

Institute for Shared Understanding

The Five Core Communication Signals

A Diagnostic Framework for Creating Communication Effectiveness

The Authoritative Reference for the Diagnostic Dimensions That Enable
the Clario Method™

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Clario Foundation Paper CFP-002

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Executive Summary

Every organization communicates. Few organizations systematically evaluate whether their communications create the Shared Understanding required for those communications to succeed.

Clario Foundation Paper CFP-001 established that Communication Effectiveness, defined as the degree to which a communication creates the Shared Understanding necessary for its intended purpose to be successfully carried out, can be intentionally created, systematically evaluated, and continuously improved. The **Clario Method™** provides a structured methodology for accomplishing those objectives.

This paper, CFP-002, establishes the diagnostic framework that makes that methodology possible. It formally defines the Five Core Communication Signals: Purpose, Action, Decision, Tone, and Shared Understanding. These five signals represent the diagnostic dimensions through which the Clario Method™ evaluates whether a communication contains the elements necessary to create Shared Understanding.

The Five Core Communication Signals are not a theory of communication. They are a practical diagnostic framework, developed through the Institute for Shared Understanding's experience in evaluating professional communication across organizational, educational, healthcare, military, government, and cross-cultural contexts. Each signal captures one distinct dimension of Communication Effectiveness. Together, they provide the structured lens through which communication can be observed, scored, diagnosed, and improved.

This paper serves as the authoritative reference for the Five Core Communication Signals. Every future Clario Method™ publication, application, certification, and evaluation instrument should cite CFP-002 as the definitive source for the official definitions, diagnostic questions, and evaluation criteria for each Communication Signal.

Abstract

The Clario Method™, introduced in Clario Foundation Paper CFP-001, provides a structured methodology for intentionally creating, systematically evaluating, and continuously improving Communication Effectiveness. This paper, CFP-002, formally establishes the diagnostic framework that enables that methodology: the Five Core Communication Signals. The five signals, Purpose, Action, Decision, Tone, and Shared Understanding, represent the diagnostic dimensions through which the Clario Method™ evaluates whether a communication is likely to create the Shared Understanding required for its intended purpose. This paper defines each signal, explains its role within the diagnostic framework, identifies the Communication Gaps that emerge when signals are weak or absent, and provides the official diagnostic questions and evaluation criteria that guide structured assessment. The Five Core Communication Signals are presented not as a comprehensive theory of communication but as the practical diagnostic dimensions that, in the Institute for Shared Understanding's experience and methodology, most consistently influence whether professional communication creates the Shared Understanding required for its intended purpose. This paper is intended to serve as the authoritative reference for the Five Core Communication Signals across all Clario Method™ applications and publications.

Keywords: *Communication Effectiveness, Five Core Communication Signals, Communication Gap, Shared Understanding, Professional Communication, Clario Method™, Institute for Shared Understanding*

1. Introduction

Clario Foundation Paper CFP-001 established that Communication Effectiveness can be intentionally created, systematically evaluated, and continuously improved. It introduced the **Clario Method™** as a structured methodology for accomplishing those objectives, and it established the theoretical foundations, drawn from constructivist communication theory, cognitive psychology, and cross-cultural communication research, on which the methodology builds.

CFP-001 introduced the Five Core Communication Signals as the observable dimensions through which the Clario Method™ evaluates Communication Effectiveness. It defined the Clario Diagnostic Process™, the six-step evaluation sequence of Observe, Evaluate, Score, Diagnose, Improve, and Verify, and it described the diagnostic scoring scale used to rate each signal.

This paper, CFP-002, builds directly on that foundation. Where CFP-001 introduced the Five Core Communication Signals and explained their role within the broader methodology, this paper formally establishes each signal as a defined diagnostic dimension. It provides the official definitions, diagnostic questions, observable evidence criteria, and evaluation guidance that practitioners, evaluators, and organizations require to apply the Clario Method™ consistently.

The purpose of this paper is not to repeat CFP-001. It is to provide the authoritative reference for the diagnostic framework that enables the methodology CFP-001 described.

2. Why Communication Needs Diagnostic Dimensions

Organizations evaluate communication constantly. After every meeting, presentation, email exchange, and strategic announcement, people form judgments about whether the communication succeeded. These judgments are typically expressed in general terms:

“That was a good meeting.”

“The email looked fine.”

“The presentation was clear.”

“Everyone understood the plan.”

These assessments feel adequate in the moment. They are rarely challenged. And they almost never identify why a communication succeeded, where it fell short, or what specific elements would need to change to improve it.

The problem is not that people lack communication skills. The problem is that organizations lack diagnostic dimensions, structured criteria through which a specific communication can be examined to determine whether it contains the elements necessary to create Shared Understanding.

Without diagnostic dimensions, communication evaluation defaults to subjective impression. Two people can attend the same meeting and reach different conclusions about whether it was effective, because they are evaluating different aspects of the experience using different, unstated criteria. One may be evaluating whether the presenter spoke clearly. Another may be evaluating whether the meeting produced a decision. Without a shared framework for assessment, these evaluations cannot be compared, reconciled, or used to drive systematic improvement.

The Five Core Communication Signals provide that framework. They translate the diagnostic objectives of the **Clario Method™** into five specific, observable dimensions that evaluators can apply consistently across communication types, contexts, and cultures. Each signal asks a different question about the communication. Together, they provide a structured lens for identifying where Shared Understanding was created and where Communication Gaps formed.

3. Overview of the Five Core Communication Signals

The Five Core Communication Signals are the diagnostic dimensions through which the **Clario Method™** evaluates Communication Effectiveness. Each signal captures one distinct aspect of whether a communication is likely to create the Shared Understanding required for its intended purpose:

Table 1. The Five Core Communication Signals

Signal	Core Diagnostic Question
Purpose	Does the communication make clear why it exists and what outcome it requires?
Action	Does it specify what needs to happen next, who is responsible, by when, and to what standard?
Decision	Is it clear what has been decided, who decided it, and whether it is final?
Tone	Is the emotional and relational dimension likely to be interpreted as intended?
Shared Understanding	What evidence suggests the recipient will interpret this communication as intended?

The five diagnostic dimensions used to evaluate Communication Effectiveness.

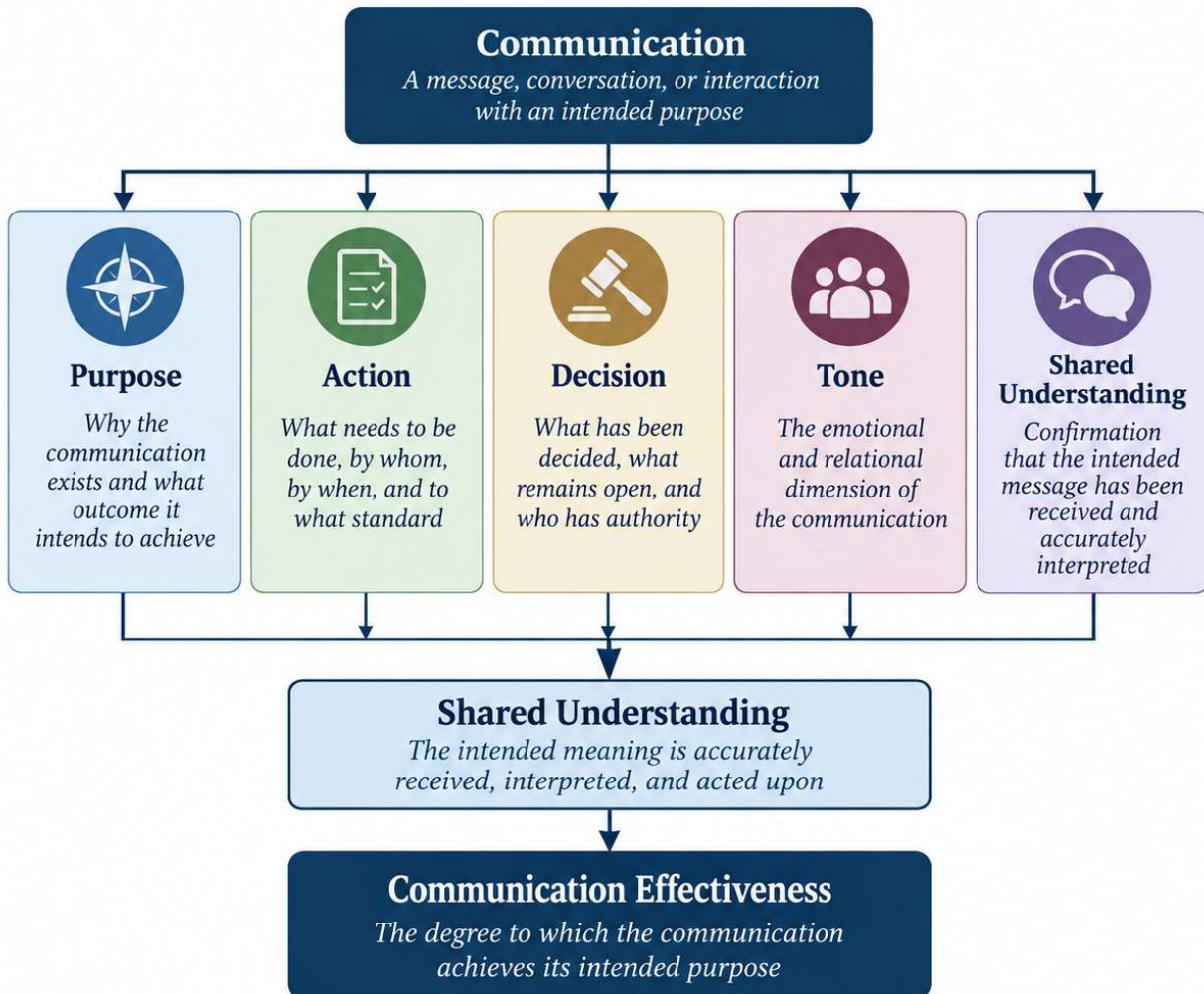
Several principles govern how these signals function within the diagnostic framework:

No single signal is sufficient. A communication may have a clear purpose but omit the actions required to fulfill it. It may specify actions precisely but leave the underlying decision ambiguous. It may be technically complete but convey a tone that undermines the intended message. Communication Effectiveness emerges from the interaction of all five signals, not from any one signal in isolation.

The signals are diagnostic, not prescriptive. The Five Core Communication Signals do not tell communicators what to say. They provide evaluators with a structured framework for examining what a communication actually contains, identifying what is missing, and diagnosing where Communication Gaps are likely to form.

The signals are practical, not theoretical. The Five Core Communication Signals are not presented as a comprehensive taxonomy of all communication dimensions. They represent the five dimensions that, in the Institute's experience and methodology, most consistently influence whether professional communication creates the Shared Understanding required for its intended purpose.

Figure 1. The Five Core Communication Signals Framework The Foundation for Shared Understanding



Five Signals. One Outcome. Greater Understanding.

Figure 1. The Five Core Communication Signals Framework

4. Signal One: Purpose

4.1 Definition

Purpose is the degree to which a communication makes clear why it exists and what outcome it requires. Purpose answers the receiver's fundamental question: *Why am I receiving this communication, and what is it trying to achieve?*

4.2 Why Purpose Matters

Every professional communication exists to achieve an outcome. A meeting is convened to reach a decision. An email is sent to coordinate an action. A policy is published to establish a standard. A presentation is delivered to create alignment. When the purpose of a communication is clear, the receiver can orient their attention, evaluate the content against the intended outcome, and respond appropriately. When purpose is absent or ambiguous, the receiver must infer what the communication is trying to accomplish, and inference is where Communication Gaps begin.

Research on cognitive processing supports this principle. When individuals understand the purpose of a message before engaging with its content, they process the information more effectively and retain it more accurately (Bransford & Johnson, 1972). Purpose provides the interpretive framework that tells the receiver what matters, what to pay attention to, and what kind of response is expected.

4.3 Observable Evidence

Evaluators assessing the Purpose signal should look for evidence that the communication:

States explicitly why the communication exists. Identifies the outcome it intends to achieve. Makes clear what type of response is expected, whether that is a decision, an action, an acknowledgment, or simply awareness. Connects the communication to the broader context that gives it meaning.

4.4 Common Communication Gaps

When Purpose is weak or absent, common Communication Gaps include: the receiver does not understand why they received the communication; the receiver cannot distinguish between information that requires action and information provided for awareness only; the receiver interprets the communication as having a different purpose than the sender intended; the receiver cannot evaluate whether the communication succeeded because the intended outcome was never defined.

4.5 Diagnostic Questions

The following questions guide evaluation of the Purpose signal:

Is the purpose of this communication explicitly stated?

Would the receiver know why they are receiving this communication?

Is the intended outcome clearly identified?

Can the receiver distinguish between information for action and information for awareness?

Does the communication connect to the broader context that gives it meaning?

5. Signal Two: Action

5.1 Definition

Action is the degree to which a communication specifies what needs to happen next, who is responsible, by when the action is expected, and to what standard it should be performed. Action answers the receiver's operational question: *What exactly am I supposed to do?*

5.2 Why Action Matters

Communication that establishes purpose but fails to specify action creates a gap between understanding and execution. The receiver may understand why the communication exists and what outcome it intends to achieve, yet still lack the information needed to act. Professional communication fails most visibly when actions are assumed rather than stated, when responsibility is implied rather than assigned, when deadlines are vague, and when performance standards are left to interpretation.

The Curse of Knowledge, discussed in CFP-001, is particularly relevant to the Action signal. Senders who are close to the work often assume that the required actions are obvious. They omit specifics that feel self-evident because, from their perspective, the next steps are clear. From the receiver's perspective, those same steps may be ambiguous, incomplete, or entirely invisible.

5.3 Observable Evidence

Evaluators assessing the Action signal should look for evidence that the communication: identifies specific actions that need to be taken; assigns responsibility clearly, stating who is expected to act; specifies when actions are expected to be completed; defines the standard to which actions should be performed; distinguishes between actions that are required and actions that are optional.

5.4 Common Communication Gaps

When Action is weak or absent, common Communication Gaps include: multiple people assume someone else is responsible for the same task; deadlines are interpreted differently because they were stated vaguely; the expected quality or standard of work is unclear, producing deliverables that do not meet the sender's expectations; the receiver understands the purpose of the communication but does not know what they are expected to do next.

5.5 Diagnostic Questions

Does this communication specify what needs to happen next?

Is it clear who is responsible for each action?

Are deadlines stated explicitly rather than implied?

Is the expected standard or quality of the action defined?

Can the receiver distinguish between required actions and optional suggestions?

6. Signal Three: Decision

6.1 Definition

Decision is the degree to which a communication makes clear what has been decided, who made the decision, whether it is final, and what decisions remain open. Decision answers the receiver's governance question: *What has been settled, and what is still under discussion?*

6.2 Why Decision Matters

Organizations depend on decisions to coordinate action, allocate resources, and resolve ambiguity. Yet one of the most common sources of organizational confusion is not the absence of decisions but the ambiguity surrounding them. Teams frequently leave meetings believing a decision was made when it was not, or believing a decision was still open when it had already been finalized. This ambiguity produces wasted effort, conflicting actions, and eroded trust.

The Decision signal evaluates whether a communication makes the status of decisions explicit. It does not evaluate whether a decision was correct. It evaluates whether the receiver can determine what was decided, who had the authority to decide, whether the decision is final, and what decisions remain open.

6.3 Observable Evidence

Evaluators assessing the Decision signal should look for evidence that the communication: states clearly what has been decided; identifies who made the decision and under what authority; indicates whether the decision is final or provisional; identifies any remaining decisions that have not yet been made; distinguishes between decisions, recommendations, and items still under discussion.

6.4 Common Communication Gaps

When Decision is weak or absent, common Communication Gaps include: team members believe a decision was made when the discussion was only exploratory; different participants leave the same meeting with different understandings of what was decided; individuals continue working under previous assumptions because they did not recognize that a decision had changed the direction; provisional decisions are treated as final, or final decisions are treated as still open.

6.5 Diagnostic Questions

Does this communication state clearly what has been decided?

Is it clear who made the decision and under what authority?

Is the decision identified as final, provisional, or pending?

Are remaining open decisions explicitly identified?

Can the receiver distinguish between a decision, a recommendation, and a discussion point?

7. Signal Four: Tone

7.1 Definition

Tone is the degree to which the emotional and relational dimension of a communication is likely to be interpreted as intended. Tone answers the receiver's relational question: *How should I feel about this communication, and what does it signal about my relationship with the sender?*

7.2 Why Tone Matters

Communication is never purely informational. Every message carries an emotional and relational dimension that shapes how the content is received, whether it is trusted, and whether it motivates the intended response. A factually accurate communication delivered in a dismissive tone may create resistance rather than alignment. A difficult message delivered with appropriate empathy may strengthen the relationship even when the content is unwelcome.

Research in organizational psychology has consistently demonstrated that tone affects message acceptance, trust, and willingness to act (Mehrabian, 1971; Goleman, 1995). In cross-cultural communication, tone carries additional complexity. Directness that signals confidence and clarity in one cultural context may signal disrespect or aggression in another (Hall, 1976; Meyer, 2014). The Tone signal evaluates whether the emotional and relational dimension of a communication is calibrated for the audience and context it addresses.

7.3 Observable Evidence

Evaluators assessing the Tone signal should look for evidence that the communication: conveys an appropriate level of professionalism for its context; demonstrates respect for the receiver; matches the level of urgency to the actual situation; expresses confidence without dismissiveness; conveys empathy where the subject matter warrants it; is calibrated for the cultural and organizational context of the audience.

7.4 Common Communication Gaps

When Tone is weak or miscalibrated, common Communication Gaps include: the receiver perceives criticism where none was intended; urgency is interpreted as anxiety or panic; casualness is interpreted as indifference or disrespect; directness is interpreted as hostility in high-context cultural environments; the emotional dimension of the message overshadows the informational content, causing the receiver to react to the tone rather than engaging with the substance.

7.5 Diagnostic Questions

Is the tone of this communication appropriate for its context and audience?

Would the receiver interpret the emotional dimension as the sender intended?

Does the level of urgency match the actual situation?

Is the communication likely to create the relational outcome the sender intends?

Has the communication been calibrated for the cultural context of the audience?

8. Signal Five: Shared Understanding

8.1 Definition

Shared Understanding is the degree to which observable evidence suggests the recipient will interpret a communication as intended. Shared Understanding is both the ultimate objective of Communication Effectiveness and the final diagnostic signal in the Clario Method™ framework. It answers the sender's verification question: *What evidence exists that the receiver understood this communication as I intended?*

8.2 Why Shared Understanding Matters

The first four signals, Purpose, Action, Decision, and Tone, evaluate what the communication contains. Shared Understanding evaluates what the communication creates. A communication may score well on every preceding signal and still fail to create the understanding it intended. The receiver may have the right information but assemble it into a different picture. They may understand each element individually but miss how the elements connect. They may believe they understand when, in fact, their understanding is incomplete or inaccurate.

This is not a failure of intelligence or attention. It is a predictable outcome of how human cognition works. As CFP-001 established, drawing on constructivist communication theory, meaning is constructed by the receiver, not transferred by the sender. The receiver builds their understanding from the communication using materials the sender did not provide: prior knowledge, assumptions, expectations, cultural frameworks, and interpretive habits. Shared Understanding cannot be assumed. It must be verified.

8.3 The Verification Imperative

The Shared Understanding signal introduces a principle that distinguishes the Clario Method™ from conventional communication assessment: the requirement for verification. Most communication evaluation stops at content analysis, examining what the sender produced. The Shared Understanding signal extends evaluation to outcome analysis, examining what the receiver constructed.

Verification can take many forms depending on the communication context: readback and teach-back protocols in healthcare and military environments; confirmation questions in meetings and briefings; follow-up assessments in educational settings; observable behavior that demonstrates comprehension; written acknowledgments that paraphrase rather than merely confirm. The form of verification matters less than its presence. Without verification, Shared Understanding remains an assumption, and assumptions are where Communication Gaps most reliably form.

8.4 Observable Evidence

Evaluators assessing the Shared Understanding signal should look for evidence that the communication: includes mechanisms for confirming the receiver's interpretation; anticipates likely misinterpretations and addresses them proactively; provides the contextual information necessary for the receiver to construct the intended understanding; accounts for differences in prior knowledge, assumptions, and cultural frameworks between the sender and receiver; produces observable evidence that the receiver's understanding matches the sender's intent.

8.5 Common Communication Gaps

When Shared Understanding is weak or unverified, common Communication Gaps include: the receiver believes they understand but has constructed a different understanding than the sender intended; the sender assumes understanding because the receiver did not ask questions, interpreting silence as comprehension; the receiver and sender use the same terminology but attach different meanings to it; the communication is technically accurate but lacks the context the receiver needs to interpret it correctly; no mechanism exists for identifying that a misunderstanding has occurred until downstream consequences reveal it.

8.6 Diagnostic Questions

What evidence suggests the receiver understood this communication as intended?

Does the communication include mechanisms for verifying the receiver's interpretation?

Has the sender anticipated likely misinterpretations and addressed them?

Does the communication account for differences in prior knowledge between sender and receiver?

Is there observable evidence that the receiver's understanding matches the sender's intent?

Has the communication been evaluated from the receiver's perspective, not only the sender's?

"Shared Understanding is not what the sender intended. It is what the receiver constructed. The distance between the two is the Communication Gap."

9. How the Signals Work Together

Communication Effectiveness does not emerge from any single signal. It emerges from the interaction of all five. A communication with a strong Purpose signal but weak Action and Decision signals may create awareness without producing coordinated action. A communication with precise Actions but unclear Purpose may produce compliance without understanding. A communication that is technically complete across all dimensions but carries an inappropriate Tone may generate resistance that undermines every other signal.

The Five Core Communication Signals are designed to be evaluated together because they function together. Weakness in one signal frequently affects the quality of others:

Purpose affects Action. When the purpose of a communication is unclear, the actions it requires are difficult to specify meaningfully. Receivers who do not understand why they are acting are more likely to act incorrectly.

Decision affects Purpose. When the decision status is ambiguous, the purpose of the communication becomes uncertain. Receivers cannot determine whether they are being asked to decide, to implement, or simply to be aware.

Tone affects Shared Understanding. When tone is miscalibrated, receivers may disengage from the content entirely, reacting to the emotional dimension rather than processing the informational content. Tone distortion can prevent Shared Understanding even when every other signal is strong.

Shared Understanding validates all signals. The Shared Understanding signal functions as the framework's verification layer. Even when Purpose, Action, Decision, and Tone are all well-defined, Shared Understanding cannot be assumed. Verification confirms whether the communication, taken as a whole, created the understanding it intended.

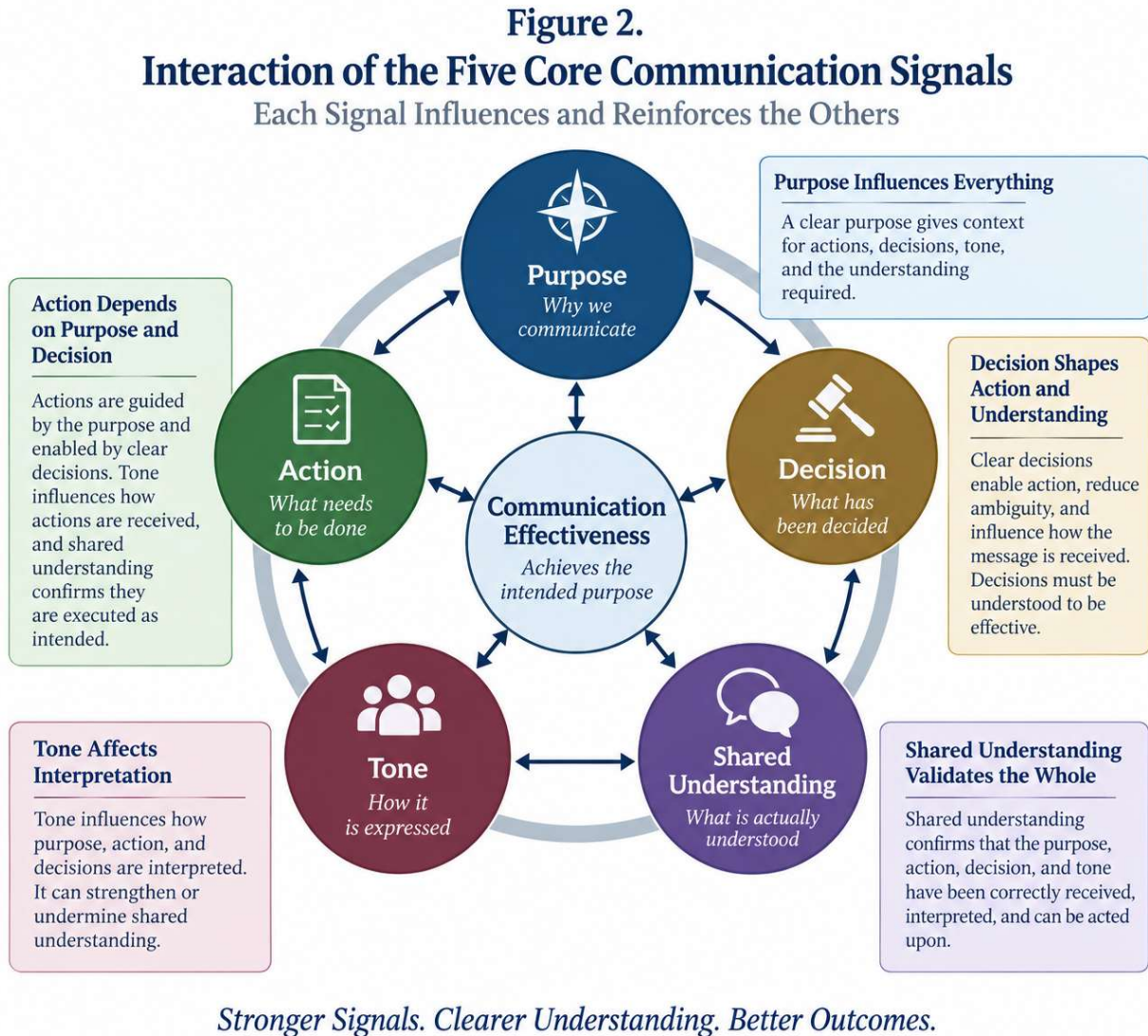


Figure 2. Interaction of the Five Core Communication Signals

10. Diagnostic Evaluation

The Five Core Communication Signals are evaluated using the diagnostic scoring scale established in CFP-001. Each signal is rated using a four-level scale that produces clear diagnostic judgments:

Table 2. The Diagnostic Scoring Scale

Score	Rating	Meaning
5	Excellent	The signal is explicit, unambiguous, and highly likely to create the intended Shared Understanding.
3	Functional	The signal is present and usable but could be strengthened.
1	Weak	The signal is incomplete, unclear, or only partially present.
0	Missing	The signal is absent.

The four-level scale used to evaluate each Core Communication Signal.

10.1 Why Scores of 2 and 4 Are Omitted

The diagnostic scoring scale intentionally omits scores of 2 and 4. This design reflects a deliberate methodological choice. When evaluation scales include intermediate values, evaluators tend to default toward the middle, producing scores that avoid clear judgments. The four-level scale requires evaluators to commit to a diagnostic assessment: the signal is either excellent, functional, weak, or absent. This constraint improves scoring consistency across evaluators and reinforces the diagnostic purpose of the evaluation. The methodology prioritizes diagnostic clarity over numerical granularity.

10.2 Calculating Communication Effectiveness

The five signal scores are summed and divided by the maximum possible score of 25 to produce a Communication Effectiveness percentage (CE%). This percentage provides an intuitive summary for organizational reporting. However, the individual signal scores provide greater diagnostic value than the aggregate percentage. A communication with a CE% of 60% could reflect uniformly moderate performance across all five signals, or it could reflect excellence in four signals and a critical absence in one. The signal-level scores identify the specific Communication Gaps that require attention.

10.3 Identifying Communication Gaps

A Communication Gap exists whenever a signal score indicates that the intended Shared Understanding is unlikely to be achieved for that dimension. The diagnostic process identifies not only which signals are weak but why they are weak and what specific elements are missing,

incomplete, or ambiguous. This diagnostic precision is what enables targeted improvement rather than general communication coaching.

Table 3. Communication Gap Indicators by Signal

Signal	Gap Indicator	Typical Consequence
Purpose	Receiver cannot identify why they received the communication	Misallocated attention; irrelevant response
Action	Responsibility, timeline, or standard is ambiguous	Duplicated effort; missed deadlines; rework
Decision	Decision status is unclear or assumed	Conflicting actions; revisited decisions; stalled progress
Tone	Emotional dimension is misinterpreted	Resistance; disengagement; relationship damage
Shared Understanding	No verification of receiver's interpretation	Undetected misunderstanding; downstream failure

How Communication Gaps manifest across the Five Core Communication Signals.

11. Practical Applications

The Five Core Communication Signals are designed to be applied across all forms of professional communication. The following examples demonstrate how the framework applies in common organizational contexts:

11.1 Meetings

A project status meeting concludes with the project manager summarizing next steps verbally. The Purpose signal evaluates whether the meeting's objective was stated at the outset. The Action signal evaluates whether specific tasks were assigned with owners and deadlines. The Decision signal evaluates whether any decisions made during the meeting were explicitly confirmed. The Tone signal evaluates whether the discussion's emotional dimension supported productive engagement. The Shared Understanding signal evaluates whether a mechanism, such as a written summary or verbal confirmation, was used to verify that all participants left with the same understanding of what was decided and what happens next.

11.2 Email

A department head sends an email announcing a policy change effective in two weeks. The Purpose signal evaluates whether the email states why the policy is changing and what the change means for recipients. The Action signal evaluates whether the email specifies what recipients need to do differently and by when. The Decision signal evaluates whether it is clear that this is a final decision rather than a proposal. The Tone signal evaluates whether the communication conveys appropriate respect and acknowledges the impact of the change. The Shared Understanding signal evaluates whether the email includes a mechanism for recipients to confirm their understanding or ask clarifying questions.

11.3 Cross-Cultural Communication

A global organization issues a directive from its headquarters to regional offices in five countries. The Purpose and Action signals function similarly across cultures, but the Decision and Tone signals carry additional diagnostic weight. The Decision signal must account for cultural differences in how authority and consensus are recognized. The Tone signal must account for differences in directness, formality, and hierarchy. The Shared Understanding signal is particularly critical, as the same words may carry different meanings across linguistic and cultural contexts. Verification mechanisms must be calibrated for each audience.

11.4 Human-AI Communication

A user provides instructions to an AI system to generate a report. The Purpose signal evaluates whether the prompt makes clear what the report should accomplish. The Action signal evaluates whether the prompt specifies format, scope, and deliverables. The Decision signal evaluates whether constraints and preferences are stated rather than left for the AI to infer. The Tone signal is less relevant in human-AI contexts but may apply when the AI's output will be delivered to a human audience. The Shared Understanding signal evaluates whether the output demonstrates that the AI interpreted the prompt as intended, and whether the user has a mechanism for verifying and correcting the AI's interpretation.

12. Relationship to Future Foundation Papers

This paper, CFP-002, establishes the Five Core Communication Signals as the diagnostic framework of the Clario Method™. Future papers in the Clario Foundation Paper Series will expand on specific dimensions of this framework:

CFP-003: Communication Gaps. Will provide a comprehensive examination of how Communication Gaps form, compound, and propagate across teams and organizations. It will establish a taxonomy of Communication Gap types and describe the diagnostic and remediation strategies the Clario Method™ employs to address them.

CFP-004: Shared Understanding: Verification, Evidence, and Confirmation. Will expand on the concept of Shared Understanding as both the objective of Communication Effectiveness and the fifth diagnostic signal. It will examine verification methods, measurement approaches, and the conditions under which Shared Understanding is most difficult to achieve.

CFP-005: Why Intelligent People Misunderstand Each Other. Will examine the cognitive, cultural, and organizational factors that cause misunderstanding to persist even in well-intentioned, well-resourced communication environments. It will draw on established research in cognitive bias, organizational behavior, and cross-cultural communication to explain why Communication Gaps are predictable rather than accidental.

13. Conclusion

The Five Core Communication Signals, Purpose, Action, Decision, Tone, and Shared Understanding, provide the operational framework that enables the Clario Method™ to intentionally create, evaluate, and improve Communication Effectiveness.

Each signal captures one essential dimension of whether a communication is likely to create the Shared Understanding required for its intended purpose. No single signal is sufficient. Communication Effectiveness emerges from the interaction of all five, and the diagnostic value of the framework lies in its ability to identify precisely where and why Communication Gaps form.

The Five Core Communication Signals are not a comprehensive theory of communication. They are the five diagnostic dimensions that, in the Institute for Shared Understanding's experience and methodology, most consistently influence whether professional communication creates the Shared Understanding required for its intended purpose. They are practical rather than theoretical, diagnostic rather than prescriptive, and designed to support structured evaluation rather than subjective impression.

This paper establishes the Five Core Communication Signals as the authoritative diagnostic framework of the Clario Method™. Every future publication, application, certification, and evaluation instrument in the Clario Method™ system should cite CFP-002 as the definitive reference for the definitions, diagnostic questions, and evaluation criteria presented here.

Communication is effective only when it creates the Shared Understanding required for the intended purpose.

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Appendix A: Official Diagnostic Questions

The following diagnostic questions constitute the official evaluation criteria for each of the Five Core Communication Signals. These questions should be applied consistently in all Clario Method™ evaluations.

Table A-1. Official Diagnostic Questions by Signal

Signal	Diagnostic Questions
Purpose	1. Is the purpose of this communication explicitly stated? 2. Would the receiver know why they are receiving this communication? 3. Is the intended outcome clearly identified? 4. Can the receiver distinguish between information for action and information for awareness? 5. Does the communication connect to the broader context that gives it meaning?
Action	1. Does this communication specify what needs to happen next? 2. Is it clear who is responsible for each action? 3. Are deadlines stated explicitly rather than implied? 4. Is the expected standard or quality of the action defined? 5. Can the receiver distinguish between required actions and optional suggestions?
Decision	1. Does this communication state clearly what has been decided? 2. Is it clear who made the decision and under what authority? 3. Is the decision identified as final, provisional, or pending? 4. Are remaining open decisions explicitly identified? 5. Can the receiver distinguish between a decision, a recommendation, and a discussion point?
Tone	1. Is the tone of this communication appropriate for its context and audience? 2. Would the receiver interpret the emotional dimension as the sender intended? 3. Does the level of urgency match the actual situation? 4. Is the communication likely to create the relational outcome the sender intends? 5. Has the communication been calibrated for the cultural context of the audience?
Shared Understanding	1. What evidence suggests the receiver understood this communication as intended? 2. Does the communication include mechanisms for verifying the receiver's interpretation? 3. Has the sender anticipated likely misinterpretations and addressed them? 4. Does the communication account for differences in prior knowledge between sender and receiver? 5. Is there observable evidence that the receiver's understanding matches the sender's intent?

The complete set of official diagnostic questions for the Five Core Communication Signals.

Appendix B: Signal Evaluation Worksheet

The following worksheet provides a structured template for evaluating a communication using the Five Core Communication Signals and the diagnostic scoring scale.

Table B-1. Signal Evaluation Worksheet

Signal	Score (0, 1, 3, 5)	Observations / Evidence
Purpose		
Action		
Decision		
Tone		
Shared Understanding		
Total (out of 25)		
CE%		

Blank evaluation worksheet for the Clario Diagnostic Process™.

Appendix C: Diagnostic Scoring Rubric

The following rubric provides detailed guidance for assigning scores to each Core Communication Signal. Evaluators should use this rubric to ensure consistency across evaluations.

Table C-1. Scoring Rubric

Score	Criteria	Guidance
5 — Excellent	The signal is explicit, unambiguous, and complete.	The receiver would need no additional information to understand this dimension of the communication. No reasonable interpretation would produce a different understanding.
3 — Functional	The signal is present and usable but could be strengthened.	The receiver can probably determine the intended meaning, but some elements are implicit rather than explicit. Minor gaps exist but are unlikely to produce significant misunderstanding.
1 — Weak	The signal is incomplete, unclear, or only partially present.	The receiver would need to infer significant elements. Multiple reasonable interpretations are possible. Communication Gaps are likely.
0 — Missing	The signal is absent.	The receiver has no information about this dimension. The signal is entirely missing from the communication.

Detailed scoring guidance for consistent application of the diagnostic scale.

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