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PUBLIC STANDARD · CDS-001

Reality Preservation Standard™

A Public Framework for Preserving Reality in Human Systems

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This publication represents a proposed public standard for preserving reality as information moves through human systems. It is intended to support discussion, implementation, and future refinement across industries.

Contents

Preamble

Purpose

Foundational Principle

Principle 01 Observe Before Interpreting

Principle 02 Separate Facts from Conclusions

Principle 03 Preserve Context

Principle 04 Document Uncertainty

Principle 05 Preserve Deviations

Principle 06 Preserve Human Intent

Principle 07 Distinguish Absence from Negation

Principle 08 Flag Potential Distortions

Principle 09 Preserve Source Visibility

Principle 10 Do Not Convert Human Experience into Artificial Certainty

The Reality Preservation Test

Closing Statement

Author

Version Control

Preamble

This document was created from a simple observation.

Modern institutions increasingly make decisions from representations of reality rather than reality itself.

As information moves through reporting systems, technology platforms, organizational structures, performance metrics, governance models, and artificial intelligence systems, reality can be preserved, clarified, distorted, simplified, misinterpreted, or lost.

Throughout my career, I have worked across direct patient care, healthcare operations, technology, data, organizational transformation, and artificial intelligence initiatives. Despite the differences between these environments, I repeatedly observed the same pattern: the greatest challenges were often not caused by a lack of intelligence, technology, effort, or resources. They were caused by gaps between what people believed was happening, what was being reported, and what was actually occurring.

As organizations become increasingly dependent upon data, automation, analytics, algorithms, and artificial intelligence, the consequences of these gaps become larger. Technology does not operate on reality. Technology operates on representations of reality. When those representations are distorted, the resulting decisions often become distorted as well.

This standard was created to establish foundational principles for preserving reality as information moves through human systems.

It is intended to support leaders, operators, educators, technologists, healthcare professionals, researchers, policymakers, analysts, and anyone responsible for collecting, interpreting, communicating, governing, or acting upon information.

The goal is not perfect information.

The goal is reducing unnecessary distortion between reality and representation.

Because reality cannot be managed if it cannot first be preserved.

Purpose

Human systems rely on information to make decisions.

Organizations collect observations, document events, generate reports, create metrics, establish policies, and increasingly train artificial intelligence systems from the resulting information.

As information moves through these processes, reality can be preserved, clarified, distorted, simplified, misinterpreted, or lost.

The purpose of this standard is to establish principles for preserving reality as information moves from lived experience into human decision-making systems.

This standard is intended for use across healthcare, dentistry, education, government, technology, finance, customer service, social services, research, artificial intelligence, and any environment where human decisions depend upon information.

The goal is not perfect information.

The goal is minimizing unnecessary distortion between reality and representation.

Foundational Principle

Every system operates on a representation of reality.

The quality of decisions is limited by the quality of that representation.

When reality is distorted, decisions become distorted.

When distorted decisions are scaled through technology, automation, policy, or artificial intelligence, the consequences compound.

PRINCIPLE 01

Observe Before Interpreting

Record what occurred before assigning meaning to what occurred.

Observation should be preserved separately from interpretation whenever possible.

Reality is often lost when conclusions replace observations.

PRINCIPLE 02

Separate Facts from Conclusions

Facts describe what can be directly verified.

Conclusions describe what someone believes those facts mean.

Both may be valuable.

They should not be treated as the same thing.

PRINCIPLE 03

Preserve Context

Events rarely occur in isolation.

Context frequently determines meaning.

Without context, information may remain technically accurate while becoming practically misleading.

PRINCIPLE 04

Document Uncertainty

Not all information is known.

Not all observations are complete.

Not all conclusions are certain.

Uncertainty should be documented rather than concealed.

Unknown is often more truthful than assumed.

PRINCIPLE 05

Preserve Deviations

Organizations often document intended processes while overlooking actual processes.

Workarounds, exceptions, manual interventions, and informal behaviors frequently reveal important realities.

Deviation is information.

PRINCIPLE 06

Preserve Human Intent

Actions alone do not fully describe reality.

Human motivations, constraints, fears, incentives, and objectives often influence outcomes.

Intent should be preserved when relevant and observable.

Distinguish Absence from Negation

Missing information does not necessarily indicate a negative finding.

A lack of evidence is not equivalent to evidence of absence.

Systems should clearly distinguish between:

- No
- Unknown
- Not Observed
- Not Applicable

Flag Potential Distortions

Potential distortions should be identified whenever discovered.

Examples include:

- Incentive-driven reporting
- Ambiguous language
- Conflicting records
- Missing context
- Reporting delays
- Copy-forward documentation
- Metric substitution

Distortions should be visible even when they cannot immediately be resolved.

Preserve Source Visibility

Whenever possible, organizations should maintain visibility into:

- Original observation
- Interpretation
- Transformation
- Reporting layer

The further information travels from its source, the greater the risk of distortion.

Do Not Convert Human Experience into Artificial Certainty

Many human realities are nuanced, evolving, incomplete, or subjective.

Systems should resist pressures to convert uncertainty, complexity, or ambiguity into unwarranted certainty.

False precision creates false confidence.

False confidence creates poor decisions.

The Reality Preservation Test

Before information is stored, reported, shared, automated, modeled, or used to train artificial intelligence systems, ask:

What reality is being represented?

What information may have been lost?

What assumptions were introduced?

What uncertainty remains?

What context is required for accurate interpretation?

What incentives may have influenced the information?

How far removed is this representation from the original reality?

Technology does not operate on reality.

Technology operates on representations of reality.

The future effectiveness of institutions, organizations, governments, and artificial intelligence systems will depend not only on the quality of their technology, but on the quality of the reality those technologies receive.

Reality cannot be managed if it cannot first be preserved.

AUTHOR

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Care Design was founded on the belief that sustainable transformation requires accurate visibility into reality. Through work spanning patient care, operations, technology, data, governance, and artificial intelligence, Care Design focuses on helping organizations understand what is actually happening before they attempt to automate, scale, centralize, transform, or optimize it.



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