had safety communication and the challenges with it figured out, read this book, not once, but twice. The first time, the little bells will go off, the second time, you start to think about how much it all makes sense.” Marie-Claire has done a wonderful job of writing about how to build a safety campaign so it is effective.”

**Rob Morphew, CRSP, EP Director, HSE,
Calgary Co-op**

“Marie-Claire Ross’s book, “Transform Your Safety Communication,” is a fantastic resource for any safety professional passionate, in developing a successful safety campaign. **I wish I had come across this book earlier in my career as I found the simple marketing techniques,** examples, and templates invaluable for planning my next safety improvement project.”

**Christopher J Langley, National HSE Manager,
Higgins Coatings**

“I really enjoyed reading “Transform Your Safety Communication” and was able to immediately implement the information into my safety management system. The information was well laid out and concisely written. I don’t have any background in marketing and found the book to be **an easy read for someone brand new to the field.** The examples given were relevant and easily relatable. **This is a book that I have already recommended to my colleagues.** It’s a valuable addition to my virtual bookshelf.”

**Carla MacKinnon, HSE Coordinator,
Pressure Services Inc**

“Great leaders, coaches and managers all have the seemingly innate ability to create high performing teams by affecting their perspective and behaviour. As the adage goes - people buy what they believe and this book gives structure to that ideal. Understanding that you are selling an outcome does not belittle the cause and I don’t believe safety is cheap, but the message has not been sold well. Marie-Claire is able to leverage off her marketing research experience on affecting human behaviour and serves up a process of applying this to health and safety. **A practical way to leading safety culture.**”

**Mark Kerns, Managing Director,
Kern Health**

To Andrew, Arielle and Amelie, my loving family, who teach
me the power of communication every day!

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Preface

Fifteen years ago, I sat in the office of a rather exuberant public relations director of a public health department, as we carefully went through mock ups of magazine ads that had been prepared to communicate a new health website.

At the time, I worked in a market research company and we extensively tested a range of different ads that their advertising agency had created. We tested everything – the health content required for the website (from both doctors and the community), then later components of the ads – images, headlines and design. Our extensive research included focus groups, in-depth interviews, and telephone questionnaires.

This wasn't my first communication research assignment; for five years I had been testing countless products and services from cheese to shoe polish and even health insurance.

Fast forward to three years later and I'm running a video production house with my husband.

While sitting in the office of a production manager (also an exuberant person), I asked him how our training video was going for his production staff. What confused me was that he didn't use my pre and post questionnaires to test how well the training video went. It was just a video that he presumed worked well (and it must because it's still being used for training some 12 years later).

What surprised a market researcher let loose in the world was that people write information, create training videos, manuals, articles and - do NOT test them. Even more strange, was that best practices are never even considered (or shock, horror, known to even exist!).

Having worked with many passionate safety and risk professionals, I have always admired their tenacity to improve safety in their workplace. Yet, understood how frustrated they were that their communication efforts often seemed so futile.

Day after day, many of you go out amongst it all and try to transfer your enthusiasm to others. So gallantly laughing off accusations that “we’ve heard this before.”

The reason I chose to write this book is that I want to help all the passionate professionals who realise how important it is to influence and engage on safety and risks. So many of you are keen to be a safety influencer, but have never been taught the required communication skills. Consider this **an easy go-to guide on the best practices to influence others on safety and quickly put together relevant communication.**

Too often, safety professionals are taught about compliance, but not the right skills to influence and engage others. This is so crucial when it comes to improving safety. After all, knowing rules and regulations is one thing, but getting people to follow them? That’s something else entirely! Yet, so few companies even think about providing safety professionals with both verbal and written influence skills training to change outdated workplace behaviour.

Keeping workers safe is one of the most important things an organisation can do. I strongly believe that if you focus on safety, then all other things will fall into place, such as productivity and profits.

To make it easier for safety professionals to pull together attention-grabbing and memorable workplace safety communication, I have

crammed this book full of lots of tips and templates. These are tested and tried techniques that work.

This provides you with easy shortcuts to quickly produce safety communication using all of the social psychologist techniques that advertising agencies use. Normally, you'd have to spend weeks searching through their information to get it to make sense to communicate on safety.

Instead, I've made it really easy for you to follow a proven formula to write interesting information on safety for:

- your company newsletter or intranet,
- training documents,
- senior management reports,
- safety meeting talks or presentations, and
- safety communication campaigns (e.g., safety themes).

This book is based on my years of communication experience in testing, creating and delivering marketing and safety training communication programs for clients and even, for my own company. Some of the programs I have worked on include manual handling training and awareness programs for both CSR Viridian and Gypsum Board Manufacturers of Australasia, truck driver training for Murray Goulburn and isolation procedures for a large steel manufacturer and Incitec Pivot to name a few.

I wish to thank those who kindly agreed to be interviewed for this book. Thanks goes to Chip Le Grand, chief editor of *The Australian* for his advice about creating leads and David Dumas from *Grey* for his input on the WorkSafe ad campaigns. Further thanks goes to Yarra Trams and the Helsinki Agency for permission to use "Beware the Rhino" posters.

A big thanks goes to our clients for agreeing to let us use some of the materials that we have created for them to show in this book. This includes GBMA, Rio Tinto (Pacific Aluminium), Pacific National and CSR Viridian.

I truly hope that this book will help companies around the world improve workplace safety communication, in order to humanise safety and ensure that everyone comes home from work safe.

Yours communicatively,
Marie-Claire Ross

Introduction

Effective communication is vital to get staff and contractors aligned and working towards a positive safety culture.

Yet, just providing training to work safely is not always enough. **How we communicate about safety influences whether or not people will accept or reject our safety messages.**

The main objective of any safety communication program is to change behaviour. **But how does a safety or risk professional change attitudes towards safety or improve the way people undertake procedures?** How can the safety manager deliver a message that motivates employees, supervisors, and contractors to think and act safely?

The secret to developing highly successful safety communication programs is to use marketing-based (also known as advertising-based) tactics.

But let's just pause and think about something for a moment. How do you feel about the term advertising?

With my blog, The Workplace Communicator, the only time I ever get negative comments is from safety professionals that believe that all marketing techniques are for con artists and that forcing anyone to buy anything is unethical. They often feel it's beneath them to have to use any marketers "tricks."

Of course, there is lots of shady advertising around. However, in this book, we're going to use the power of marketing for the greater good of safety.

First, let's get really clear on what advertising is all about. According to Wikipedia, *advertising is a form of communication intended to persuade an audience to purchase or take some action upon products, ideas, or services. Advertising can change attitudes, values and actions of those who see or hear the message.*

It's important to understand that the marketing techniques I want to go through with you are really **about influence to change behaviour, attitudes and values**. It's not about manipulating people and duping them into believing that they have to work safely (and here's a philosophical question for you: is it actually wrong to "manipulate" someone to work safely?) Instead, it's about persuading people to work safely, consider others, and learn new safety behaviour.

"Advertising is only evil when it advertises evil things." David Ogilvy

What I love about safety communication is that at its core, it's all about saving lives. It's not forcing people to buy a product they don't need at a price they can't afford. Instead, when executed correctly, it's about getting people to understand why a particular safety message needs to matter to them and what they can do about it. **It's about positive behaviour change.**

In order to promote safety messages (and save lives!), it's time that safety professionals started to think like marketers.

So if you have any doubts about marketing, it's time to lose that queasy feeling. However, the fact that you have picked up this book means that you are keen to learn how to engage others on safety. Thank you for wanting to make a meaningful difference in your workplace!

If you are in a safety leadership role, this book gives you the tools to improve safety behaviour, reduce wastage and increase workplace efficiencies.

A healthy workplace culture emphasizes the importance of safety as part of how the organisation operates. When it comes to high performing businesses, there are three core inter-related areas that need to be in balance, in order to create the right environment for safety and productivity.

These are **Unity**, **Compassionate Leadership** and **Communication**. Once you get these three areas in balance, it produces trust (which is when people feel safe).

Workplace Culture Model for High Performing Companies



Workers look to senior leaders to see that safety is a priority and that they are safe from harm. They get this from clear **communication** that is transparent, authentic and has no trace of hypocrisy. They see it from a **unified workplace** where people work together and look out for each other. And they feel it from **compassionate leaders** who care about them.

This in turn enables workers to feel safe to excel and take risks in their career, knowing they are protected from getting injured at work or from being bullied or harassed by colleagues (you can read more about improving your safety culture in this free report: www.digicast.com.au/workplace-safety-culture).

To be the best safety, executive manager, human resources, quality, risk or training professional, it's important for your career that you learn communication skills to influence, engage and improve workplace behaviour. The skills that you will learn from this book are critical for you to improve safety in your company and achieve your goals. They can also be transferred to other areas in your life.

With that in mind, let's take all of the ethical parts of advertising and use them to create a safe, happy workplace.

To your communication success!

How to Use This Book

I know you're all busy and writing a safety communication campaign is probably your least preferred task in the world.

So to make this learning process foolproof, I've written this book so you can easily scan the content and find relevant information. You do not have to read every page (although, it's better if you do).

In general, I make reference to safety professionals in this book.

However, I know a lot of you are not safety professionals all the time; some of you are in administration, senior management, human resources, internal communications, quality and environmental departments (sorry if you're not in this list, you can always email me and tell me what you do at info@digicast.com.au).

However, the fact that you are reading this book means that you are not like the average safety professional.

Truly great safety professionals don't blindly follow instructions, they challenge the status quo and look at ways to better communicate their message. They're not happy with mediocrity. They live for their job and are always thinking of innovative solutions to their safety problems. They don't just accept the standard answers. At any given opportunity, they consider options to ensure workers make it home to their families.

And this is called art.

Let's get things straight. Art doesn't mean you can draw or paint, it means you can see. You can see what's right or wrong.

As Seth Godin makes clear in the wonderful book, "Linchpin", art is anything that's creative, passionate and personal. **And great art resonates with the viewer, not only the creator.**

Artists can work with watercolour and clay. But artists can also work with business strategies, customer service, managing a meeting and safety. **Art is about intent and communication, not substance.**

Artists take their job personally. They are willing to challenge the status quo, be bold, insightful and creative.

A safety artist is not willing to put up with ordinary safety results. He (or she) is ready to do what it takes to inspire a workforce to work safely. He might have to be compliant, for compliance sake, but he's also prepared to do more than just be compliant.

"Art is a personal gift that changes the recipient. The medium doesn't matter. The intent does." Seth Godin

In the book, "Grow," Jim Stengel believes that great CEOs are actually brand artists that connect people holistically with both rational and emotional information. They lead people with unified stories that communicate how the company improves lives both internally and externally.

What I want you to understand is that no matter whether you're the CEO or Safety Director, to get the best results, you need to consider yourself as an artist.

This book will transform your safety communication so that you start to operate on an entirely different level. No longer will safety be seen as grumpy talk from an overbearing policeman. Instead, this

book will teach you how to align everyone on the importance of safety within the company.

To make it easier, as this book is about safety communication, I'll refer to you all colloquially as safety professionals or safety artists; as when you are writing safety communication, that's technically your job role.

The objective of this guide is to make it really easy for safety professionals who are new to the topic of safety communication, as well as those who have been communicating safety for some time and want to learn new techniques.

This introductory content includes step-by-step instructions on how to get started with some communication methods to change behaviour, as well as lots of easy to use information and templates to start crafting your messages.

After reading it, you will be able to execute basic and medium-level marketing tactics to improve how you engage others on safety.

How this Book is Written

Essentially, this book is broken down into six sections:



1. **Learn:** Discover the Proven Safety Communication Framework



2. **Attention:** Capture Your Audience's Attention



3. **Remember:** Achieve Memorable Safety Communication



4. **Persuade:** Get the Effective Communication System



5. **Create:** Transform your Safety Communication



6. **Templates:** 5 Templates to Make Safety Messages Stick

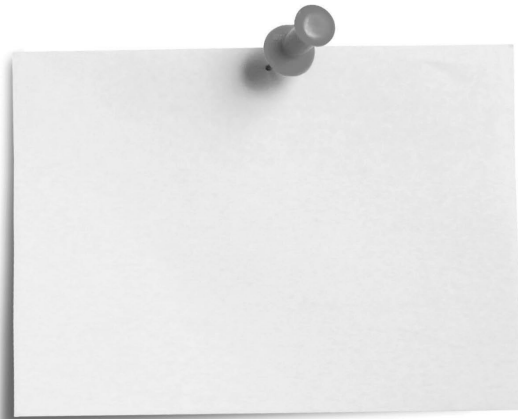
Chapters 1-4 provide you with theory and examples of how to create compelling safety communication that will grab attention, be memorable and positively influence people to change behaviour. At the end of chapter four, I introduce the SELLSAFE formula for effective safety communication and delve into some examples and how Grey, the ad agency, creates their award-winning safety campaigns.

While chapters 5-7 are all about how to create your safety communication with lots of tips and templates. All of the theory that you have been taught is combined into easy to use models. This is the action chapter and it's where you can start "doing." It is where you can get up and running quickly.

There are two types of safety communication that a safety professional creates:

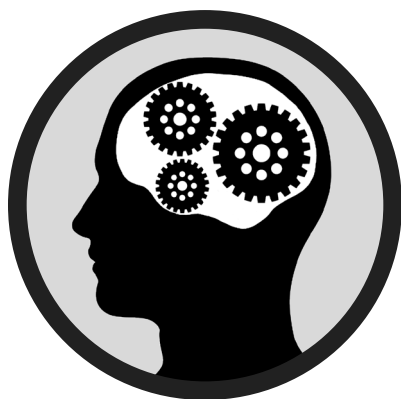
1. **Short Communication Pieces** – For many of you, there will be times when all you need to do is write a short safety communication piece such as an article for a newsletter, a report for your senior manager or workers, or a speech/presentation for a meeting. If you are short of time, skip straight to Chapter 5, read the tips and follow the Safety Communication Content Creation Template.
2. **Long Communication Pieces** – This is when you have to create a safety theme or introduce a new safety training process that will be repeated over time (usually 1-3 months). **This is what is referred to as a workplace safety campaign.** This type of communication is like a full ad campaign with a slogan, images, lots of different communication mediums (i.e., emails, posters, training), as well as a schedule of communication events. Ideally, read the whole book, in particular the first four chapters on how to change behaviour. The three ad templates at the back of the book are the most relevant to you, as well as the Communication Schedule.

Throughout this book, you will find “Sticky Tips” to help reinforce important information to make your messages stick.



Now, safety artist, it's time to create a world of safe workplaces,
let's get started.

PART I



LEARN

“A powerful read. If you ever thought you had safety communication and the challenges with it figured out, read this book, not once, but twice. The first time, the little bells will go off, the second time, you start to think about how much it all makes sense. Marie-Claire has done a wonderful job of writing about how to build a safety campaign, so it is effective.”

Rob Mophew, CRSP, EP Director, HSE, Calgary Co-op

You can have the best safety system in the world, but if you are not communicating it correctly, your organisation is at risk.

Tell-tale signs of poor safety communication include:

- **Safety is seen as boring** and staff tune out.
- **A lack of trust** with management and workers wondering “Are they serious or is this just lip service?”
- Employees have **no clear or consistent understanding** of what is required from a safety perspective.
- **Injuries are high** and keep rising.
- **Employees aren’t looking out for each other.**

Transform Your Safety Communication provides you with the secret psychology techniques used by advertising agencies to influence and engage. This easy to read and practical book will teach you:

- **The 4 powerful commandments** of safety communication.
- How to **grab your audience’s attention.**
- How to create **memorable safety messages.**
- The 8 elements of the **SELLSAFE formula** to change safety behaviour.
- How to quickly transform your safety communication with **5 easy templates and frameworks.**

Learn how to effectively transform your safety messages and become an inspiring safety leader by reading this highly engaging book that is filled with tips, examples, templates and frameworks.



Marie-Claire Ross (BA Hons) began her career in market research. She worked with well renowned advertising agencies and communication consultancies, testing communication campaigns for success. Here, she honed her word-savvy skills, writing assorted business reports to engage time-poor executives. For over 13 years, she has run a video production agency writing video scripts to influence, as well as articles on communication that have been published worldwide. Her popular Workplace Communicator blog is read by close to 10,000 people each month. Over the last ten years, she has worked with large industrial companies around the world to improve their safety communication. To learn more, visit www.digicast.com.au.


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