DE-RISKATHON

ACRISURE®

SESSION SUMMARY – OCTOBER 27, 2026

Leadership, Teamwork & Performance Under Pressure

PRESENTED BY



Mike Massimino
Former NASA Astronaut
Columbia University



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WATCH THE SESSION REPLAY

SESSION AT A GLANCE

Former National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) astronaut Mike Massimino drew on near misses in training, a stripped bolt during one of the more complex repairs attempted in space, and NASA's response to the Columbia accident to show how speaking up, sharing mistakes, and trusting your team build a culture where safety comes first.

LESSONS FROM THE MISSION

Speak up
When you see something, say something — no matter your rank

Share close calls
Near misses were told to the whole office and never held against you

Check each other
A second set of eyes caught an airlock valve that wasn't fully closed

The three trusts
Trust your tools, your training, and your team — then execute

30 seconds of regret
Own the mistake, move on, and don't make it worse

Fail op, fail safe
Survive one failure and keep operating; survive two and stay safe

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. **Make speaking up an expectation.** As a new astronaut, Mike stayed quiet when a veteran pilot turned the wrong way, and they nearly had a midair collision.
2. **Share mistakes; never hide them.** Close calls were lessons for everyone. An astronaut who hid running a jet off the runway was never trusted again.
3. **Never crush an idea.** Thank people and explain why. A new crewmate's idea, inspired by his kids' toy grabber, became the tool used to change Hubble's gyroscopes.
4. **When things go wrong, call mission control.** The fix for Mike's stripped bolt came from an engineer who stepped back and asked, "What would I do in my garage?"
5. **De-risk; don't expect zero risk.** There's no such thing as zero risk. NASA made the final Hubble mission acceptable by keeping a rescue shuttle ready.

BUILDING A SPEAK-UP CULTURE

- **Make it required** to speak up, never hold it against anyone, and recognize good catches
- **Listen to everyone.** A young worker sweeping the floor told astronauts to get off equipment they'd climbed without harnesses — and received a safety award
- **Stay vigilant.** Experienced people can get comfortable; new people often notice more
- **Take extra care at night** and late in the day, when fatigue lowers awareness
- **Practice safely, too.** It's easy to get so focused on learning a task that you forget to work safely

LEADING AND DEVELOPING PEOPLE

- **Find a way to care for and admire everyone on your team** — as Mr. Massimino recalled, advice from Apollo 12 moonwalker Alan Bean
- **If you don't like someone,** you probably don't know them well enough yet
- **Before addressing a problem,** remember why you value that person
- **Assign the "junior most qualified"** person to a task, and pair them with a mentor
- **Ask newer people,** "What do you think?"
- **Make experienced people instructors.** Teaching the next class was a mark of success

WHEN THE UNEXPECTED HAPPENS: THE STRIPPED BOLT

1. **Tell mission control right away** ▶
2. **Take 30 seconds of regret** ▶
3. **Don't rush or break anything else** ▶
4. **Let the whole team work the problem** ▶
5. **Test the fix on the ground** ▶
6. **Carry it out safely**

Engineers at Goddard Space Flight Center confirmed on a Sunday that the handrail's bolt would break at about 60 pounds of force. The crew taped the handrail to contain debris before pulling it off, and the instrument they repaired is still working today.

HOW NASA DE-RISKED THE FINAL HUBBLE MISSION

- ☐ Redesigned the external tank to stop debris strikes
- ☐ Added cameras and imagery to analyze every launch
- ☐ Inspected the shuttle after launch and again before reentry
- ☐ Developed ways to repair heat-shield damage in orbit
- ☐ Kept a second shuttle and crew ready to launch a rescue
- ☐ Trained with the rescue crew, who quarantined alongside them

Why it mattered: unlike the space station, Hubble offered no safe haven — about 18 days of life support. A standby rescue flight brought the risk to an acceptable level.

> *"It's better to speak up and be wrong than to stay silent and be dead."*
>
> — ASTRONAUT JIM KELLY, AS SHARED BY MIKE MASSIMINO

Building a speak-up safety culture?

Acrisure's risk consultants can help you evaluate and enhance your near-miss reporting, safety leadership, and training programs.

ASK A RISK QUESTION

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