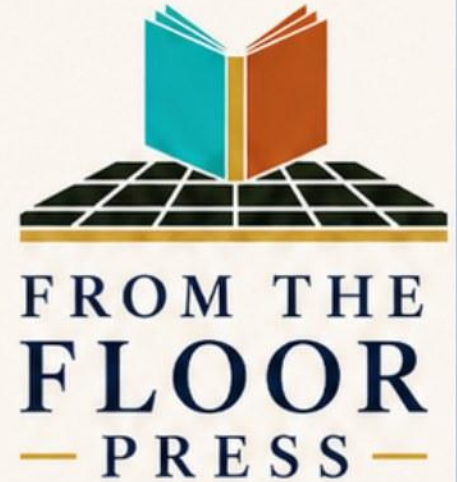


Why 'Black Belt' Almost Got Lost in Translation



The telephone game on the warehouse floor —
and what it teaches us about
communication reliability

By Adriane 'Ace' Crabtree, LSSBB
Author, *Failure to Communicate:
The #1 Reason Teams Fail —
and How to Fix It*



**One phrase.
Two different pictures.**

I said 'black belt' and meant Lean Six Sigma.
My associate heard 'black belt'
and pictured karate.
That small gap in context became
a real-life example of the telephone game.

Same words. Different picture.

fromthefloorpress.com



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The Real Floor Moment



“Black belt”
meant one thing
to me — and
something else to her.



My picture: Lean Six Sigma Black Belt



Her picture: Karate



Result: Same words. Different meaning.



That is where the telephone game started.

The Silent Spiral™

How meaning quietly drifts on the floor.



1 Word heard



2 Assumption fills the gap



3 Meaning drifts



4 Action follows
the wrong picture



The breakdown is often quiet
long before it becomes visible.



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Breaking the Spiral™

Four ways to interrupt the wrong picture.



1. Pause the story

Stop the automatic narrative.
Give yourself space to listen
before meaning takes over.



2. Ask what the word means

Surface assumptions early.
Don't let a single word drive
a wrong picture.



3. Translate the context

Check what's really happening.
Clarify the situation behind
the message.



4. Confirm the picture

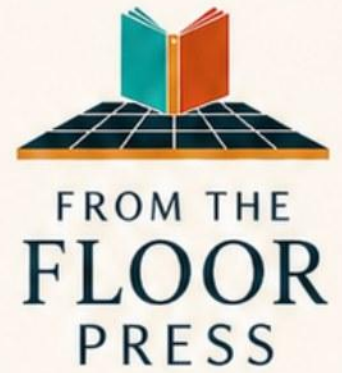
Validate understanding before
you act. Align on what you
both see.



Ask for the picture before the assumption hardens.



Swipe to continue



Why This Matters on the Floor

The same pattern shows up in everyday operations.



Urgent

One person hears today.
Another hears end of week.



Clean this up

One person hears housekeeping.
Another hears system correction.



Quality issue

One person hears blame.
Another hears investigation.



Communication fails when people
keep talking while picturing different things.



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