Confirm and Verify

Confirm and verify is the governing maxim for responsible reliance upon information, promises, authority, and reported experience. It requires a person or institution first to establish precisely what is being claimed and then to test that claim against independent evidence where the consequences justify doing so.

The maxim is not an instruction to distrust everyone. It is an instruction to place trust on a foundation proportionate to the risk.

Confirm what has been represented. Verify what must be true before relying upon it.

Confirmation and verification are related but distinct acts.

Confirmation establishes the exact claim.
Verification determines whether the claim is accurate, complete, authorized, and dependable.

Without confirmation, the wrong proposition may be investigated. Without verification, a clear statement may still be false, misleading, unauthorized, incomplete, or impossible to perform.

Confirm the Claim

Many failures begin because people act upon assumptions rather than precise representations.

A person may believe that admission is guaranteed, funding has been approved, employment is secure, a deadline has been extended, a leader speaks for a constituency, or an institution will provide assistance. Yet no one has established exactly what was promised, by whom, under what authority, or subject to which conditions.

Confirmation asks:

- What exactly was stated?
- Who made the statement?
- In what capacity did the person speak?
- When was it stated?
- To whom does it apply?
- What conditions or exceptions were included?
- What action was promised or required?
- When is performance due?
- What record preserves the representation?

Confirmation converts impressions into definite claims capable of evaluation.

Statements such as “they said it would be handled,” “I was told I was approved,” or “everyone knows this person represents us” are not sufficiently precise for consequential reliance.

The claim must be reduced to identifiable terms.

Verify the Claim

Verification compares the confirmed claim with evidence independent of the claim itself.

The appropriate method depends upon the subject. Verification may include:

- obtaining the written policy;
- contacting the responsible office;
- reviewing official records;
- checking credentials or authority;
- comparing several independent sources;
- confirming funds, dates, or contractual terms;
- requesting written acknowledgment;
- observing actual performance;
- reviewing prior conduct;
- consulting a qualified professional;
- testing whether the promised pathway exists.

The person who makes a claim may provide useful evidence, but the claim should not automatically serve as its own proof.

A title does not prove authority.
Confidence does not prove competence.
Goodwill does not prove capacity.
Repetition does not prove truth.
Visibility does not prove representation.
A promise does not prove performance.

Verification establishes whether reliance is justified.

Consequences Determine the Required Depth

Not every statement requires a formal investigation. Verification should be proportionate to the possible consequence of error.

A low-cost, reversible decision may require little more than ordinary confirmation. A decision involving safety, legal rights, education, employment, substantial money, political authority, reputation, or long-term dependency requires greater care.

The governing relationship is:

> **The greater the consequence of error, the stronger the verification required before reliance.**

This principle also considers reversibility.

A mistake that can be corrected easily may permit faster action. A mistake that could cause permanent injury, missed opportunity, financial loss, legal exposure, or developmental delay requires stronger safeguards.

Urgency may change the method of verification, but it does not make truth irrelevant. Under time pressure, the decision-maker should verify the most consequential facts first and preserve alternatives whenever possible.

Verify Authority as Well as Accuracy

A statement may be factually accurate but unauthorized.

An employee may correctly describe a likely outcome without possessing authority to guarantee it. A political figure may express a common concern without possessing a mandate to speak for a community. A consultant may recommend a course of action without possessing the credentials required for the matter.

Verification must therefore examine:

- whether the speaker possesses relevant knowledge;
- whether the speaker has authority to bind the institution;
- whether the representation falls within that authority;
- whether the institution recognizes the commitment;
- whether the person can perform what has been promised.

Accuracy and authority are separate questions.

A person may know without having power. A person may possess power without having knowledge. Responsible reliance requires identifying which condition exists.

Verify Conduct, Not Merely Language

Words should be compared with behavior.

A person or institution may state principles, publish policies, make promises, or express support while acting inconsistently. Repeated conduct often provides stronger evidence of reliability than formal declarations.

Verification therefore asks:

- Has the person performed similar promises before?
- Does actual practice match written policy?
- Are standards applied consistently?
- Are explanations stable or constantly changing?
- Does the institution preserve records?

- Are errors corrected when identified?
- Who bears the cost when the promise fails?

This gives practical meaning to the related maxim:

> **Actions speak louder than words.**

Speech reveals intention. Conduct reveals capacity, priority, and reliability.

Trust Is Graduated

Confirm and verify does not reduce trust to a choice between complete faith and complete rejection.

Trust may be graduated.

A person may be trusted to provide initial information but not final authorization. An institution may be trusted for routine transactions but not as the sole pathway for a critical need. A leader may be respected while still being required to document decisions. A longtime ally may be trusted personally while material financial or legal terms remain subject to written confirmation.

Graduated trust permits cooperation without unnecessary exposure.

Trust should increase through verified competence, consistent conduct, transparency, accountability, and successful performance. It should decrease when representations remain undocumented, authority is unclear, explanations conflict, or failures are concealed.

Verification Is Not Disrespect

Requests for documentation or independent confirmation are often portrayed as accusations of dishonesty. This framing discourages responsible judgment.

Verification is not necessarily a declaration that another person is lying. It recognizes that people may be mistaken, uninformed, unauthorized, overconfident, forgetful, pressured, or dependent upon information that has changed.

Competent institutions should expect consequential claims to be verified.

Systems should make verification easier through:

- written policies;
- clear lines of authority;
- accessible records;
- confirmation numbers;
- transparent criteria;
- appeal procedures;
- audit trails;

- documented decisions.

An institution that demands trust while resisting verification creates unnecessary risk.

Application to Misdirection

Confirm and verify is especially important where people depend upon guidance for education, employment, politics, finance, law, health, or institutional development.

Defective guidance may consume years before the error becomes visible. A person may follow advice faithfully and still discover that the promised credential, pathway, benefit, or opportunity never existed.

Before committing substantial time or resources, the person should confirm:

- the required pathway;
- the actual eligibility standards;
- the cost;
- the expected duration;
- the authority of the adviser;
- the probability and conditions of the promised result;
- available alternatives;
- the consequences of failure.

A trusted adviser may still be wrong. Good intentions do not return lost time.

Application to Representation

Claims of representation also require confirmation and verification.

The relevant questions include:

- Which constituency does the person represent?
- How was authority granted?
- What is the scope of the mandate?
- Is the representative accountable to identifiable members?
- Can the constituency correct or remove the representative?
- Is outside recognition being mistaken for internal authorization?

Identity, celebrity, appointment, wealth, media access, or political visibility do not independently establish representative authority.

A person may speak as a member of a group without possessing authority to speak for the group.

Institutional Duty

Malone institutions should incorporate confirmation and verification into ordinary operations rather than depend upon individual suspicion.

Consequential decisions should create records showing:

- the claim or request received;
- the source;
- the authority asserted;
- the evidence reviewed;
- unresolved uncertainties;
- the responsible decision-maker;
- the resulting action;
- later confirmation of performance.

Material commitments should be written whenever practical. Critical information should not depend upon one person, one account, one platform, or one institution when independent confirmation is reasonably available.

Institutional verification protects both the decision-maker and the person whose claim is being evaluated.

Limits of Verification

Verification must remain proportionate and lawful.

It should not become harassment, unauthorized surveillance, an excuse for refusing all cooperation, or an impossible demand that prevents timely action. Some matters cannot be confirmed completely. Some decisions must be made under uncertainty.

Where complete verification is unavailable, the decision-maker should:

- state what is known;
- identify what remains uncertain;
- evaluate the potential consequences;
- reduce unnecessary exposure;
- preserve alternatives;
- document the basis for the decision;
- review the decision as new evidence appears.

The absence of certainty does not eliminate responsibility.

Governing Principle

The governing principle is:

> **Reliance upon consequential information, promises, authority, or representation shall be proportionate to the degree to which the underlying claim has been precisely confirmed and independently verified.**

The corresponding rule is:

> **No material decision shall depend solely upon status, confidence, familiarity, popularity, declared goodwill, or unsupported assurance when reasonable verification is available.**

Confirm and verify is a discipline of truth, not a culture of suspicion. It protects people from vague promises, unauthorized commitments, defective guidance, false representation, institutional denial, and avoidable dependency. It allows trust to exist, but requires trust to grow from evidence, authority, conduct, and accountability rather than assumption alone.