June 2026

Aero Crew News™

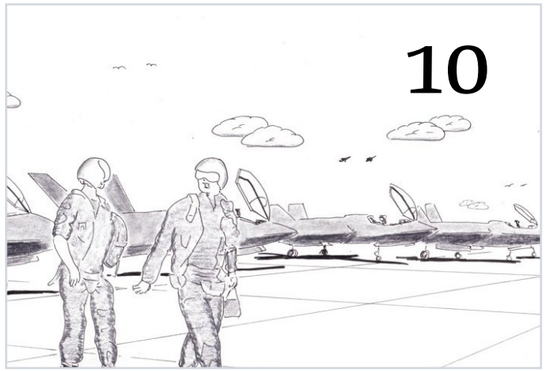
Your Industry Connection



contents

June 2026

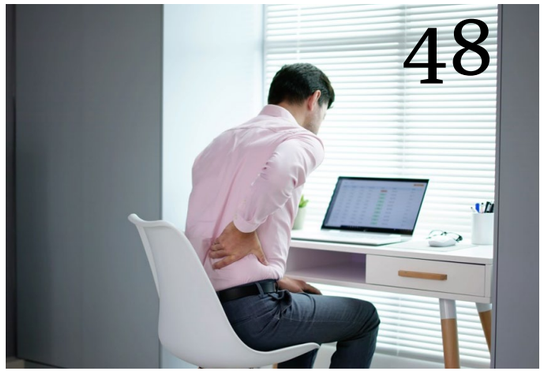
Jump to each section Below
by clicking on the title or photo.











Also Featuring:

Letter from the Publisher 4
Aviator Bulletins 6
Remembering the Unity Within the Aviation Industry 12
Contract of Carriage 14
Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting (ARFF) 16
A Path Forward Following a Toxic Fumes Event 18
Why Does My Release List Two Alternates? Part 1: "Marginal" Weather 23
How AVI-8 Brings Different Eras of Aviation to the Wrist 32
Understanding How Weight-Loss Drugs Can Impact Your Medical 38
Culture, Compensation, and Safety 52
The Upgrade Effect: What a Captain Upgrade, Airline Switch, or Equipment Change Does to Your Mortgage—And How to Fly Through It 58

the grid



PlaneSense, Inc

Add to Compare



JetBlue Airways

Add to Compare



Breeze Airways

Add to Compare



iAero Airways

Add to Compare

US Cargo

21 Air, LLC
ABX Air
ATI
Alaska Seaplanes
Aloha Air Cargo
Ameriflight
Atlas Air/Southern Air
FedEx Express
iAero Airways
Kalitta Air
Key Lime Air
UPS

US Charter

Airshare
Alaska Seaplanes
GMJ Air Shuttle
Key Lime Air
Omni Air International
Ravn Air Group
XOJET Aviation

US Fractional

FlexJet
NetJets
PlaneSense

US Major Airlines

Alaska Airlines
Allegiant Air
American Airlines
Avelo Air
Breeze Airways
Delta Air Lines
Frontier Airlines
Hawaiian Airlines
JetBlue Airways
Southwest Airlines
Spirit Airlines
Sun Country Airlines
United Airlines

US Regional Airlines

Air Choice One
Air Wisconsin
Cape Air
CommutAir
Elite Airways
Endeavor Air
Envoy
GoJet Airlines
Grant Aviation
Horizon Air
Key Lime Air
Mesa Airlines
'Ohana by Hawaiian
Piedmont Airlines
PSA Airlines
RavnAir Group
Republic Airways
Silver Airways
Skywest Airlines
Star Mania Air, Inc.

US Cargo Regional

Alpine Air
Empire Airlines

The Grid (contract comparisons, pay charts, company details, etc.) has moved online. Click on the airlines above to go directly to that airline's information, or go to www. AeroCrewNews.com/go/thegrid.

Dear Spirit Family,

There is no easy way to write this letter. On May 2nd, more than seven thousand of you—our brothers and sisters—lost your jobs, your healthcare, your security, and the daily community you built over years and decades. However, you remain our colleagues.

To the pilots who strapped on the jet with pride, to the flight attendants who showed up at o'dark:thirty to take care of strangers, to the mechanics, dispatchers, gate agents, and every employee at every base and every hub—please hear me as I say this: you matter. What you built mattered. And the way it ended was not what you deserved.

An airline is never just a logo on a tail. It's the people inside the uniform, the friendships born on layovers and in the crew rooms that felt like a second home. To have all of that taken from you with barely an hour of warning is a wound the rest of us cannot fully understand, but we stand beside you as it heals.

You are not invisible to the rest of the aviation world. ALPA, AFA-CWA, and the leadership of every major carrier in this country has moved quickly to open job pipelines and preferential interview pathways. Aero Crew News will do its part too, publishing every hiring link we can confirm while amplifying your voices so this industry never forgets what happened. Here, you can access the list to date.

For everyone impacted, our sister company, Aero Crew Solutions, is offering a 20% discount on all their services (application review, résumé critique, interview prep and career consulting).

To my readers at every other carrier: when a Spirit résumé crosses your desk, extend your hand and more. That will show our airline industry at its best.

Fly Safe,

Craig D. Pieper

Craig D. Pieper



About the Publisher

Craig Pieper is the Publisher and Founder of Aero Crew News. Craig obtained his Bachelors of Science in Aeronautical Science, along with a minor in Aviation Weather, from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in 2001. Craig is also a captain for a major airline with a type rating in the Boeing 737 & Embraer 145 and has logged over 10,000 hours of flying time since his introductory flight on November 14th, 1992.

May 2026

Feature – The annual ACN Photo Contest has its winners!

Baggage – While a constant in aviation, stress is manageable and necessary in balance.

Business Vector – Leadership is vital to any organization and the lack of competent leadership is a crisis.

Coffee & Pretzels – Is our relationship with ATC like a marriage?

Desk One – Tips and tricks from dispatchers will make your planning easier and better.

Fitness – Here's your fitness reset plan for the four-day trip—easy and effective.

Grey Matter – The Passenger Bill of Rights is examined and explained.

Money – Saving early is always wise with some options explained in this month's column.

Moonlight – A new learning tool, The Checkride Guide has been developed to help students prepare for their private, instrument or commercial checkrides.

Mortgage – Learn to look beyond the interest rate and how lowest isn't always best in the long run.

Perspectives – After years of flight instructing, our author is in the pupil's seat again.

Squall Line – Gain greater understanding of the today's weather technology and learn from this interesting case study of contradictions.



View as Flip Magazine

Download PDF

CREDITS

Publisher / Founder
Craig Pieper

Aero Crew Solutions, CEO
Scott Rehn

Editor
Deborah Bandy

Layout Design
Sarina Williams

Additional Contributors
Greg Kaley
John McDermott
Richard Swindell
Sergio Sovero
Steve O'Leary
Laura Laster
Rendezvous
Ethan Barnes
Reini Thijssen
Scott Darragh
Christopher Broyhill
Spencer Wartman
Charlie Mattingly

Aviator Bulletins
Provided by the companies listed

Photographs By
Aviator Bulletin photographs provided by the companies listed.
Photographs as noted or licensed by Aero Crew News, LLC

Grid Updates Email
GridUpdates@AeroCrewNews.com

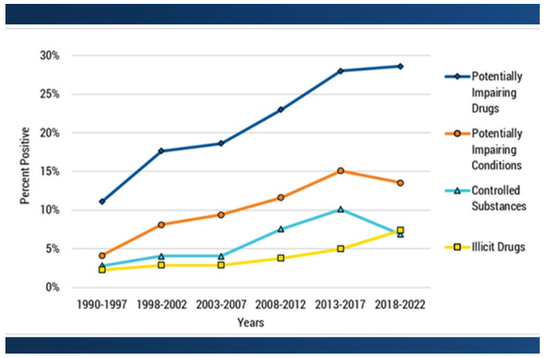
Social Media
Edith Duran

© 2026 Aero Crew News, All Rights Reserved.



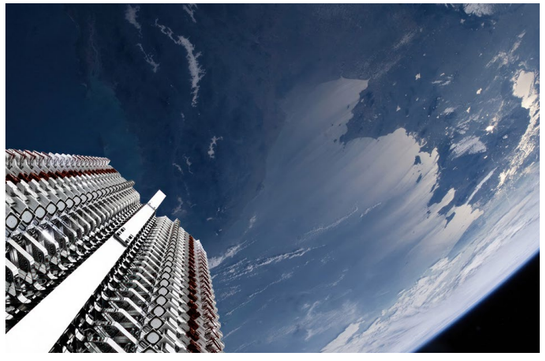
United Flight Attendants Ratify New Contract

United Flight Attendants, represented by the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA, voted by 82% to ratify a new contract. The agreement provides a 31% average wage increase for the nearly 30,000 Flight Attendants plus boarding pay (additional 7-8% compensation on average... Read More



NTSB Releases Study on Drug Presence Trends Among Fatally Injured Pilots

The National Transportation Safety Board published a safety research report that found that 52.8% of fatally injured pilots tested positive for at least one drug of any type, and 27.7% tested positive for two or more drugs, continuing an upward trend. Read More



American Airlines to Install Starlink, the Fastest Wi-Fi in the Sky

American Airlines announced a sweeping modernization of its narrowbody inflight customer experience with the installation of Starlink, the fastest Wi-Fi in the sky, on more than 500 narrowbody aircraft beginning in Q1 2027. Read More



Virginia Becomes Latest State to Extend Paid Sick Leave to Airline Flight Crews

Capt. Jason Ambrosi, president of the Air Line Pilots Association, Int'l (ALPA), issued the following statement after Virginia signed into law paid sick leave protections for workers, including airline pilots and flight attendants... Read More



American Airlines unlocks more access for travelers with four new nonstop routes

American Airlines launched four new routes to unlock even more access between the U.S. and Europe with new nonstop service to Budapest, Hungary (BUD) and Prague (PRG) from Philadelphia (PHL), and to Athens, Greece (ATH), and Zurich (ZRH) from Dallas-Fort Worth (DFW). Read More



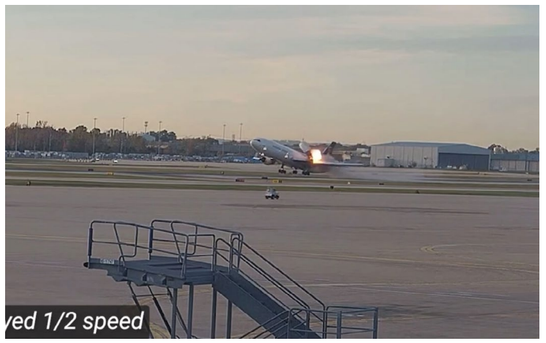
United Sees Flight Demand Spikes Around the Season's Biggest Cultural Moments

A summer packed with global events is giving air travel a boost, with United Airlines seeing double-digit increases in demand to destinations tied to once-in-a-lifetime moments – from a total solar eclipse in Europe to international soccer matches and major global concert tours. Read More



Avelo Airlines Extends Flight Schedule Through the Winter Holiday Season

Avelo Airlines announced that it is extending its flight schedule through early-January 2027, just in time to start planning winter and holiday travel. Avelo Customers can now book travel to over 30 popular destinations through Jan. 5, 2027. Travelers can make reservations at AveloAir.com. Read More



NTSB Releases Animation and Surveillance Video of UPS Flight 2976 Engine Separation

The National Transportation Safety Board has released an explanatory animation and airport surveillance video related to the crash of UPS Flight 2976 on November 4, 2025. The Boeing MD-11F cargo aircraft lost its left engine shortly after takeoff from Louisville Muhammad Ali International Airport, ultimately... Read More



United Adds Nonstop Service to Sapporo, New Flight Between Chicago and Tokyo-Narita

United announced it is expanding its service to Japan with new flights to Sapporo and Tokyo-Narita this winter. The airline will launch the first nonstop service from the continental U.S. to Sapporo, Japan and will be the only U.S. airline offering nonstop service... Read More

amberjack

Dress Shoes for Pilots

Scan Me to Shop Now!

- Slip Resistant Outsole
- TSA Compliant
- Complies with Uniform Guidelines
- Non-FOD Carrying Tread
- Premium Full-Grain Leather
- Incredibly Supportive Insole



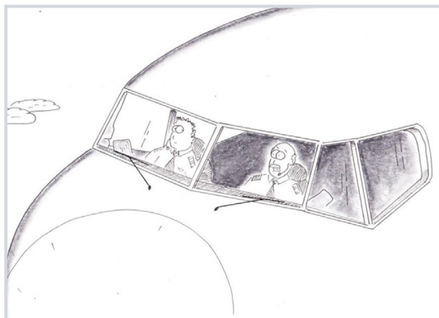
www.amberjack.shop

coffee & pretzels

Greg Kaley



But the honest reason I joined? All the rhyming and alliteration I can get away with in normal conversation.



Check Out Last Month's Cartoon



About the Author

Greg Kaley is a pilot with a major airline who also happens to be a cartoonist. He started the cartoon "Coffee & Pretzels" in 2016. After graduating from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University (Prescott Campus), he flight-instructed and subsequently... Read More...



AeroCrewShop.com

Remembering the Unity Within the Aviation Industry



WRITTEN BY: JOHN MCDERMOTT

Spirit Airlines' demise earlier this month was the most visible airline bankruptcy in over a decade. The first Chapter 11 bankruptcy by a major airline in 11 years, Spirit's closure was felt more strongly across the country than any recent airline closure.

All week, I have heard stories from various former Spirit employees about their time at the airline. Many have heard of the pilot who missed out on his retirement flight by one day, but I have also flown pilots commuting to visit friends impacted by the closure. An airport an hour from where I live in Pennsylvania was served only by Spirit; the abandoned Spirit planes I have seen across the country remind me how lucky many of us are to have our jobs, even those at regional airlines.

As difficult as this transition has been for many, I am also reminded of how incredibly tight-knit this industry is. Everything from preferential hiring to offers of free simulator time for Spirit pilots have been proffered in one context or another. The morning immediately after the closure, my employer sent out emails encouraging our pilot group to keep an eye out for Spirit pilots to make sure they got onboard commutes and deadheads back home or to their bases.

While I am sure that some level of preferential hiring is due to the experience and training that Spirit pilots have, I also know that each professional pilot in this industry has a strong emotional investment in caring for Spirit crewmembers, pilots and flight attendants alike. Each of us is affected by this closure, either due to its impact on hiring or because we know someone who was laid off. Many of us also know a pilot who started as a flight attendant, ramp agent, dispatcher, or intern–or are else close with someone in one of these roles–and therefore equally feel for those employees.

Aviation has a history of coming together in times of tragedy. The industry was unified around PSA and UPS employees after crashes last year, everyone felt the burden of furloughs at the start of the COVID pandemic, and we all held together during the financial crisis in 2008 and the bankruptcies and mergers that followed.

As big as our aviation industry can feel, it's also incredibly small in many ways, and many hardships are felt by all. In one way or another, there is a strong shared experience and struggle that comes with years of flight instructing, multiple bankruptcies, and industry downturns that all have felt in one way or another.

I am constantly touched emotional when I see how well we rally around those impacted by hardships. I find it to be among the most inspiring things about what I do. Especially as the industry becomes more diverse, this unity is a tremendous indicator of a shared value system that ties us together. Across various experience levels, operators, and career goals, I am continuously impressed by how tightly aviation professionals (and even amateur pilots and aviation enthusiasts) bind together.

Equally notable is the support airlines offer to the passengers affected by this shutdown. Those stranded across the country, and even those impacted while out of the country, have numerous options to get home and reach their destinations. And while other airlines are certainly taking a business approach to fare and network adjustments, the increased options (and the efforts competitors are going to make to fill holes left by Spirit) will ensure that passengers continue to have options for their travels.

Support for Spirit employees and passengers will surely continue in the coming weeks and months, and I am certain that the rest of the industry will continue fighting for them as they continue their aviation journeys. I am excited to keep meeting, being updated by, and flying with these employees. Though there will be a gaping hole in the industry for some time, I am hopeful that many of those affected will eventually be resettled across the industry in one way or another. I am also confident that the industry will continue rallying around Spirit and its employees to ensure they land on their feet.



About the Author

John McDermott's passion for aviation began in a Michigan bookstore when he found a story about a chance encounter between enemy pilots during World War II. Soon, after watching countless hours of fighter jets and traffic from his home near O'Hare International Airport, he was hooked forever.. Read More...



GREY MATTER

Contract of Carriage

Probably less than what you think

Written by: Richard Swindell

A couple of months ago when I shared a story about cells phones and non-compliance on airliners, it seems we unintentionally started a short series of what passengers are and are not entitled to. Now, we're continuing with what passengers receive in exchange for purchasing an airline ticket, and it's probably less than you think.

To get started, we need to define *contract of carriage*.

A contract of carriage (sometimes called condition of carriage) is a legally binding agreement between the air carrier and a passenger who buys a ticket, that outlines the rights, responsibilities, and liabilities of both parties. Each time you buy a ticket on an airline, you implicitly agree to the contract of carriage, because it is literally the small (although tiny is probably a better description) print stuff that frankly nobody but airline attorneys ever read.

Features of the contract of carriage include rights and liabilities; what the carrier is responsible for, including what happens if there are service delays or damages to cargo and baggage, as well as terms and conditions including rules for passengers, baggage policies including limits and fees, check-in deadlines, cancellation and refund procedures, denied boarding compensation, etc. And there's always a force majeure clause (sometimes referred to as acts of God) that suspend airline liability for uncontrollable and/or unforeseen events. A recent example of this was the widespread outbreak of violence in Mexico after the army killed the Jalisco New Generation Cartel leader, Nemesio Oseguera Cervantes, aka El Mencho. For tourist and air travelers, the results were broad flight cancellations due to security concerns, which was beyond the control of the airlines. At the same time, a massive snowstorm in the northeastern U.S. shut down New England airports for several days. Also beyond the control of the airlines.

Most people believe that when they purchase an airline ticket, they are in possession of an ironclad guarantee of service, presumed to be a specific seat, on a specific flight at a specific time to a specific destination. Although it mostly works out this way (mostly because it's in the airlines' best interest to make it happen accordingly), you are not, in fact, entitled to or guaranteed any of this. While the airline will generally do its best to accommodate the assumed purchase conditions of the ticket, due to contract of carriage (which you agreed to when you purchased it), the ticket really only confirms your reservation. In this way, the ticket really functions more like OpenTable*, rather than your own personal Magna Carta.

Contracts of carriage (which have been affirmed by court decisions up to and including the Supreme Court) generally allow airlines to change seat assignments, substitute aircraft, or deny boarding due to overbooking, safety, or operational requirements. So, your ticket does not guarantee you a specific seat or even a seat on a particular flight, despite some individuals' misconception that they now own that seat for the low, low price of $129 taking them from Denver to Kanas City, on August 12th at 3pm.

To summarize, contract of carriage provides a legal framework ensuring both parties understand their obligations, rights, rates, and the limits of liability before transportation occurs, and if anyone were to actually read the fine print, one would discover that there are far fewer entitlements than anticipated that go with that ticket. It is important to note however that despite being a binding document for the airline-passenger relationship, contract of carriage (written and established by each individual airline) may not substitute, omit, circumvent or conflict with federal regulations and guidelines such as those outlined in the Airline Passenger Bill of Rights (which we covered last month—in the May 2026 issue).

The practical reality of all of this is that with a U.S. airline you have a 78% chance of arriving at your intended destination within 15 minutes of your planned time, only a 1.3% chance of your scheduled flight canceling, and a mere 0.000001% chance of being involved in a fatal accident. By comparison, the average U.S. driver loses about 53 hours per year to traffic congestion, maintains a consistent one in 366 chance of being in a car accident for every 1,000 miles driven, and a 77% lifetime chance of being in at least one car crash.

Ok, we're going to change topics next month so come back for some truly heavy discourse.

*OpenTable is a handy app that assists you with making reservations at restaurants in your area or in an area of your choosing. Grey Matter is not underwritten or compensated by OpenTable in any way.



About the Author

Richard Swindell left active-duty military service and transitioned to the airline industry where he flies and works as a line check airman for a major airline. Read More...

KNOWLEDGE BASE

Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting (ARFF)

Written by: Sergio Sovero



Airport Emergency Firefighting Equipment Test // Editorial photo credit: kmm7553 - stock.adobe.com

Pilots are trained to use all available resources when abnormal situations arise, such as emergencies. During airport operations, a critical safety role is delegated to Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting (ARFF). These professionals undergo extensive training to handle a multitude of events and to promptly respond to any aircraft emergency.

Each aircraft incident requires a variety of emergency solutions. Airport firefighters undergo extensive training in the application of firefighting foams, dry chemicals, and clean agents to extinguish burning aviation fuel. To the extent possible, they control the spread of fire in order to maintain a safe evacuation path for passengers exiting the hazard area. Under Part 139, the FAA mandates ARFF presence at all airports served by air carriers. ARFF facilities are inspected annually for compliance with mandated regulatory standards.

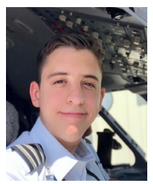
Depending on the type and length of aircraft an airport serves, different requirements, known as “indexes,” are mandated. An index determines the number of ARFF vehicles and the quantity of extinguishing agents required. Visually, these vehicles differ from traditional municipal fire trucks. They are larger, allowing them to carry additional water, equipment, gear, and up to five personnel. They are also designed for off-road operations, with wide tires and long-travel suspension systems, as they may need to maneuver through aircraft parts and debris. Each vehicle is equipped with powerful, high-capacity pumps capable of spraying water and foam over long distances from turrets.

A variety of extinguishing agents is available to ARFF personnel, ranging from dry chemicals and water to firefighting foams. Personnel are required to train in real-world scenarios on an annual basis. In addition, advances in technology have enabled virtual-reality training, allowing ARFF teams to simulate real-life situations and gain experience handling a wide variety of scenarios without the cost and safety concerns associated with live vehicle operations or live-fire training.

It is important to emphasize the role of communication between pilots, air traffic control, and ARFF personnel. Clear and concise exchanges allow pilots to make informed decisions pertaining to the safety of passengers and crew. When an emergency evacuation is initiated by the captain, it is imperative, to the extent possible, to communicate this to ATC and ARFF personnel. Previous accidents have demonstrated that uncontrolled evacuations can result in injuries unrelated to the aircraft damage itself, including instances where ARFF vehicles have struck passengers. When communicating with ARFF personnel, pilots should be specific when asking questions and when instructing ARFF crews to be additional sets of eyes outside the aircraft.

Per FAR Part 139, the first responding ARFF vehicle must reach the midpoint of the farthest runway, or any point on the movement area, and begin discharging extinguishing agent within three minutes of the alarm. In other situations, such as when an emergency landing is anticipated, ARFF vehicles are strategically pre-positioned at multiple runway intersections, allowing them to enter the runway within seconds of the aircraft touchdown. Drill exercises are conducted regularly to ensure Part 139 standards are consistently met.

ARFF professionals often work behind the scenes at airports across the nation, rarely drawing attention during routine operations. Yet within the layered system of aviation safety, ARFF serves as one of the final lines of defense when accidents occur, playing a critical role in preserving lives and keeping the traveling public safe.



About the Author

Sergio Sovero was born and raised in Lima, Peru, and is currently a captain for Delta Air Lines. Read More...

AERO MEDICAL

A Path Forward Following a Toxic Fumes Event

For flight crews and passengers impacted by contaminated cabin air, treatment to damage of the autonomic nervous system can be essential to recovery.

Author: Steve O'Leary, Physio PS

While the aviation industry has long maintained that cabin air quality meets safety standards, there is mounting evidence to suggest that toxic fumes from aircraft engine oil, hydraulic fluids, and cleaners are causing a constellation of serious health problems in pilots, flight attendants, ground crew and frequent fliers—a condition known as Aerotoxic Syndrome.

The industry has always maintained they meet air quality standards which may be true, but the major incidents and cumulative effects are what cause the health problems.

With the exception of the Boeing 787, today's commercial aircraft use "bleed air" systems that pull compressed air directly from jet engines into the cabin unfiltered. When engine seals fail or maintenance issues arise, this air becomes contaminated with a potent organophosphate neurotoxin, along with carbon monoxide, toluene, and other harmful substances.

While the Federal Aviation Administration describes contaminated air incidents as "rare," records indicate that fume events now occur at a frequency of nearly 108 occurrences per million departures. The range of symptoms reported by those affected by a fume event is extensive precisely because the autonomic nervous system controls so many bodily functions.

Patients commonly experience:

- Severe brain fog and cognitive impairment
- Chronic fatigue and anxiety
- Cardiovascular irregularities
- Gastrointestinal disorders
- Headaches and neurological symptoms
- Chemical sensitivities
- Memory loss and speech impairment
- Vision problems
- Numbness and tingling in extremities

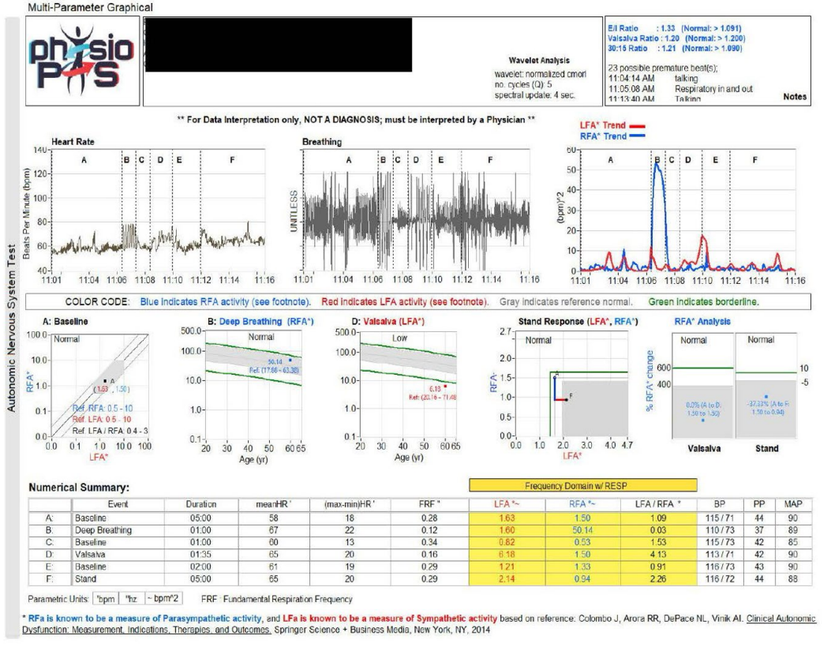
Because affected individuals present with such a wide array of symptoms, many doctors struggle to provide an accurate diagnosis. Without understanding that the root cause lies in autonomic nervous system dysfunction at the cellular level, physicians often treat individual symptoms rather than addressing the underlying problem. Moreover, most medical schools do not train physicians extensively on the autonomic nervous system, leaving practitioners at a disadvantage when confronted with a patient with an autonomic disorder.

Many patients find themselves bouncing from specialist to specialist, collecting diagnoses that fail to explain the full picture. Some are eventually referred to psychiatrists under the mistaken belief that their symptoms are psychological rather than physiological. This pattern of misdiagnosis can continue for years, leaving patients without effective treatment and unable to function normally.

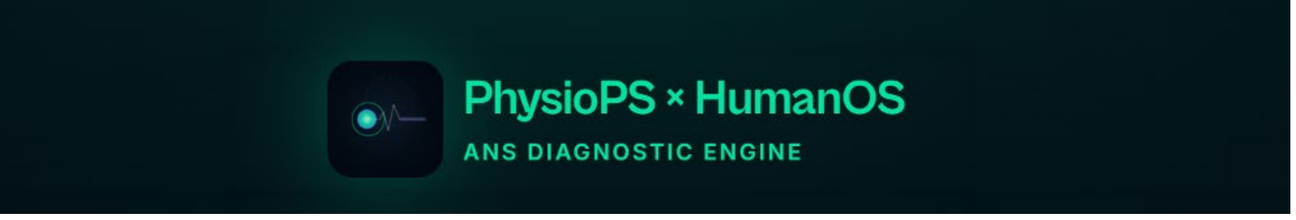
Physio PS Inc., Luminary Clinic, affiliated physicians, and researchers have conducted extensive testing and have provided care for numerous individuals impacted by aerotoxic events.

They are now developing plans to expand their network of testing partners and standardizing protocols. Collaborating with airline unions, government agencies, and global independent testing organizations is essential to ensure comprehensive support and easy to reach testing.

Recent advances in diagnostic technology offer hope for those suffering from aerotoxicity and similar conditions. Physio PS, Inc. can monitor and differentiate between the two branches of the autonomic nervous system, providing physicians with a clear picture of which branch (or both) is operating abnormally. This diagnostic capability is crucial because treatment protocols differ depending on whether the sympathetic or parasympathetic system is over- or under-functioning. A sample report will then look like this:



BACK TO CONTENTS







Our new AI based diagnostic reporting tool is a game changer.

With proper diagnosis, physicians can develop targeted care plans that address the root cause of autonomic dysregulation. Treatment typically involves:

- Low-dose pharmaceuticals to rebalance autonomic function
- Targeted nutritional supplements, particularly R-alpha-lipoic acid (a powerful antioxidant)
- Proper hydration protocols using electrolyte carriers (sodium and potassium)
- Gradual, supervised exercise programs to retrain the nervous system
- Removal of ongoing toxic exposures

Physio PS, Inc. technology uses FDA-cleared algorithms to analyze ECG, respiratory rate, and blood pressure data, providing objective measurements of autonomic function. An emerging AI-assisted diagnostic system promises to streamline the process further, potentially achieving 90-95% diagnostic accuracy based on extensive databases of previous cases and published research.

Success Stories: Recovery Is Possible

Clinical results demonstrate that with proper diagnosis and treatment, patients can achieve significant improvement. Those who previously could not function on a daily basis have reported feeling “magically better” within three to six months of beginning targeted care plans, allowing them to return to normal lifestyles.

The key is early intervention and comprehensive treatment. Unlike the “sick care” model that focuses on managing symptoms indefinitely, this approach addresses cellular-level damage and supports the body’s natural healing mechanisms.

“After two decades as a flight attendant, I began experiencing health issues like fatigue, brain fog, stomach pain, and dizziness,” said Michelle. “Even though I visited several doctors and specialists, my condition only worsened, which ultimately forced me onto disability and led to the loss of my job. By doing my own investigation and connecting with colleagues who were also affected, I discovered Physio PS testing and Luminary Clinic in New Hampshire. After taking a simple test and starting their treatment plan, I noticed improvement and remain hopeful about making a full recovery.”

Prevention: Protecting Yourself Before You Fly

While systemic changes to aircraft design and maintenance procedures are needed, individuals can take steps to protect themselves from toxic exposures during air travel:

- Ensure proper hydration before flying—use electrolyte solutions containing sodium and/or potassium, not just water
- Consider taking antioxidant supplements like R-Alpha-Lipoic Acid acid before flights
- Be aware of unusual odors during boarding and flight (described as dirty socks, musty/moldy, old cheese, or chemical smells)
- Avoid breathing air from vents if contamination is suspected
- Document any exposure incidents and seek medical evaluation if symptoms develop

A Broader Issue: Not Just Aerotoxicity

The same cellular-level damage and autonomic nervous system dysfunction seen in aerotoxicity occurs in other conditions as well. Long COVID, post-viral syndromes, postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome, and exposure to other environmental toxins and stress can all cause oxidative stress that impairs nervous system function. The Physio, PS, Inc. autonomic nervous system monitoring and treatment approaches that prove effective

for aerotoxicity have for many years benefitted a much broader patient population suffering from unexplained chronic symptoms.

Dr. MaryBeth Ayer uses Physio PS autonomic nervous system testing alongside Hair Tissue Mineral Analysis to uncover how chronic stress disrupts the nervous system and creates severe mineral deficiencies that can drive debilitating symptoms. After her own health collapsed leaving her nearly bedridden and barely able to walk, she rebuilt her health by restoring nervous system function and correcting those underlying deficiencies. Today she works with clients across the country to identify the root causes of chronic symptoms and restore their health.

“Physio PS technology is truly unmatched when it comes to identifying nervous system dysfunction,” says Dr. MaryBeth Ayer. “It completely changed my life when I was at my sickest, and I now see it change the lives of the people I work with every day.”

Steve, a professional golfer reports, “I found Physio PS testing from a doctor who was trying to figure out my health issues. I got Covid twice and the second time was really bad even though I was vaccinated, it took a while to get over it but even after recovering I was not the same. I had no energy, brain fog, pain when I ate. It was horrible. I saw multiple doctors over a year’s time and they could not figure it out. Finally, I found a concierge doctor who worked with Physio PS and Steve O’Leary, one of the founders, tested me himself. Instantly he knew what was going on and the doctors put me on a care plan, and within three months I was clearly better. And after six months, I was back on the tour and won my first tournament. I owe the doctors and Physio PS for taking the time and pinpointing the problem.”

For now, awareness remains the first line of defense. Flight crews, frequent travelers, and healthcare providers all need to understand that the symptoms of aerotoxic syndrome are real, that the underlying mechanism involves autonomic nervous system damage, and that effective diagnosis and treatment are available.

The air we breathe aboard aircraft should support our health, not compromise it. This is not a psychosomatic condition but a serious occupational and public health issue demanding urgent attention. With proper diagnostic tools, targeted treatment protocols, and preventive measures, we can begin to address this hidden health crisis in our skies.

To learn more about Physio P.S. and find out where to be tested, please contact us at (603) 287-1817, soleary@physiops.com, or visit our website at https://aerotoxicity.physiops.com/.



About the Author

Steve O’Leary is a business executive with a rare combination of technical expertise and sales leadership, and a track record of building world-class sales and marketing teams for global companies. Read More...

BACK TO CONTENTS



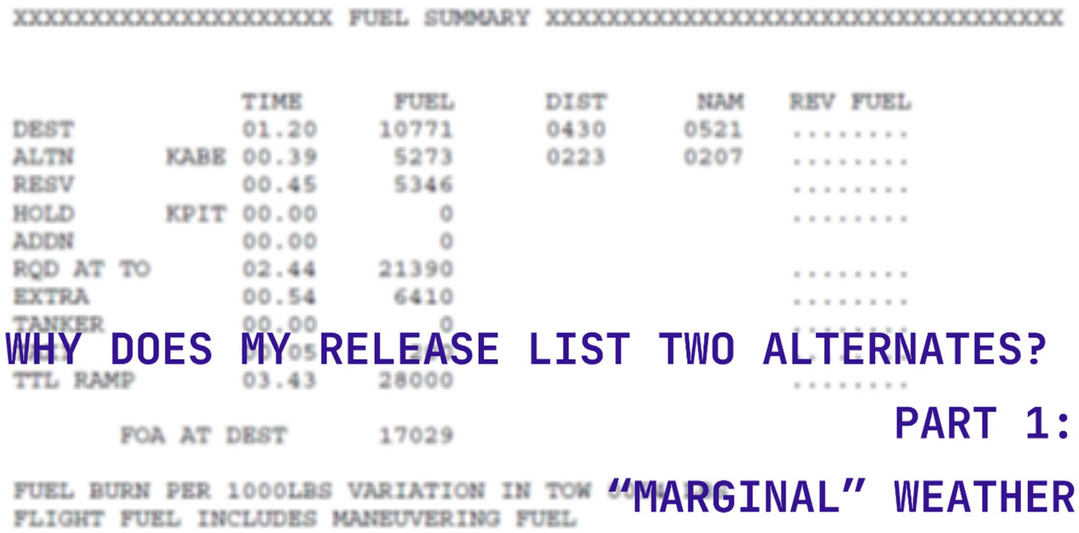
Why Does My Release List Two Alternates? *Part 1: “Marginal” Weather*

Written by: Laura Laster

When your dispatch release has two alternates listed rather than just one (or none), you might wonder why. There are two scenarios where you are legally required to have a second alternate, outside of ETOPS rules. I’ll explain one here and the other in next month’s article.

Scenario 1: “Marginal” Weather: 14 CFR § 121.619(a)

This is one of those confounding regulations that is difficult because of what the FAA did *not* define. You might read this regulation and see the “1-2-3 rule” for domestic operations. At first glance it seems a lot like Part 91 instrument flight rules. However, there’s a requirement for an additional alternate to be added if “the weather conditions forecast for the destination and first alternate airport are marginal…” (14 CFR § 121.619(a)). What is “marginal?” Spoiler: the FAA never defines “marginal” within 14 CFR.



WHY DOES MY RELEASE LIST TWO ALTERNATES? PART 1: "MARGINAL" WEATHER

I did some digging around in the FAA's Legal Interpretations database (so you don't have to!) and found an interpretation from 1989 where the FAA was asked about the definition of "marginal." To quote from their response, "we cannot give a definitive answer to your question." This fantastic non-answer is found on page 7 of the linked PDF to read in context. https://drs.faa.gov/browse/excelExternalWindow/FAA000000000LEGALINTPR2007004PDF.0001 Or, to skip all the background and legalese, here's a screenshot from interpretation 1989-28 which the FAA had attached to another interpretation from 2007.

Since "additional consideration" has not been given the term "marginal" and since an "alternative proposal" has not been developed, we cannot give a definitive answer to your question. However, generally, when interpreting the FAR, no magical formula or semantic insight is necessary and, unless the word is otherwise defined, each word should be given its plain and ordinary meaning, i.e., its dictionary definition. *Webster's Third International Dictionary* defines the word marginal in pertinent part as "4 a: close to the lower limit of qualification or acceptability." Therefore, when the weather conditions for the destination and first alternative are close to the lower limits of weather conditions required for landing at the destination airport at ETA at least one alternate must be designated.

If you feel the rule should be changed, you may petition the Agency for rulemaking in accordance with Section 11.25 of the FAR. This letter has been coordinated with the Office of Flight Standards Service here in FAA Headquarters.

We hope this satisfactorily answers your inquiries.

This does **not** satisfactorily answer my inquiry. What does "weather conditions…close to the lower limits of weather conditions…" mean? What is "close" in this context?

The bottom line is this: the FAA has never defined "marginal" related to weather. It has been left up to each certificate holder (read: airline) to determine what "marginal" means to them. Because of this, it's important to be able to reference what **your** operation calls "marginal."

Some operators use a time-based window, and others just look at the estimated time of arrival. Each airline is responsible to get its own definition of "marginal" that their certificate management office can agree upon. Essentially, it takes the regulation and makes it dependent on the airline's definition of "marginal" meaning there is great variety among airlines on what is "marginal."

Here are three examples from three different real airlines operating under domestic rules. (Names have been changed to protect the innocent.)

Airline A says two alternates are needed if both these conditions are met:

- Marginal at destination airport: < 1000' ceiling OR < 3sm visibility from 1 hour before to 1 hour after ETA AND
- Marginal at first alternate: < 600' ceiling OR < 2sm visibility at the ETA

Airline B says two alternates are needed if both these conditions are met *at the ETA*:

- Marginal at destination airport: forecast at lowest authorized landing minimums AND
- Marginal at first alternate: forecast is at lowest authorized alternate filing minimums

Airline C says two alternates are needed if both these conditions are met at the ETA:

- Marginal at the destination: less than 600' ceiling and less than 2sm visibility AND
- Marginal at the first alternate: less than 600' ceiling and less than 2sm visibility

This gets confusing if you are used to one set of rules at one airline and then encounter a new set of rules at your next airline because there's no standardization required. My advice: if your dispatcher adds a second alternate on the release, and you have any concerns about why, ask the dispatcher for clarification. It could be for "marginal" weather. But it could be for the second reason, which I'll discuss in next month's release from Desk One!



About the Author

Laura Laster graduated from LeTourneau University in 2004, becoming a flight instructor for the university. She then worked for Dynamic Aviation as a King Air survey pilot and eventually worked at Dynamic Airways during their air carrier certification for Part 121 Supplemental operations... Read More...

MOONLIGHT

If Only There Were an App for That

A chance lobby encounter in New York City sparked a simple idea. What grew from it is something aviation has never had - a global professional network born, built, and backed by aircrew, for every pilot and flight attendant on earth.

WRITTEN BY: STAFF WRITER

It was a morning like any other New York layover. Solo night. Didn't do much. Alarm, uniform, crew van. He was heading down to the pickup when he spotted a familiar face across the lobby, someone he hadn't seen in almost ten years.

"Ken! What's up bro! How are you? How's the family? Were you staying here last night?"

"Yeah, it was lame. I didn't do anything."

"Dude, I wish I would have known you were here."

"Yeah, that would have been way more exciting."

They laughed it off, grabbed their bags, and went their separate ways to different gates. But somewhere on that van ride to the airport, the founder of Rendezvous couldn't shake one thought: *if only there were an app for that.*

> "We were in the same hotel. A good friend I hadn't seen in a decade, one or two floors apart, and we both spent the night alone in New York City. That shouldn't happen."

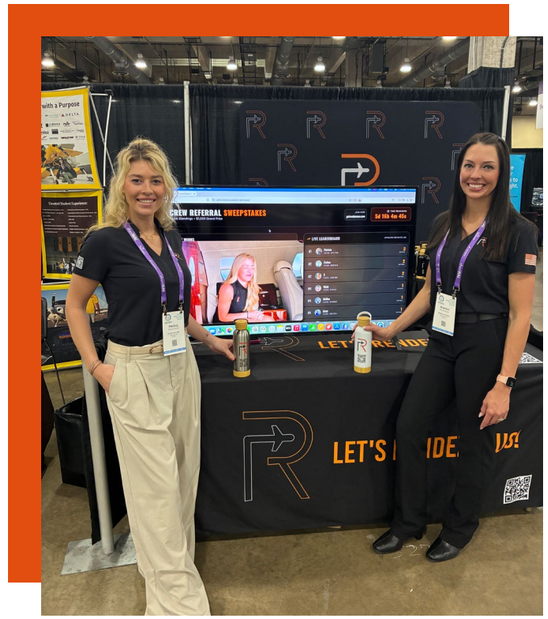
Stop and think about how often that happens. Not once a month. Not once a trip. Probably hundreds of times a trip, across every hotel corridor, every crew van, every terminal in every city on your schedule. And it's not just a domestic problem. It's happening in Dubai and Frankfurt and Singapore and Sao Paulo. Crews from a dozen different airlines passing through the same airports, bunking in the same crew hotels, eating alone in cities they've been through forty times, never knowing that the person they trained with, flew with, or haven't seen in years is two floors up.

The missed connections in this industry aren't rare. They're constant, and they're global. They're just invisible because there was never a way to see them.

> Hundreds of missed connections. Every trip. In every city, on every continent. Because you simply didn't know your friend was there.

What happened after that New York lobby is not the story of someone who set out to build a company. He had no intention of becoming an app developer. He came to the airlines from the military, a world where your crew was your community, and the isolation of the 121 layover caught him off guard. He just wanted a tool, something simple, that would make it easy to connect with friends on the road. So, he did what any reasonable person would do: he looked for what already existed.

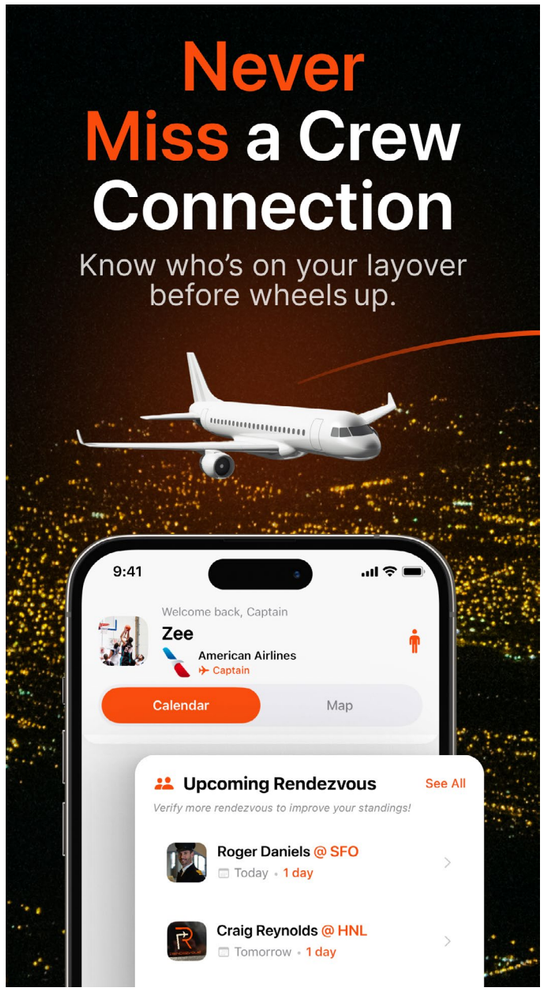
He tried every app on the market. None of them actually did what he wanted. The problem wasn't a lack of aviation apps. There are plenty. But most are built around airline operations, dispatch data, legality calculators, company portal logins, etc. Many require signing in through a carrier's internal system, which the major airlines are steadily locking down. Others are so loaded with operational data that finding a friend on an overnight feels like reading a systems manual just to send a text. And then there are the workarounds everyone already knows; the fragmented Facebook groups, the airline-specific group chats that only reach your own carrier and go silent the moment you upgrade, change bases, or move on. Patchwork solutions built for no one in particular, owned by platforms that understood nothing about this life.



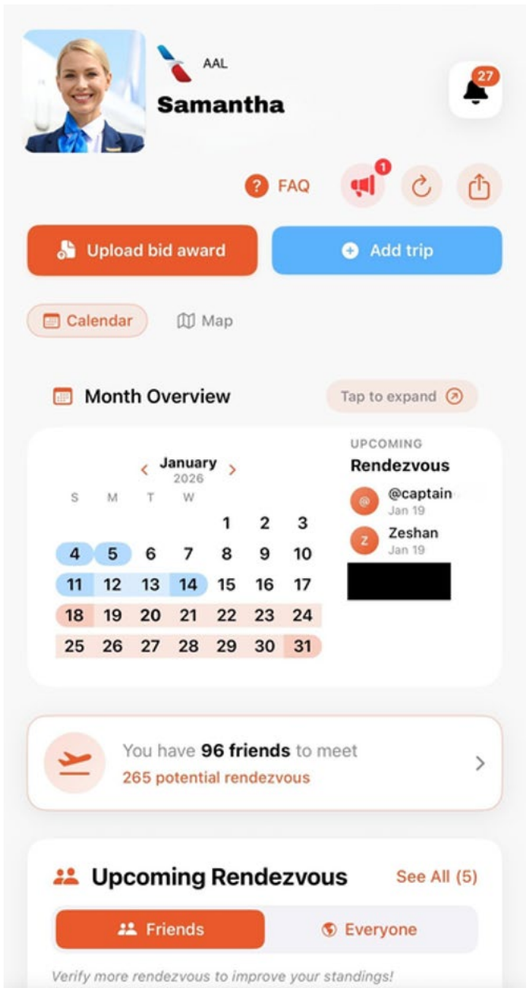
"As aviation becomes more global and connected online, I think privacy matters more than ever, especially for us women in the industry. I love how Rendezvous allows crews to network and build genuine connections without feeling like you're broadcasting your location or personal life to the world. We spend so much time away from home, having a safe and seamless way to connect internationally feels really valuable. I've believed in the team and the vision from day one, and it's been amazing to be a small part of watching it grow." **Mellisa Whitfield, International Airline First Officer & Rendezvous Ambassador**

The apps that existed were built for the airline. The Facebook groups were built for the algorithm. Nobody had built something for the crew at every carrier, in every country, all at once.

So, he built it. From the start, he was unambiguous about what it had to be: not a product from a big-tech company trying to understand an industry it had never worked in. Something different. Something born, built, and backed by aircrew, simple, sleek, and designed around the rhythms of layover life by people who had lived every minute of it, from stateside regionals to long-haul international operations across every ocean.



Never Miss a Crew Connection—know who's on your layover before wheels up.



96 friends to meet. 265 potential rendezvous. Your schedule, your matches, your community.

BUILT FOR PRIVACY FROM DAY ONE

Before a single feature was built, there was a harder question to answer, one that anyone who's spent time on the road already knows is real. How do you create a platform that connects crew members across the globe without turning it into a live tracking tool?

For a lot of potential users, especially flight attendants and female crew members who had legitimate, deeply personal safety concerns about location-sharing apps, that question wasn't secondary. It was the whole conversation. Most existing apps wanted your location. They wanted your full schedule. They wanted your contact details. They wanted to know everything, all the time, and share it broadly. That's not connection. That's surveillance.

Rendezvous was built on the opposite philosophy entirely.

Location Never shared - Rendezvous does not track or broadcast your live location. Ever.

Schedule Never exposed - Your full schedule stays private. Only a layover match triggers visibility - nothing more.

Contact info Never shared - No phone numbers, no email addresses. All communication stays inside the app, on your terms.

Connection Mutual match only - You only appear to someone when you both share the same layover. No browsing. No cold contact.

The logic is elegant in its simplicity. You upload your schedule, but your schedule is never shared. The app works quietly in the background, and the only thing it ever surfaces is a match: you and another crew member are in the same city on the same night. That's it. What happens next is entirely your call. You can reach out through the app, make a plan, or do nothing at all. No one can search for you. No one sees your itinerary. No one has your number. You are only visible to someone else in the one moment when it's actually useful, and only if they're already going to be in the same place.

You're not broadcasting your life. You're just finding out who's already going to be there and deciding for yourself what to do about it.

That privacy-first design holds whether you're based in Atlanta or Amsterdam, flying for a U.S. regional or a Gulf carrier with an international operation that crosses a dozen time zones. The rules don't change by airline, by country, or by crew base. Rendezvous is a global platform, and it treats every user, regardless of carrier, flag, or flag state, with the same standard of privacy and the same fundamental respect for their safety.

THE BIGGER VISION

Here is what the lobby moment in New York was really pointing toward, something far larger than one overnight, one hotel, one missed dinner with an old friend.

The vision behind Rendezvous is to build the professional ecosystem that aviation has always needed and never had: a single global

BACK TO CONTENTS

platform connecting every corner of the industry, from student pilots logging their first hours to 121 captains on their final line check, from regional flight attendants to cabin crew flying widebodies for international carriers across six continents. Every airline. Every role. Every flag. One community.

Student pilots: Find mentors and community from the very first lesson

Regional & domestic crews: Build the cross-airline network that opens doors to the majors

International crews: Connect across carriers and cultures - no borders, no barriers

Flight attendants globally: A professional “home” that crosses every uniform and every continent

Think about what that network means for a first officer at a regional who wants to understand what a career at a Gulf carrier looks like. Or a flight attendant in London trying to connect with cabin crew at carriers she’s hoping to join. Or a student pilot in Lagos who needs a mentor who has walked that exact road before. The aviation community is global by nature. Its people cross borders every single day but its professional network has never reflected that. It has always been fragmented by airline, by country, by whatever Facebook group happened to have the most members that month.

Rendezvous is the answer to all of that. One ecosystem. Simple and sleek. No big tech. No outsiders. No fragmented chats. No compromise on privacy. And no borders because the crews who need it most are often the ones flying furthest from home.

Born from the cockpit and the forward galley. Built to connect every pilot, every flight attendant, and every aviation professional on earth, across every airline, every role, and every time zone, without ever exposing where you are, who you’re flying with, or where you’re headed next.

Aviation has always run on relationships and trust, across every cockpit, every cabin, and every country. Rendezvous is built on both.

It started with a lobby in New York and an old friend who spent an evening alone in one of the world’s great cities. It grew into something much bigger, a conviction that every aviation professional on earth, regardless of what uniform they wear or what flag flies on their tail, deserves a safe, simple, private way to find their community wherever they land.

Hundreds of missed connections. Every trip. In every city. On every continent. That number doesn’t have to stay that way. You’ve already mastered the first two parts of this job, the flying and the landing. Rendezvous takes care of the rest.

About the Organization

Rendezvous is your co-pilot for connection. Designed for pilots, flight attendants, and traveling aircrew, it lets you sync your flight plans and touch down with fellow aviators wherever you land. Read More...

Fly. Land. Connect.

Every airline. Every role. Every country.
gotrendezvous.com // Available now on iOS // Android coming soon

BACK TO CONTENTS

THE PERFECT LIGHT FOR PROFESSIONAL AVIATORS



HANDS FREE | COMPACT | 2.5H RUNTIME



SHOP DEX FINGERLIGHT

Faster and easier, and points light exactly where you need it.

PRODUCT REVIEW

How AVI-8 Brings Different Eras of Aviation to the Wrist

Author: Craig Pieper



Wearing the right watch for when you fly is important. In aviation, readability, durability, and reliability are all important, especially in high pressure situations when you may need to quickly reference the information at a glance.

Over time, however, aviation watches have become closely tied to personal style and the flying culture itself. Some pilots and aviation enthusiasts may prefer cleaner and more professional looking watches, while others gravitate toward tactical styling, military inspired details, or watches that celebrate important moments in aviation history. Because of that, aviation watches are no longer designed with a one-style-fits-all approach. Instead, they often reflect the personality, preferences, and experiences of the people wearing them.

Here is where AVI-8 watches stand out within the aviation watch space. Rather than focusing on one single interpretation of an aviation-inspired watch, AVI-8 creates collections inspired by different aircraft, eras, and personalities connected to flight. Some designs lean heavily into vintage military inspiration, while others take on a more modern or tactical appearance. Certain models place emphasis on functionality and readability, while others focus more on storytelling and heritage. Although all four watches reviewed share clear aviation roots, each one feels distinct in both appearance and personality.

BACK TO CONTENTS



P-51 Mustang Patriot Automatic Tuskegee Airmen 85th Anniversary Limited Edition - Rantoul

The P-51 Mustang Patriot Automatic Tuskegee Airmen 85th Anniversary Limited Edition immediately introduces a more historical and commemorative side of AVI-8's design philosophy. Inspired by the legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen, the watch carries a strong emotional and heritage-driven identity. With its warmer tones, detailed dial, and vintage styling, the watch feels more connected to the early history of military aviation rather than modern combat inspired aesthetics. Instead of aggressively standing out through sharp colors or bold tactical elements, the design feels more refined and respectful toward the aviation history it represents.

That historical focus also changes the type of pilot or aviation enthusiast who may be drawn toward the watch. Rather than feeling like a purely functional tool, the design seems aimed toward collectors and aviation fans who wish to honor the cultural side of flight. The automatic movement further reinforces that traditional approach, helping separate the watch from more modern quartz-based pilot watches that focus primarily on convenience and practicality. The movement choice gives the watch classic mechanical feel that aligns naturally with its historical inspiration.

Even with its detailed design and commemorative identity, the Tuskegee Airmen edition still feels approachable for aviation enthusiasts who want a visually unique pilot watch without entering the luxury watch market. That balance between storytelling, traditional watchmaking, and affordability helps the model stand apart within AVI-8's lineup. While some pilot watches focus almost entirely on utility, this watch demonstrates how aviation-inspired design can also celebrate the people and stories connected to flight history. For many aviation enthusiasts, that emotional connection can be as important as the watch's functionality or appearance.





P-51 Mustang Blakeslee Chronograph – Command Pilot

Compared to the heritage driven approach of the Tuskegee Airmen edition, the P-51 Mustang Blakeslee Chronograph Command Pilot (https://avi-8.com/collections/p-51-mustang/products/p51-mustang-blakeslee-meca-quartz-chronograph-command-pilot-av-4077-01) shifts toward a more functional and traditional military pilot aesthetic. The overall design feels heavily inspired by cockpit instrumentation found in classic military aircraft, particularly through its darker dial, bold numerals, and detailed chronograph layout. While the watch still carries AVI-8's recognizable aviation inspired styling, it places a greater emphasis on readability and practicality than in historic storytelling.

That focus makes the Command Pilot feel especially versatile. For pilots or aviation enthusiasts looking for a watch that can easily transition into everyday wear, the clean and balanced appearance helps the model feel less specialized than some of the company's. The design still maintains strong aviation character but does so in a more restrained and professional way. Rather than demanding attention through aggressive styling choices, the watch relies more on subtle military-inspired details and a practical layout.

Its meca-quartz movement also contributes to that practicality. While automatic (self-winding) movements often appeal to collectors and enthusiasts who enjoy traditional watchmaking, the meca-quartz setup provides a more modern and convenient ownership experience. That combination allows the Command Pilot to maintain the appearance of a classic chronograph while still offering the simplicity and reliability many everyday users appreciate. For pilots who value a balance between aviation-inspired design and daily usability, the Command Pilot offers one of the more straightforward and versatile interpretations within AVI-8's lineup.





P-51 Mustang Blakeslee Chronograph – Legion

Although the P-51 Mustang Blakeslee Chronograph Legion (https://avi-8.com/collections/p-51-mustang/products/p51-mustang-blakeslee-meca-quartz-chronograph-legion-av-4077-11) shares many of the same core features as the Command Pilot, the overall personality of the watch feels noticeably different. The darker tones combined with the red accents immediately create a more aggressive and tactical appearance. Compared to the cleaner and more traditional feel of the Command Pilot, the Legion appears much bolder visually and feels more inspired by modern military equipment and contemporary aviation technology.

Even with the more aggressive styling, the watch still maintains strong readability throughout the dial. The chronograph layout remains detailed, but the contrast between the hands, numerals, and darker background helps preserve the quick readability expected from pilot-inspired watches. That balance between detail and functionality is important because pilot watches have historically prioritized visibility and fast reference points during flight. AVI-8 manages to maintain those characteristics while still giving the Legion a strong visual identity.

The Legion seems aimed toward a slightly different audience within aviation culture than the Command Pilot. While the latter leans toward versatility and traditional styling, the Legion appears more directed toward pilots and aviation enthusiasts who prefer a stronger visual appeal with a more tactical overall appearance. Its sharp design helps the watch immediately stand out while remaining connected to AVI-8's broad military aviation influence.



BACK TO CONTENTS





Hawker Hunter Atlas Dual Time Chronograph – Black Ops

The Hawker Hunter Atlas Dual Time Chronograph Black Ops (https://avi-8.com/collections/hawker-hunter/products/hawker-hunter-atlas-dual-time-chronograph-black-ops-av-4100-04) continues AVI-8's tactical styling while introducing features that feel especially connected to modern aviation travel. Unlike the vintage-inspired P-51 Mustang models, the Black Ops version leans heavily into a stealth contemporary appearance with its dark tones, technical dial design, and sharp styling choices. The watch immediately feels more modern compared to the military heritage influenced identity seen throughout the P-51 collection.

One of the biggest differences introduced by the Black Ops model is the dual-time functionality. For pilots, travelers, or aviation enthusiasts frequently moving between time zones, that feature adds another layer of practicality beyond the standard chronograph layout. Rather than functioning purely as a stylistic aviation accessory, the dual-time display helps the watch be more connected to the realities of modern international travel and long-distance aviation. Additionally, that added functionality gives the watch a technical identity.

Compared to the cleaner layouts seen in some traditional pilot watches, the Black Ops design resembles the advanced instrumentation associated with modern aircraft cockpits. While some aviation enthusiasts may prefer the vintage styling of the P-51 models, others may appreciate the sharper and more contemporary direction taken by the Hawker Hunter Atlas Dual Time Chronograph. The watch feels particularly suited for aviation enthusiasts who enjoy tactical aesthetics, darker color palettes, and travel focused functionality.

Wrap up

Although all four AVI-8 watches share aviation inspired roots, each one approaches pilot-watch design from a different perspective. The Tuskegee Airmen edition emphasizes storytelling, aviation history, and traditional mechanical styling. The Command Pilot focuses more heavily on practicality, versatility, and classic military pilot aesthetics. The Legion introduces a bolder and more aggressive tactical personality while still maintaining the core features of a traditional pilot chronograph. Meanwhile, the Hawker Hunter Atlas Dual Time Chronograph Black Ops shifts toward a more technical and travel focused interpretation of aviation-inspired design.

Together, the collection demonstrates AVI-8's ability to explore multiple sides of aviation culture without making the watches feel repetitive. Rather than creating one universal pilot watch, the brand offers different styles that connect to different personalities, experiences, and interests within the aviation world. Some pilots and collectors may be drawn toward heritage and historical storytelling, while others may prioritize tactical styling, readability, or modern travel functionality.

Thank you to AVI-8 Watches for the opportunity to review and compare these pieces. For pilots, collectors, and aviation enthusiasts alike, the collection provides several unique ways to bring aviation-inspired style into everyday wear. Happy flying in style!



About the Publisher

Craig Pieper is the Publisher and Founder of Aero Crew News. Craig obtained his Bachelors of Science in Aeronautical Science, along with a minor in Aviation Weather, from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in 2001. Craig is also a captain for a major airline with a...Read More





SKYLAW

Understanding How Weight-Loss Drugs Can Impact Your Medical

Written by: Ethan Barnes

GLP-1 medications have rapidly become one of the most significant developments in obesity treatment in decades. Many patients achieve substantial weight loss, often with improvements in blood pressure, lowering of cardiovascular risk factors, and lessened sleep apnea symptoms.

To stay with the times, the Federal Aviation Administration has quietly modernized its approach to weight-loss treatment and medical certification as medications like Wegovy®, Ozempic®, and Zepbound® have become increasingly common among pilots and other aviation professionals.

The FAA's updated "Weight Loss Management" disposition guidance now provides a clearer certification pathway for many applicants. The distinction between receiving an immediate issuance and facing an FAA deferral may now come down to a few important factors: is the prescribed medication acceptable to the FAA, are you taking a combination of medicines, or just one, and have you ever been diagnosed with diabetes.

The FAA's Three-Tier Weight-Loss Framework

Under the FAA's March 2024 Weight Loss Management disposition table, applicants fall into three primary categories based on their treatment method. It is important to note that if you have been diagnosed with diabetes, the FAA will instead evaluate you under its diabetes certification protocols, which carry significantly stricter requirements.

Lifestyle Modification and OTC Treatment
Pilots using diet, exercise, behavioral modification, or approved over-the-counter medications (Orlistat, also known as Alli®) generally face the least scrutiny during the medical certification process.

If your Aviation Medical Examiner (AME) determines your condition is stable, symptoms are controlled, and there are no medication side effects that could impair safe operation of an aircraft, the AME may issue the medical certificate during the exam.

One Prescription Medication
The FAA's current guidance is particularly important for pilots using a single GLP-1 medication for weight management.

Under the agency's Conditions AMEs Can Issue (CACI) pathway, pilots taking one qualifying non-insulin diabetic medication component may still receive their medical certificate directly from the AME without FAA deferral.

Common medications in this category include:

- Semaglutide (Wegovy/Ozempic)
- Tirzepatide (Zepbound/Mounjaro®)
- Liraglutide
- Metformin

To qualify for same-day issuance, the FAA requires several conditions be met:

- A current, detailed clinical progress note from your treating physician that meets FAA specifications
- Hemoglobin A1c testing within the previous 90 days
- An A1c below diabetic thresholds (6.4% or lower)
- No significant medication side effects
- No episodes of hypoglycemia requiring assistance

The FAA also requires observation periods before pilots may resume flying duties after starting or adjusting medication dosages. These waiting periods are intended to ensure pilots do not experience side effects that could affect aeromedical performance. Typically, the FAA requires a two-week observation after starting the medication, and a 48-hour observation for dosage changes.

When Certification Becomes More Complicated
The FAA draws a much firmer line once a pilot begins taking two or more diabetic-type medication components simultaneously.

Examples could include:

- Metformin combined with Wegovy
- Zepbound combined with another glucose-management medication
- Multiple GLP-1 agents prescribed together

In these situations, AMEs are generally required to defer the application to the FAA for possible Special Issuance (SI) consideration.

That process may require:

- A detailed clinical progress note
- A Weight Loss Management Status Report
- Documentation explaining the reason for treatment
- Clarification regarding any history of diabetes

Unlike CACI issuance, deferred cases often involve longer review timelines and additional FAA oversight.

Aeromedically Unacceptable Weight Loss Medications

Not all medications that are prescribed for weight loss are acceptable for FAA medical certification. Currently, all FDA approved GLP-1 Agonists (Ozempic, Wegovy, Zepbound, etc.) are acceptable. However, the class of drugs known as “Sympathomimetics” are prohibited. Sympathomimetic drugs are stimulants, prescribed to suppress appetite, and aid in short term weight loss. Common forms of Sympathomimetic drugs are benzphetamine (Regimex®), diethylpropion (Tenuate®, Tempanil®), phendimetrazine (Bontril®), phentermine (Adipex®, Fastin®).

What Pilots Should Do Before Starting Medication

Should you decide to pursue weight loss through medication, keep the following in mind:

- Only certain medications are acceptable for FAA medical certification
- Understand observation requirements
- Keep documentation organized
- Monitor side effects carefully

Airman should consult with their AME before beginning any prescription weight-loss medication and possibly speak with an aviation attorney.

If you need assistance protecting your FAA medical certificate, you may want to reach out to Ramos Law to request a consultation with an aviation attorney.



About the Author

Ethan Barnes, Esq. is an aviation attorney at Ramos Law in Broomfield, Colorado. Ethan currently practices medical-certificate defense... Read More...







How To Set Better Boundaries

Written By: Reini Thijssen

Do you often feel overstimulated, or as if life is happening to you rather than with you? Many people recognize that feeling, and some thoughts that might come up are the following:

"I am constantly busy, but I don't know what I actually want for myself."
"Everyone seems to need something from me."
"By the end of the day, my head feels full, like there's no space left."
"Some conversations leave me completely depleted."

Setting boundaries is not easy. In fact, many people have no clear sense of where their personal boundaries actually are. We blame demanding family members, insensitive coworkers, or a society that never seems to switch off. And yes, all of those play a role.

However, the frustration and resentment usually start somewhere else—not knowing what you want.

Boundaries vs. Rules vs. Assertiveness

Boundaries are about defining your own personal space, limits, and needs. They communicate what you are comfortable with and what you are not willing to tolerate in a relationship. Healthy boundaries protect your well-being and preserve your sense of self while staying connected to others.

Rules are attempts to control or restrict another person's behavior. When one partner imposes rules, it can undermine autonomy and create power imbalances. Rules are often enforced with consequences or punishments, which can lead to fear, resistance, or resentment rather than mutual respect.

Assertiveness is the communication skill that allows boundaries to be expressed clearly and respectfully. It is the ability to state your needs, preferences, and limits without aggression or passivity. Boundaries define *what you need*; assertiveness is *how you communicate it*.

Beliefs

Boundaries are very personal, and they are rarely the same for everyone else. Often, there is an underlying belief that makes it difficult to protect your boundaries properly. For example, you may believe that setting boundaries:

- Causes conflict or confrontation
- Damages relationships/friendships
- Should not be necessary
- Makes you "difficult."
- Is not possible, because these things are "expected" from you

We often do not consider that:

- The other person may actually appreciate and respect you for being clear
- Communicating boundaries creates clarity about where you both stand
- Clear expectations reduce misunderstandings and resentment
- Others may not hold the expectations you assume they do
- Healthy relationships can handle honesty

Rarely do we consciously notice when something happens near or crosses our personal boundary. Instead, we suddenly feel irritated, angry, or defensive. We are surprised by our own response, without realizing what actually happened.

Meanwhile, we are eroding our boundaries daily. We (overshare) online, mix work and private life, and grow accustomed to constant availability. Transparency is praised, accessibility is expected. Fully visible, always available have become the norm.

The Garden Metaphor

A helpful way to understand boundaries is through the metaphor of a garden. It is a modern therapeutic metaphor that organically developed in psychology and has been popularized by multiple writers and therapists.

Your thoughts, feelings, memories, beliefs, and experiences are alive and constantly changing, much like a garden. Some areas feel calm and nourishing. Other areas may be overgrown, neglected, or shaped by old ideas that no longer fit who you are now.

That garden is you. Around your garden is a fence, a hedge, a wall, or maybe nothing at all. You most likely do not want everyone wandering through your garden without your permission, seeing everything that grows there 24/7. And you would not want others throwing their frustrations, opinions, or emotional burdens into it. Often however, that is exactly what happens.

When people begin to pay attention to their boundaries, they start noticing how that fence is shaped. Is it high or low? Solid or full of gaps? Is the gate always open, or tightly locked? And is it that way by choice, or by habit?

Many of us carry beliefs planted early in life: that others always come first, that it is better not to be difficult, that saying no is selfish. Over time, these ideas lower the fence and keep the gate open until exhaustion sets in.

By becoming aware of this, boundary-setting becomes more intentional and less reactive. You can decide when there is enough space to open the gate and welcome someone in, and when it needs to stay closed. Not because you do not care, but because you *do* care.

Awareness

Practical awareness helps. Writing down moments when your boundary is (almost) crossed can be revealing. Noting when a family member turns every morning into an emotional debrief or a coworker who comments on your appearance can be helpful. Seeing it on paper shows how often it happens, and how much energy it costs.

Awareness and strengthening your boundaries do not just affect you. When your fence becomes more solid, others tend to adjust. People are less likely to overstep, to unload, or to demand without thinking.

There is another important side to this. As you become more aware of your own boundary, you might also begin to notice how easily you might cross others'. Boundary awareness is not only about protecting your own space, but it is also about respecting the space of others. Knocking before entering the gate, instead of stepping over the fence.

Important note: Boundary awareness is not about control or becoming rigid or distant. It is about creating enough time and space to breathe, choose, and connect without resentment. A well-tended garden is not closed off from the world; it simply has a fence, a gate, and the other person who knows how and when to open it.

Exercise 1: Practice Setting Boundaries with DESC

This exercise helps you convert frustration into a clear (professional) boundary using the DESC model. Boundaries are about protecting focus, performance, and well-being, not correcting someone else.

Step 1: Identify the Irritation (Awareness)
Think of a recent example:

- A colleague vents loudly about a difficult flight or checkride
- Repeated interruptions during flight planning
- Extended non-essential conversation during preflight

Saying, *"You seem really stressed,"* is not a boundary; that comments on them. A boundary clarifies what you need.

Ask yourself: What do I need?

- Do I need a calm preflight environment to focus?
- Do I need quiet during flight planning?
- Do I need mental space before a simulator session?

Write down:

- The situation:
- What actually matters to me in this moment:

Step 2: Build Your Boundary Using DESC
In this statement, there is no accusation or diagnosing their stress; it is all clear communication. Now structure your boundary:

D – Describe (neutral, factual)
"When preflight conversations turn into extended venting..."

E – Express the impact
"...it makes it harder for me to concentrate on preparing for departure."

S – Specify your need
"I need a quieter environment so I can focus properly."

C – Consequence / next step
"If that is not possible, I will prepare in a different space."

It becomes the following statement: *"When preflight conversations turn into extended venting, it makes it harder for me to focus on departure prep. I need a quieter environment to concentrate. If that is not possible, I will prepare in a different space."*

Step 3: Communicate Kindly and From Your Perspective
The other person does not have to fully understand your need; what matters is that they respect it. Look for a solution that works for both of you. For example: "I work best if I can prep quietly before departure. Would you be okay catching up about that later during cruise or after landing?"

Step 4: Avoid Debating
If the other person responds with: "I'm not even that stressed." That is a defensive reaction, and that is okay. It is not your responsibility to manage their discomfort. Stay grounded and repeat your need: "For me, it's really helpful to have a calm morning so I can focus." You can add: "Would that work for you?" You are not arguing about whether they are stressed; you are protecting your performance environment.

Step 5. Do Not Minimize Your Needs
Avoid (internal) statements like: "Maybe I am just being sensitive." "It is probably not a big deal." You are allowed to have limitations. If you diminish your own need, you undermine your own standard.

Boundary Checklist
Before or after communicating, ask yourself:

- Is my boundary concrete and specific? Example: "I want a quiet preflight briefing."
- Did I communicate it clearly and without blame?
- Is it realistic and something the other person can reasonably respect?
- Is my consequence a boundary (what I will do), not a punishment?

Reflection Practice

At the end of each day, reflect:

- In what situation did I need a boundary?
- What boundary was important to me?
- Did I communicate a boundary, or just comment on what annoyed me?
- How did I protect it? What did I say or do?
- If I did not protect it, what would I do differently next time?

Exercise 2: Explore Beliefs + Reframe

As mentioned earlier, oftentimes we have beliefs about setting boundaries. In this exercise, you identify and challenge the hidden beliefs that keep you from setting healthy boundaries.

Step 1: Identify a Recent Situation

Think of a recent moment in which you:

- Said yes but meant no
- Felt resentful
- Overextended yourself
- Avoided speaking up

Write down:

- What happened
- What you wanted to say
- What you actually said

Step 2: Identify the Underlying Belief

Complete this sentence:

"If I set a boundary, then _____."

Common examples:

- "...they will be upset."
- "...I will disappoint them."
- "...I look selfish."
- "...they won't not like me anymore."

Step 3: Reality Testing

Ask yourself:

- What actual evidence do I have that this will happen?
- What is another possible outcome?
- How might a secure and confident version of me interpret this situation?

Step 4: Reframe

Replace the belief with a balanced alternative:

- "People can tolerate disappointment."
- "Clarity strengthens relationships."
- "I am allowed to have boundaries."

This exercise builds awareness that boundaries are blocked more by belief than by circumstance.

Exercise 3: Practice Setting Boundaries

Boundaries improve with repetition, like strength training. With this exercise, you can work on your "boundary muscle" through practice in safe situations.

Step 1: Choose Low-Stakes Opportunities

Start small:

- Decline a store mailing list.
- Say, "Let me check my calendar and get back to you."
- Ask for a different table at a restaurant.
- Request clarification in a meeting.

Step 2: Keep It Short

Practice this structure:

"I'm not able to ___, but I can ___."

"That doesn't work for me."

"I need ___ in order to ___."

Keep it short. No over-explaining and thank them for being accommodating.

Step 3: Notice the Aftermath

After you set the boundary, reflect:

- What actually happened?
- Did the feared outcome occur?
- How did it feel to do that?
- Most people discover:
- The reaction is neutral or respectful
- The anxiety was worse than the reality
- Confidence increases with repetition

Final Thoughts

Setting healthy boundaries can feel uncomfortable at first, especially if you are used to prioritizing others or avoiding conflict. However, boundaries are not selfish; they are essential for emotional health, self-respect, and sustainable connection.

If you find it difficult to identify or communicate your boundaries, or if relationship patterns repeatedly leave you feeling drained or resentful, seeking support from a licensed mental health professional can be helpful. Emerald Mental Health provides a safe space to explore your needs, strengthen assertiveness skills, and build healthier relationship dynamics over time.

Reach out to reini@emeraldmentalhealth.com or visit emeraldmentalhealth.com .

Resources

Alberti, R. E., & Emmons, M. L. (2017). *Your perfect right: Assertiveness and equality in your life and relationships* (10th ed.). New Harbinger Publications.

Drescher, A. (2024, November 15). *Boundaries vs. rules*. Simply Psychology. https://www.simplypsychology.org/boundaries-vs-rules.html

WorkMotion. (2023, May 2). *The DESC feedback model*. WorkMotion. https://workmotion.com/academy-post/the-desc-feedback-model



About the Author

Reini Thijssen is a licensed mental health counselor (LMHC, LPC) and a certified life coach specializing in supporting pilots and individuals in high-demand professions both within and outside of aviation. She has been a writer for Aero Crew News since 2019 and covers various aviation-related topics... Read More...



The Real Reason Your Neck, Back and Hips Never Stop Hurting



Written By: Scott Darragh

You've tried everything—the neck rolls between legs, the hip flexor stretch in the hotel room, the foam roller you packed in your crew bag that adds three pounds to your carry-on. Every two weeks, you visit the chiropractor who gives you thirty minutes of relief before the next four-day trip undoes all of it. You stretch. You get adjusted. You take something for the pain. And then you sit back down in that seat—cockpit, jump seat, passenger cabin—and within an hour you're right back to where you started.

If this is you, I want to tell you something that took me years to understand and that most fitness professionals still won't say out loud: **Stretching a tight muscle is one of the worst things you can do for it.** And the tightness you feel in your neck, your hips, and your lower back almost certainly has nothing to do with the muscle being short.

Why Muscles Get Tight

Here is what actually happens when a muscle becomes chronically tight: your nervous system is constantly monitoring your body for instability. It is running a silent background check every second of every day scanning joints, assessing load, evaluating whether your body is safe to move through space.

When it finds a weak link—a muscle that isn't strong enough to do its job—it responds by locking down the surrounding tissue. It creates tension. It essentially puts a brace around the problem area to protect you from injury. That tension is what you feel as tightness.

Your neck is tight because the deep stabilizers that hold your head over your spine are weak. Your hip flexors are tight because your glutes aren't doing their job. Your lower back is screaming because your core isn't providing the stability your spine needs to feel safe. **The tightness is not the problem. It is the symptom.** This is your nervous system doing exactly what it is supposed to do—protecting a weak area by making it feel locked up.

Why Stretching Makes It Worse

When you stretch a tight muscle, you get relief. Sometimes significant relief. For twenty minutes, an hour, maybe the rest of the day you feel better. But here is what you did not do—you did not make the muscle stronger. You did not address the instability that caused the nervous system to brace in the first place.

The next time you sit for four hours in a pressurized tube at altitude—with your pelvis tilted forward, your shoulders rounded, your head pushed slightly in front of your spine — the nervous system runs its check again, finds the same weakness, and locks everything back down. You are not making progress. You are managing symptoms on a loop.

Plus, in some cases you are actively making things worse. Repeatedly lengthening a muscle that your nervous system has already identified as unstable can increase the perception of threat and trigger even more protective tension over time. Stretching feels productive. For chronic tightness rooted in weakness, it is mostly a distraction from the actual fix.

What Really Works

The fix is almost always the same: strengthen the muscle that is supposed to be doing the job the tight muscle is compensating for.

Tight neck and upper traps? The real weakness is almost always in the deep neck flexors and lower trapezius—the muscles responsible for keeping your head stacked over your spine. Stretch the neck all you want. Until those muscles can hold your head up without strain, the tightness will return every single time you sit for a living.

Tight hip flexors? For most crew, the real culprit is weak glutes. Your glutes are the primary hip extensors. When they are not strong enough to do that job, your hip flexors take over—and they stay in a constant low-grade contraction to compensate. You can

stretch your hip flexors twice a day for the rest of your career. If your glutes stay weak, the tightness stays too.

Tight lower back? This one is almost always a core stability issue. The muscles of the deep core—not your six pack but the deeper stabilizing layer—are responsible for protecting your lumbar spine under load. When they are weak or not firing correctly, your lower back muscles brace to compensate. That chronic ache that follows you off the plane is not a flexibility problem. It is a stability problem.

What To Do About It

The good news is that this is fixable. And it does not require hours in the gym or a complex program. It requires three things consistently:
First, stop stretching as your primary solution. Use movement to warm up. Use gentle mobility work to feel better in the short term. But stop expecting stretching to solve a strength problem.

Second, identify the actual weak link. For most crew members it is one of three places: the posterior shoulder and lower trap, the glutes and hip stabilizers, or the deep core. A simple functional assessment will tell you exactly where your weak link is.

Third, train the weakness directly. Face pulls, dead bugs, glute bridges, Pallof presses, single-leg work—none of these are glamorous. All of them work. Done consistently two to three times per week they will change the chronic pain pattern most crew members have normalized as just part of the job.

The Bottom Line

Your body is not broken. It is not aging poorly. It is not just the nature of this career. Your nervous system is protecting weak tissue. It has been doing it for years. And every time you stretched instead of strengthened, you gave it temporary relief without ever addressing the reason it braced in the first place.

The neck pain, the hip tightness, the lower back that never fully resolves—these are not inevitable consequences of flying for a living. They are a training problem, and training problems have training solutions. Stop stretching what is tight. Start strengthening what is weak. Your body will figure out the rest.



About the Author

Scott Darragh is an MSP-based 737 airline captain, former U.S. Army helicopter pilot, aviation officer, who holds a BS in history and journalism from Washington State University. Read More...

LOSE FAT BEFORE YOU LOSE YOUR MEDICAL

JET SET TRAINER

YOUR AVERAGE TRAINER DOESN'T WORK REDEYES...

WE DO.

VISIT JETSETTRAINER.COM

AND LOSE 1-2LBS A WEEK





Culture, Compensation, and Safety

Written By: Christopher M. Broyhill, PhD, CAM Fellow, CCP

Recently, I was asked to speak to the National Safety Roundtable, an event that occurs the day before the Flight Safety Foundation's annual Business Aviation Safety Seminar. The gentleman who asked me to speak is a former client who sits on the board, and he was keenly interested in my ideas on the correlation between compensation and safety. I agreed to speak on that topic, thinking that I could easily generate a presentation that would capture those ideas in just a few minutes. Instead, I had a bit of an epiphany—an epiphany dealing with the relationship between organizational culture, compensation, and safety. Let me walk you through it.

First, let's look at the metaphor I've been using to capture the relationship between organizational culture, compensation, and leadership since I've been speaking on those subjects.



Figure 1 – The Classic Retention Metaphor

Makes sense, right? If personnel retention is the stool, then organizational culture, quality of life, and compensation are the legs, and the whole thing rests on the foundation of leadership. For years, I have believed this picture captures the relationship between these areas. But, as I thought through that relationship, especially as I focused on the compensation piece, a different relationship emerged.

Organizational Culture

To start the discussion, let's examine the topic of organizational culture. (I would strongly argue that if someone aspires to lead an organization, let alone an aviation organization, a knowledge of how organizational culture works is crucial.) While entire books have been written on organizational culture, perhaps the best academic definition comes from Edgar Schein:

> *The culture of a group can be defined as the accumulated shared learning of that group as it solves its problems of external adaptation and internal integration; which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, feel, and behave in relation to those problems. This accumulated learning is a pattern or system of beliefs, values, and behavioral norms that come to be taken for granted as basic assumptions and eventually drop out of awareness* (Schein, 2017, p. 6).

The working definition is simply: "The way we do things around here." But what does that look like?

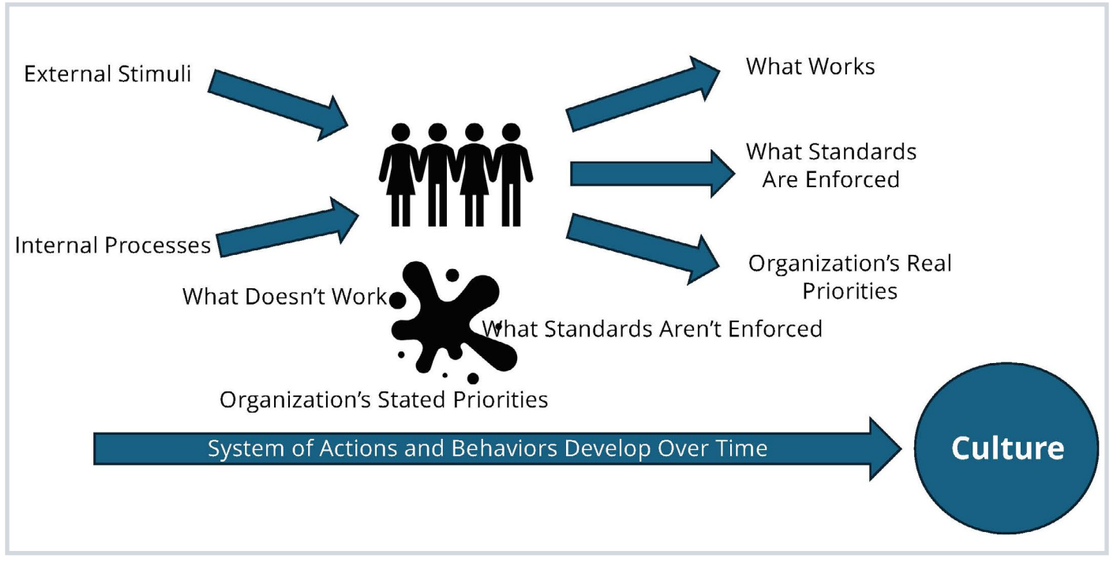


Figure 2 – The Way Culture Works

BACK TO CONTENTS

Organizational culture is formed based on what works, what standards are enforced, and what the organization's real priorities are. You'll notice that there is no qualification of whether those elements are good or bad. That's irrelevant. It's about what works, what people actually do, what they have learned to do within the context of the organization. Sometimes, those elements can be good, and they can make the organization perform better. Other times, those elements can be bad, or even toxic, and destroy the organization.

How is an organization guided in the decision of what works? Well, as you might imagine, it's all about leadership.

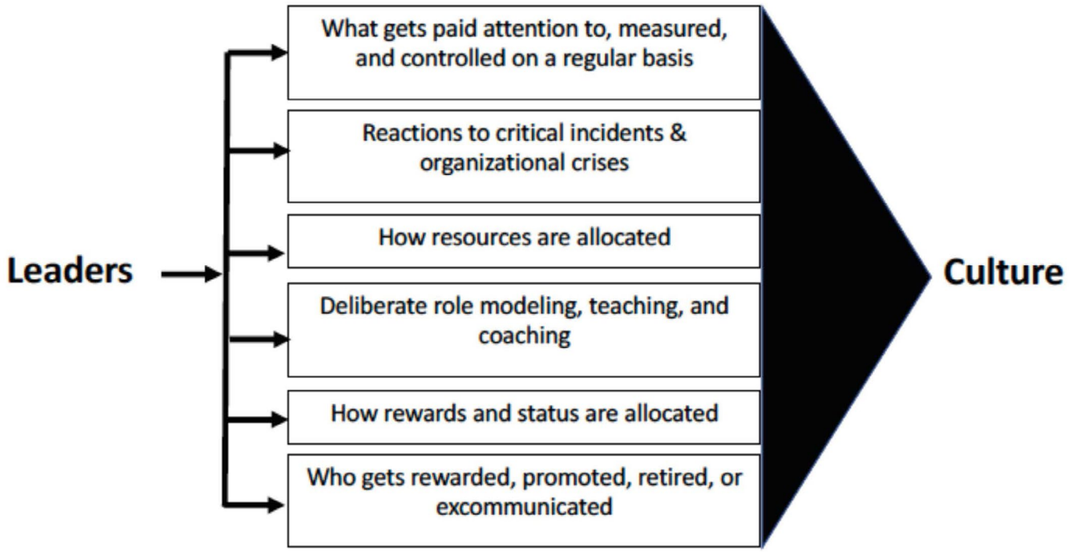


Figure 3 – The Impact of Leadership on Organizational Culture

Schein says, "Culture creation and management are the essence of leadership and make you realize that leadership and culture are two sides of the same coin" (Schein, 2010, p. 3). We see that manifested in Figure 3. In a leader's day-to-day actions and words, organizational culture is formed, reinforced, and inculcated. If you're in a leadership position, your subordinates are watching *everything* you do, and they are listening to *everything* you say.

Safety Culture and Retention

From organizational culture, we move to safety culture. Since many of the elements of safety culture are embedded in organizational culture, an organization's safety culture directly reflects its overall culture (Broyhill, 2016). And here's where the retention piece fits into the puzzle.

A deliberate effort to retain personnel not only reflects a healthy organizational culture but also reflects a healthy safety culture. Why is retention a key element? Because keeping the same people working together in an organization reduces variables within that operation. The interactions between personnel remain constant because the team knows how to work together within the organization's culture. Conversely, personnel turnover introduces variables into the organizational culture which can disrupt it, adversely affecting the safety culture embedded in it.

Compensation as a Cultural Indicator

The decision not to pay competitive compensation rarely occurs in isolation. In fact, when we examine the top excuses organizations use to justify not increasing compensation (excuses we've discussed in previous articles), we can see that they stem from leadership/cultural issues.

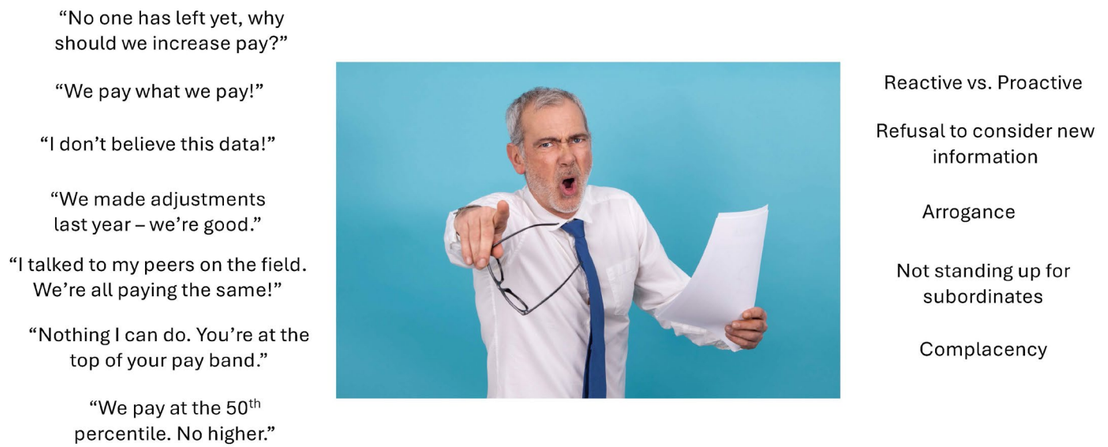


Figure 4 – Reasons to Deny Compensation as Leadership/Cultural Issues

Further, an organization which has a cultural issue with paying competitive compensation will probably have a cultural issue with paying more for safety-related programs like safety education, IS-BAO, FOQA, etc. Put bluntly, cheap organizations are usually cheap across the board, not just in one area. FlightSafety International has maintained for years that "the best safety device in any aircraft is a well-trained pilot." I would add that "the best safety investment you can make is to retain your personnel by paying them competitively."

You might be asking where the epiphany is in all of this. That is a function of the figure below.

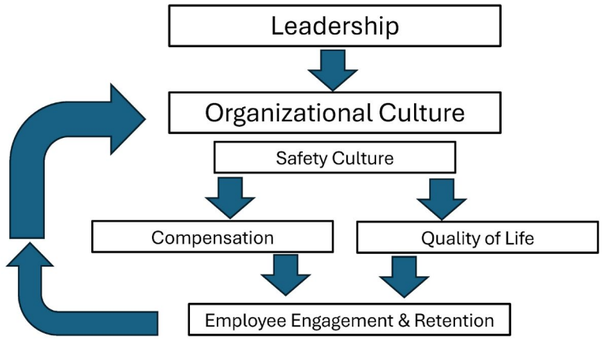


Figure 5 – The New Retention Diagram

What dawned on me as I put these thoughts together (granted, they could do with a little refinement) is that my three-legged stool model did not accurately reflect the way the retention equation works. That reality is reflected in Figure 5. Leadership drives the organizational culture and the safety culture, that, in turn, drive compensation and quality of life. Compensation and quality of life drive employee engagement and retention, which directly affect the organizational and safety cultures. If the retention is good, the organizational culture remains stable. If retention is bad, the organizational culture, and the safety culture with it, are degraded.

What's the takeaway from all of this? When a leader/an organization is setting priorities for safety dollars, the first investment, in fact, the best investment, is simple. Pay people competitively. The rest will take care of itself.

Bibliography

Broyhill, C. (2016). *The Effects of IS-BAO Implementation and Leadership Performance on Safety Culture in Business Aviation Flight Operations.* Daytona Beach: Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University.

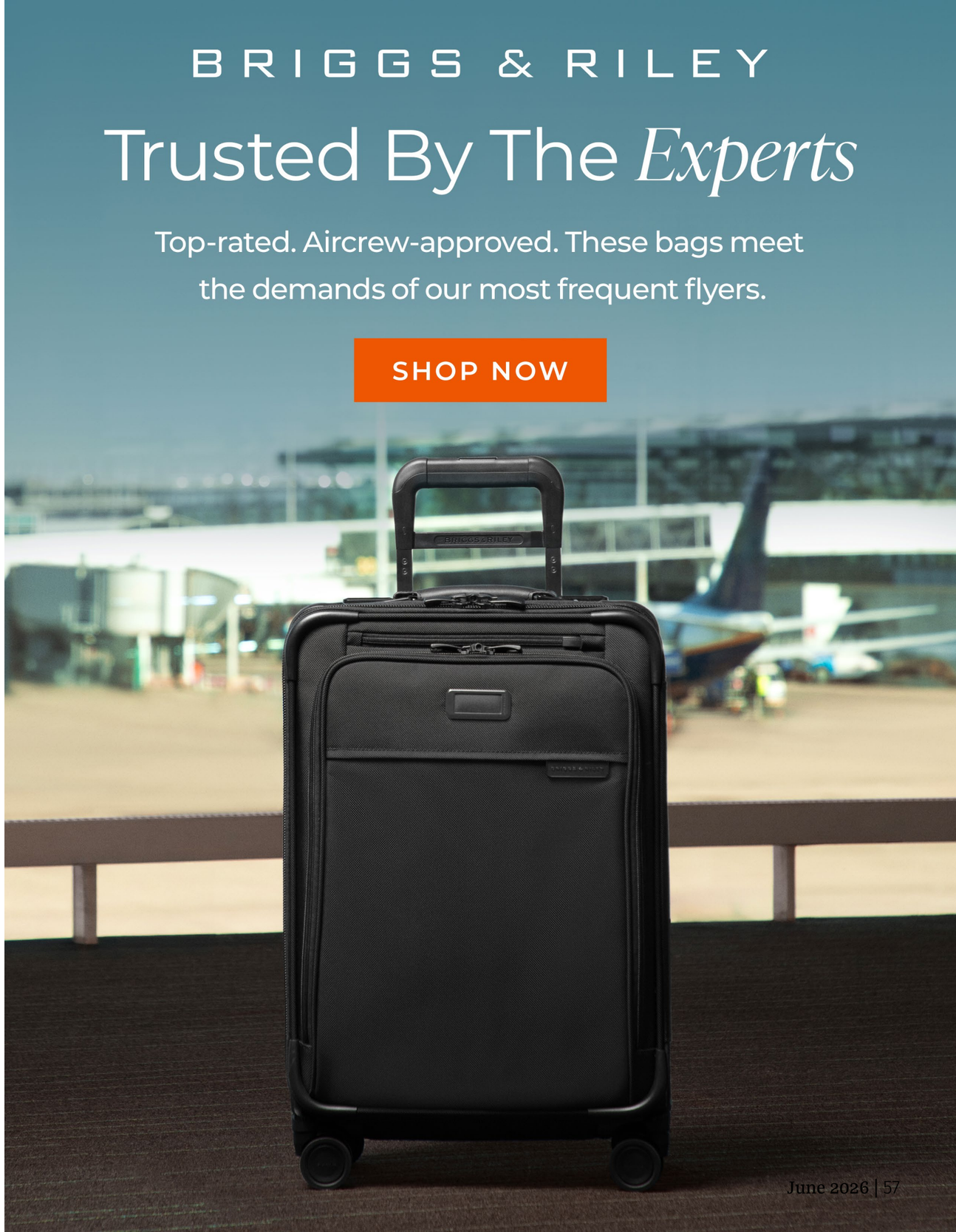
Schein, E. (2010). *Organizational Culture and Leadership.* San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons.

Schein, E. (2017). *Organizational Culture and Leadership.* Hoboken, N.J. : John Wiley & Sons.



About the Author

Dr. Chris Broyhill is an industry veteran with over 40 years in aviation. He graduated from the United States Air Force Academy in 1982, served with distinction for over 20 years in the Air Force and flew multiple aircraft. Read More...



MORTGAGE

The Upgrade Effect: What a Captain Upgrade, Airline Switch, or Equipment Change Does to Your Mortgage—*And How to Fly Through It*



Editorial photo credit: GingChen / Shutterstock.com

Written by: Spencer Wartman

Congratulations are in order. You just got the call… captain upgrade, new airline, new equipment, new domicile. Whatever the specific change, your income is about to look significantly different. For most pilots, that kind of news triggers two thoughts almost simultaneously: *this is great*, and *I should probably buy a house*.

Both of those thoughts are likely valid. The problem is that acting on the second one at the wrong moment—or without the right preparation—can turn what should be a smooth approach into a go-around at the worst possible time. Let's discuss how the mortgage industry reads pilot income during a pay transition, why it matters, and how to time your move so the math works in your favor.

Why Pay Transitions Create Mortgage Problems

The mortgage industry is built on one core concept: the ability to verify stable, predictable income. For salaried employees, this is easy—two years of W-2s, two months of pay stubs, done. For airline pilots, it has never been that simple, and a pay transition makes the documentation picture even more complex.

Here is what most pilots don't realize until they're already under contract on a home: underwriters typically look backward just as much as forward. They want to see what you *have* earned as well as what you *will* earn. And when you are in the middle of a pay transition—upgrading from first officer to captain, switching from a regional to a major, or moving from one equipment type to a higher pay rate—your recent pay history may not reflect where your income stands today, or will stand soon.

This creates a documentation gap that can affect your qualifying income, your debt-to-income ratio, and in some cases, whether you are approved at all.

The Four Transition Scenarios I See Most Often

1. The Captain Upgrade or Year Two
This is the most common scenario I encounter. A first officer hits year two or upgrades to captain, pay jumps significantly, and they want to buy a new home to match their new life. Completely reasonable, and the good news is that the mortgage process does not have to take as long as most pilots assume. Lenders who know what they're doing can have you prequalified before that new captain paycheck arrives but will need one full pay stub reflecting your captain rate before the loan can close. You don't need six months of history at the new income level. You don't need to wait a year. One complete paycheck showing your actual captain earnings is what gets us to the closing table. That said, this rule is specific to the pay stub itself—unlike a new hire situation, a letter from your chief pilot or HR confirming a pending upgrade is not enough to use for qualifying purposes. This is why I tell pilots approaching an upgrade to contact me early so we can get the prequalification process started, then close as soon as that first captain stub hits.

BACK TO CONTENTS

2. The Airline Switch
Moving from one carrier to another—whether it is from regional to major, from major to a different major, or any lateral move—is treated as a future income scenario, not a current income situation. That is the key distinction between a carrier switch and a captain upgrade. You do not need a pay stub from the new airline to qualify. What you need is a final job offer letter that includes your class date and your expected salary. With that letter in hand, we can qualify you on that future income as long as closing falls within 60 days of your class date. The critical word is *final*. A conditional offer—one that is still pending background checks, drug screening, or PRIA clearance, does not meet the standard. It must be the real thing, unconditional and confirmed. Once you have that letter, reach out immediately. The 60-day window from your class date moves fast, especially when you factor in how long it takes to find a home, go under contract, and work through the loan process. The earlier in that window we start, the better your options.

That said, if you plan to close AFTER starting at the new airline, we do need to see a pay stub from the new carrier before closing—so while the offer letter gets you approved, the paycheck must be in hand by closing day.

3. The Equipment Change
Moving to a higher-paying equipment type at the same airline is treated the same way as a captain upgrade. We need to see the new pay stub before closing—but just like the upgrade scenario, we can start the prequalification process before that stub arrives. One complete paycheck reflecting your new equipment pay is what gets us to closing. No offer letter, no waiting period, no income averaging. Because your employer hasn't changed and your employment history stays intact, the documentation picture is clean. Get in touch early, get the process started, and we close once that first stub at the new rate is in hand.

4. The Domicile Change That Triggers a Move
Sometimes it isn't about pay at all—it is about geography. A domicile change or the decision to finally move closer to base can put you in the market suddenly. If your pay is stable and you don't have any of the above transitions happening simultaneously, this is usually the cleanest mortgage scenario for a pilot. But if you're also in the middle of upgrading or switching carriers at the same time you're buying near a new domicile, you are stacking complexity—and you need a lender who can work through all of it in one file.

The Timing Playbook: When to Buy

Here is how I advise pilots who ask me when to pull the trigger on a home purchase relative to a pay transition—and what documentation you need at each stage:

New hire or airline switch—closing within 60 days of your class date: Both of these are treated as future income scenarios. If you have a final, unconditional offer letter that includes your class date and your expected salary, we can qualify you on that future income—as long as closing falls within 60 days of that class date. It must be final and unconditional; a conditional offer pending background checks, drug screening, or PRIA clearance does not meet the standard. And because 60 days goes quickly once you factor in home search, contract, and loan processing, the time to call is the day that final letter arrives.

You do not need a pay stub from the new carrier to get approved, but you do need to have one in hand if you CLOSE AFTER STARTING THE NEW JOB.

Captain upgrade, year two or equipment change—paystub required before closing: Because you are not starting a new job, the future income rule does not apply to either of these scenarios. We can begin the prequalification process before that first paycheck at the new rate arrives, but we need one complete pay stub in hand before we can close. No 12-month seasoning, no second or third check required—just that one full stub. So, the move is to contact the lender early, start the process, and close once that paycheck lands.

VA Loan Considerations for Veteran Pilots in Transition

If you are a veteran pilot eligible for the VA loan benefit—and a significant portion of airline pilots are—pay transitions do not change your fundamental eligibility for the program. You still have access to zero down payment, no monthly mortgage insurance, and the VA's favorable qualifying guidelines. What does change is the income documentation picture, which applies to VA loans just as it applies to conventional financing.

One additional consideration specific to VA loans: if you are buying a new home but do not plan to sell your current home before closing, your entitlement situation needs to be carefully evaluated. If your existing home was purchased with a VA loan that has not been paid off or assumed, a portion of your entitlement is still tied to that property. Depending on your remaining entitlement and the loan amount you need, you may still be able to use your VA benefit on the new purchase—but the math matters, and it can determine whether a down payment is required and how much. This is not a reason to avoid the VA loan; it is a reason to have that conversation early so we can structure the transaction correctly from the start.

The Bottom Line

Buying a home during a pay transition is not impossible and is common. But it requires early planning, the right documentation strategy, and a lender who understands how airline pay actually works—not just what it looks like on a standard W-2.
The most expensive mistake I see pilots make is waiting until they are already under contract on a home before talking to a lender about their specific situation. By that point, the timeline is compressed and the options are limited. The conversation I want to have with you is the one that happens *before* you find the house—when there's still room to plan the approach, set up your documentation

correctly, and time the application to your advantage.

Whether you are six months from an upgrade, just accepted a CJO at a new carrier, or sitting at a new domicile trying to figure out if now is the right time to buy near base, talk to a lender who knows what they're doing to help you work through the math.

Spencer Wartman (NMLS #2109932) is a Loan Originator at Trident Home Loans (Equal Housing Lender, NMLS #65716), a veteran-owned and operated mortgage lender. Spencer is a USAF veteran, a current Lieutenant Colonel in the Missouri Air National Guard, and a UPS MD-11 First Officer. He holds the CVLS designation and is a NAMB Top Veteran Loan Originator (TVLO). He specializes in VA loans and airline pilot mortgages and has been writing for Aero Crew News as part of his ongoing series helping pilots build smarter financial flight plans. Contact Spencer at spencer@mythl.com or visit spencerattrident.com. Trident Home Loans corporate office: 6723 Plantation Rd, Pensacola, FL 32504. Toll-free: (877) 874-3368.

Trident Home Loans, NMLS ID 65716, Corporate Office located at 6723 Plantation Rd, Pensacola, FL 32504. Any offers or advertisements for mortgage products on our website or other platforms are subject to conditional approval. The actual terms and conditions of a mortgage loan, including interest rates, loan amounts, and eligibility, are dependent upon several factors, including the borrower's creditworthiness. Trident Home Loans reserves the right to modify or revoke any offer, and final approval is contingent upon the completion of a full application, verification of information provided, and meeting all underwriting requirements. For information regarding our licensing, you can visit our website at www.Tridenthomeloans.com.Trident Home Loans is an Equal Housing Lender. Please note that this disclaimer is provided for informational purposes and may be subject to updates or changes in accordance with regulatory requirements. Borrowers are encouraged to contact Trident Home Loans directly for the most up-to-date and accurate information regarding mortgage products and offerings. This advertisement is not an offer to lend, and all applications are subject to credit approval. Terms and conditions may apply.



About the Author

Spencer Wartman is a Loan Originator at Trident Home Loans, a veteran-owned and operated mortgage lender located in Pensacola, FL. Read More...





MONEY

Worthy Wins! What Does Winning Look Like to You in Personal Finance and Life?

Written by:Charlie Mattingly

"It's not enough to have lived. We should be determined to live for something." ~ Winston Churchill

Winning in personal finance and life means defining and pursuing "worthy wins"—goals and habits that actually improve your quality of life, deepen relationships, and align with your core values, not just increase the balance of your 401(k).

In this article, I'll help explore what a "worthy win" really is—and how it can reshape the way we think about success in money, career, and relationships. You'll learn a simple framework to filter decisions and habits through what matters most.

Finally, I'll share some practical examples of wins in my own life that I continuously strive for in hopes of achieving a life well-lived.

Money Is a Blessing—But It Doesn't Automatically Equal Contentment

If you're a professional pilot these days, you may be making more money than you ever thought you would. Awesome, right?!? Money is a blessing that can create opportunities, remove obstacles, and, quite frankly, allow you to have more fun!

However, as you progress in your professional pilot career and you see more money in your 401(k), you may not feel as content as you expected. There's still stress about spending, health concerns, the busyness of life, and the amount of taxes you're paying really makes you angry!

Maybe you've hit the "wins" you dreamed of in your twenties—like getting hired at your dream airline—only to find that it's become a grind. Maybe, after reaching some career goals, you quietly moved the goalposts. Now it seems like someone else has the bigger 401(k), nicer house, and happier family than you—at least on Instagram anyway!

"Worthy Wins": A Better Definition of Winning

One of my favorite podcasts, *The Jon Gordon Podcast*, featured a recent episode where Jon Gordon interviewed John Olinger, a previous executive at Nike and author of the book "Worthy Wins: Pointing Your Life Toward What Matters Most." In his book and in the conversation, Olinger explores the difference between meaningful achievements and goals that look impressive but leave you empty

Likely, you've heard this line before, as I have. But maybe as you progress in your professional pilot career and have achieved the goals you set for yourself, you're ready to put more thought and action into this idea of "what really matters to you?" What achievements will actually increase my family's quality of life?

The podcast discussion emphasizes that worthy wins are not just about big milestones, but also about daily actions and relationships that truly matter. Olinger shares strategies for staying focused on what's important, avoiding distractions, and making decisions that reflect your core values.

Kobe Bryant's Framework for Excellence

One of my favorite examples from the podcast was John Olinger's experience at Nike and working with Kobe Bryant. In addition to working for a decade at Nike as the Brand and Digital Marketing leader, Olinger worked for three years as the Global Brand Director for Kobe Bryant. He says Kobe had a "secret formula" for excellence in life and basketball: extreme clarity about what mattered to him. Kobe wanted to be the greatest basketball player on the planet—period. After his playing days, his focus shifted toward his businesses and being a great father to his daughters. Every habit and decision was filtered through that definition of winning.

Before we get to Kobe's three rules for *how* to accomplish the worthy wins in your life, we must first determine and get extremely clear on *what* the worthy wins are. I'm guessing that you don't want to be the greatest athlete in the world. And I also know that many of you don't obsess over becoming the best pilot in the world either. However, becoming crystal clear on what winning is to you and me is the first and most important step.

From my own experience, this clarity is hard to find. When I sit with the question of what really matters, I feel a tug-of-war between what I think I "*should*" want and what would truly represent a life well lived for my family and me.

A Financial Example: Boats, Lake Houses, and Real Life

I live in East Tennessee, where lake life, water sports, and boating are some of the best in the country. One of my best friends regularly shames me for not owning a wake-surf boat pulled by a brand-new, six-figure, four-wheel-drive truck. Honestly, I feel like I *should* want that too!

In the summer, when I see families heading to the lake with their beautiful boats and new trucks, I feel those twinges of envy. I know my income is likely similar to theirs—maybe even higher. So, the thought creeps in: if they can have it, why shouldn't I? Furthermore, I deserve that!

The question I keep coming back to is this: Would owning a boat (or an airplane, beach house, lake house, etc.) create worthy wins in my life and relationships? In the boat example, I literally pictured my family and me on the water and hit "play" in my mind—trying to imagine what it would truly feel like over time, not just in the first week.

At one point, I seriously considered buying a lake house. We even took an hour-long joy ride as a family to check out a potential property. The drive was hot and miserable, and the kids griped at each other the whole way. That one experience helped me realize that, at least for now, our family wasn't ready for this adventure.

In addition to my own life experiences, and research (check out Pilot Money Guys Podcast/ Fight #114 with Dr. Michael Finke), I know that if I bought the lake house or the boat and it allowed my family to cultivate meaningful relationships, special moments and memories, it's worth it! Maybe even a good investment!

Kobe's Three Rules for Achieving Worthy Wins

Whatever your desire in life or work—being a better parent, spouse, friend, or leader—you can use Kobe's approach as a framework for your own worthy wins. According to Olinger, Kobe lived by three rules:

1. Urgency: Live Like Tomorrow Isn't Promised
Kobe modeled a powerful sense of urgency in pursuing his goals. He approached each day as if tomorrow weren't guaranteed. (Sadly, Kobe died in a helicopter crash with his daughter in January 2020.)

Interestingly, Buddhist monks do an in-depth study and meditation practice of their own death called Maraṇasati (mindfulness of death, death awareness). They spend time remembering that death can strike at any time and that we should practice with urgency in every moment, even in the time it takes to draw one breath.

This may sound morbid to many, but we intuitively know that embracing the awareness of your mortality can lead to a more intentional, present, and meaningful life. This mindset encourages us to focus on what truly matters, savor each moment, and act with purpose. Time truly is short!

2. Consistency: Get a Little Better Every Day
Kobe believed in consistent improvement—becoming a little better each day. Author James Clear, in *Atomic Habits*, describes this idea as the "aggregation of marginal gains." He tells the story of British Cycling hiring Dave Brailsford as performance director after more than 100 years without a Tour de France win. What made him different from previous coaches was his relentless commitment to a strategy that he referred to as "the aggregation of marginal gains," which was the philosophy of searching for a tiny margin of improvement in everything you do. Brailsford said, "*The whole principle came from the idea that if you broke down everything you could think of that goes into riding a bike, and then improve it by 1 percent, you will get a significant increase when you put them all together.*"

3. Patience: Respect the Long Game
Olinger says patience was hard for Kobe but he knew it was important. Furthermore, patience feels like the antithesis of urgency. However, Kobe knew he could not become the greatest basketball player on the planet in one day.

In the same way, you don't have to pull off huge miracles today to achieve worthy wins in your life. You're not going to suddenly become the ideal spouse, parent, or steward of your money overnight. But if you keep showing up with urgency and consistency—and give the process time—you'll move steadily toward your own definition of winning. Give yourself some grace along the way!

Examples of Worthy Wins That Are Hard to Measure

Some of the most meaningful wins in life don't show up on a bank statement or résumé, which makes them harder to measure but no less important.

A few years ago, I hired an executive coach to help me become a better business leader. My background was in the military and as an airline pilot—I'd never run a successful business before, and I felt like I needed professional help.

What surprised me was the very first topic my coach wanted to address: the health of my marriage. I remember thinking, "What does this have to do with running a business or increasing revenue?" His answer was simple: if my marriage wasn't healthy, nothing else would function at its best.

Through that process, I realized that a major worthy win for me was investing more intentionally in my marriage. The whole point of earning more money is to have more time and margin to enjoy life with my wife—so why not prioritize that now, instead of waiting for some future milestone?

For you, worthy wins might include working extra trips to pay for a dream scuba vacation with your kids, not just to see a bigger number in your checking account. It might be choosing

a slightly reduced flying schedule that allows you to be present for key moments at home.

Another worthy win I'm still working on is the way I use my words with my wife, my children, and everyone around me. Truett Cathy, founder of Chick-fil-A, once said, "How do you identify someone who needs encouragement? That person is breathing." Using our words to sincerely encourage others is a worthy win that costs us very little but pays huge relational dividends.

As an airline or professional pilot, you will inevitably miss significant events in the lives of those you love—birthdays, games, recitals, anniversaries. That's part of the job. But you can still build deep, meaningful relationships—sometimes even stronger than those who are home every night—if you focus on the quality of the time and engagement you do have, rather than the quantity.

Don't Let the Almighty Dollar Lead You Astray

It's easy to slip into a mindset where making the most money and never "leaving anything on the table" becomes the main scoreboard. The ability to pick up extra trips can be a blessing: it can fund vacations, college for your kids, or big experiences you genuinely care about.

But that same ability can also consume you. If more money becomes the only win that matters, you risk chasing goals that actually pull you away from the worthy wins you say you value—your health, marriage, friendships, faith, or time with your kids.

So ask yourself: what does winning look like in your life? Is it just a number on your pay stub? Is it a certain balance in your bank or investment accounts? Or is money a means to create time and flexibility so you can pursue the things that lead to real contentment?

Hitting a dollar amount is important—and as financial professionals, that's a big part of what we help people do. But it's also the easiest thing to measure. Other forms of return on investment are much harder to quantify: the strength of your relationships, the way you spend your time, your contribution to others, and your spiritual or emotional well-being.

Reflection: Define Winning Before You Chase It

One reason I keep returning to this topic is that I carry a healthy fear of achieving things that won't matter when all is said and done. I don't want to wake up at 90 and realize I won the wrong game.

So, I regularly ask myself: when I'm 90 years old (Lord willing), and my kids or grandkids ask whether I have any regrets or wish I'd done anything differently, what will I say? My hope is that I can honestly say:

- I did the best I could with what I had.
- I took smart risks.
- I invested in what mattered most—especially relationships.
- I was a good steward of the blessings in my life, including my personal finances.

That's what a worthy win looks like to me. The real challenge—and the real opportunity—is to slow down long enough to define what winning looks like for you, then use your money, time, and talent in service of that vision.

Fly safe!



About the Author

Charlie Mattingly a CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™ professional, is a first officer for Southwest Airlines based in Atlanta.
Read More...

Please let us know if we can help you on your journey to financial peace and prosperity! Hopefully, you found this article interesting and helpful. If you have any questions, contact us at 865-240-2292 or Andrew@leadingedgeplanning.com.

Check out our Pilot Money Guys podcast where we regularly discuss these types of financial topics along with some fun airline news updates and interesting guest interviews. Even the editor and founder of Aero Crew News – Craig Pieper!

📅Schedule a Time to Chat
✈️Take the Pilot Wealth Index Quiz
📧Read Before Fly Newsletter
📽️Leading Edge YouTube
🎤The Pilot Money Guys Podcast
📷 Pilot Money Guys Instagram
📔Pilot and High-Income Blog
🗣️ Submit a Suggestion

Leading Edge Financial Planning LLC ("LEFP") is a registered investment advisor. Advisory services are only offered to clients or prospective clients where LEFP and its representatives are properly licensed or exempt from licensure. For additional information, please visit our website at www.leadingedgeplanning.com. The information provided is for educational and informational purposes only and does not constitute investment advice, and it should not be relied on as such. It should not be considered a solicitation to buy or an offer to sell a security. It does not take into account any investor's particular investment objectives, strategies, tax status, or investment horizon. You should consult your attorney or tax advisor. The views expressed in this commentary are subject to change based on market and other conditions. These documents may contain certain statements that may be deemed forward-looking statements. Please note that any such statements are not guarantees of any future performance, and actual results or developments may differ materially from those projected. Any projections, market outlooks, or estimates are based upon certain assumptions and should not be construed as indicative of actual events that will occur. All information has been obtained from sources believed to be reliable, but its accuracy is not guaranteed. There is no representation or warranty as to the current accuracy, reliability, or completeness of, nor liability for, decisions based on such information, and it should not be relied on as such.

FEATURE

For the One: *A Pilot's Journey from Passion to Purpose*



My first mission was risky. The woman was being held at a hospital until we could transport her to a safe location. Her trafficker had already shown up once, intending to take her back. We didn't know if he would return—or if he was watching. Time mattered, but so did precision.

A plan came together quickly. She would be escorted under protection, accompanied by an armed guard. A private investigator would follow to make sure they weren't being tracked. Every step, from the hospital room to the airport, had to be intentional. There was no margin for error. Every decision had consequences, and every delay carried risk.

I remember waiting at the airport, going over every detail in my mind. Weather, route, alternates, those were the easy parts. The real weight of the mission sat in the back of my mind: this flight mattered in a way none of my other flights ever had.

When she finally arrived, you could see both fear and hope in her eyes. We quickly escorted her to the airplane, got her settled in, and as soon as the wheels lifted off the runway, something changed. She exhaled. She knew she was safe.

And then, just like that, she became a passenger. Curious, light, even joyful. During the flight, she repeatedly asked if we were going to descend. I finally asked her why. She said, "I want to go through a cloud."

So, we maneuvered slightly, found a small one, and flew right through it. She laughed out loud with pure unfiltered joy. It was the kind of laughter that comes from relief, from release, from realizing, maybe for the first time in a long time, she was somewhere safe.

In that moment, I realized something profound: aviation wasn't just my passion anymore. It had become my purpose.

Falling in Love with Flight

Like so many nine-year-olds, I played on a softball team. Our sponsor, Sheriff Ross, surprised us one day at the end of the season, he was going to take us flying.

I still remember running out to see his airplane with the other girls, full of excitement. We couldn't all go at once, so we took turns. When it was my turn, I squeezed into the middle of the backseat, straining to see out the window. That was it. I fell in love with flying.

Something about being in the air changed my perspective. I felt peace up there that I had never experienced before. Looking down at the world, I knew, even at nine years old, that I wanted to be a pilot. It wasn't just the view—it was the feeling, the calm, the clarity. I felt the sense that, somehow, everything made a little more sense from above.

The path wasn't simple. Life took me in different directions, and for a time, flying had to take a back seat as I raised my family. But the dream never died.

Years later, I found my way back, one step at a time, one lesson at a time, one rating at a time. Eventually, I found myself back in the cockpit, flying professionally, now as a captain. It didn't happen overnight. It took sacrifice, persistence, and a willingness to start again when it would have been easier not to.

I thought I was returning to a passion. I didn't realize it was about to become something much bigger.

The Moment Everything Changed

In 2020, I became involved in efforts to support survivors of human trafficking. What I quickly learned was this: human trafficking is not rare. It's not distant. And it doesn't look like what most people think. It's happening in every state in this country.

Right now, an estimated 27.6 million people are being exploited worldwide, and the industry generates roughly $32 billion every year. Most of it happens in plain sight. It's happening in the neighborhoods we drive through every day, in hotels, in homes, in workplaces, often unnoticed, often misunderstood.

It often starts quietly, a relationship, a job opportunity, someone offering help at just the right moment. And then slowly, control is taken away piece by piece, until leaving isn't as simple as just walking away. And finally, when someone is ready to leave—there's another problem.

The Barrier No One Sees

Transportation is a barrier to freedom. You can identify a survivor. You can have a safe place ready. You can have advocates in place to support them. But if you can't get them from where they are to where they need to be, safely, quickly, and without being detected, everything falls apart.

Before Freedom Aviation Network, the solution was often a bus ticket. Think about that for a moment. Someone leaving a controlled and dangerous situation, placed on a bus for hours, sometimes longer, hoping they make it safely to the other side. Hoping no one is watching.

Hoping no one is waiting. Hoping they don't run into the very person they're trying to escape.

The reality is many don't make it. They're intercepted. They're tracked. They're pulled right back into exploitation. That's what happens when there isn't a safe way out.

The Birth of Freedom Aviation Network (FAN)

That's where aviation came in. I began reaching out to fellow pilots, friends, students, colleagues, and asking a simple question: would you be willing to use your airplane to help someone get to safety?

The response was overwhelming. Pilots stepped up. They didn't just say yes, they leaned in. They volunteered their time, aircraft, fuel, talents, resources, but most of all their hearts. Many of them recruited other pilots when they couldn't fly a mission themselves.

That's what struck me the most: no hesitation, no questions, just a willingness to help. Aviation is full of problem-solvers, and when presented with a mission like this, people didn't ask why, they asked how. That's how Freedom Aviation Network was born.

FAN exists to provide safe, efficient, and compassionate air transportation for survivors of human trafficking and their advocates. Completely free, no cost, no barriers, no questions about whether someone "qualifies." If there is a need, we do everything we can to meet it. And when that transportation barrier is removed, everything changes. People get out. They make it to safety. They get a chance to start over.

What FAN Really Does

What started as a small effort quickly grew into something much bigger. Flight after flight, mission after mission, we began transporting survivors (we fondly refer to them as VIPs) to safe locations. Sometimes it's an emergency extraction, getting someone out before a situation escalates. Sometimes it's relocating someone to a new shelter, giving them a fresh start. Sometimes it's family reunification, bringing someone back to the people who love them. Sometimes it's getting someone to court when their presence matters more than anything. Every flight is different. But every flight matters.

Because for the person sitting in that seat, it's not just a flight. It's a way out. It's the first step toward healing, toward stability, toward a life that finally belongs to them again.



The Power of the Aviation Community

One of the most incredible parts of this journey has been watching the aviation community come together. General aviation pilots, airline pilots, corporate partners, FBOs, people across the industry have stepped up in ways I never could have imagined. Pilots covering for each other, offering aircraft, making time when it's not convenient, and just showing up.

Organizations like Air Care Alliance have also played a vital role in supporting nonprofits like ours, helping connect aviation resources to missions that make a difference. Their support has helped validate that this kind of mission belongs in aviation, that using airplanes to serve others is not just possible, but essential. This isn't just one organization doing the work. It's a community. It's public-benefit flying. And it's working!

What Pilots Need to Know

As pilots, we are in a unique position. We see people in transition, at airports, in FBOs, on ramps, in moments where something might not feel right. It's not always obvious. But sometimes it looks like:

- A passenger who avoids eye contact
- Someone who doesn't have control of their own forms of identification
- A person who lets someone else speak for them
- Travel plans that don't quite make sense
- A visible imbalance of control, where one person is clearly directing every aspect of the interaction
- Signs of anxiety, fear, or reluctance that seem disproportionate to the situation

No single sign tells the whole story. But patterns matter. And if something feels off, trust that instinct and follow proper reporting protocols. Awareness matters. Education matters. And as pilots, we have an opportunity, and a responsibility, to pay attention.

If you're a pilot reading this, I would simply say this, there is a place for you in this mission. Whether it's flying, supporting, educating, or advocating, your skills can make a difference in ways you may have never imagined. Because sometimes the most important flight you'll ever make isn't the longest, the fastest, or the most complex, it's the one where everything changes for the person sitting beside you.

One Flight at a Time



Author Stephanie Lamar with FAN VIP

Early on, I struggled with the scale of the problem. Human trafficking is massive. It's overwhelming. And I remember thinking, are we really making a difference by helping just one person at a time? You look at the numbers. You hear the stories. And it feels like what you're doing is just a drop in the bucket.

I prayed about that. And what came to me was simple, but powerful. The image of the shepherd leaving ninety-nine sheep to go after one is when it clicked. This work was never meant to be about solving everything all at once. It's about showing up, for one person, in one moment, when everything is on the line. Because for that one person, it's everything.

I've seen it. I've seen the moment someone realizes they're safe. I've seen the weight lift. I've seen the shift, from fear to hope, right there in the seat next to me. That's not small. That's real.

Aviation has the power to change lives. Sometimes, it's the life of a nine-year-old girl discovering her dream. And sometimes, it's the life of a survivor finding freedom above the clouds. When you start to see it that way, you realize something else, this is how change happens, one flight at a time, one person at a time. That's why our motto at Freedom Aviation Network is For The One. That's why we fly—for the one.

Aviators and Advocates

Freedom Aviation Network began with a clear need: survivors of human trafficking often face increased danger in the first hours after leaving their situation. In those moments, safe and efficient transportation can mean the difference between freedom and being pulled back into the shadows.

In 2020, a small group of volunteer pilots stepped in to help, offering their time, skills, and aircraft to carry survivors to safety. What started as a few missions soon grew into something much larger. Survivors didn't just need a ride—they needed a reliable network, ready to engage, to ensure that they could reach safety and begin the journey of recovery. By 2022, Freedom Aviation Network was formally established as a nonprofit, bringing together pilots, aircraft owners, and advocates across the country.

At the heart of FAN is the principle "For the One." In the early days, it was easy to feel overwhelmed: so many still needed help, and each mission required significant time and resources. But through prayer, a vision of Jesus as the shepherd leaving the flock to go after the one, brought clarity. Every life is worth every mile, every effort, every resource. That is why each mission, no matter how small it may seem, carries immeasurable value.

Today, FAN has flown hundreds of missions across the United States, partnering with agencies, shelters, and communities to make freedom accessible. Each flight represents more than transportation, it is a declaration that survivors are not alone, and that hope is possible.

To learn more about Freedom Aviation Network, visit our website: freedomaviationnetwork.org

FREEDOM AVIATION NETWORK

for the one



About the Author

Stephanie Lamar is the founder of Freedom Aviation Network and a professional aviator with nearly three decades of flight experience. She began flying in 1996 and is now a Part-121 captain. Read More...



Aero Crew Solutions is a group of professionals committed to providing you outstanding service to solve your employment needs. We do this by hosting job fairs throughout the United States. We also provide various career services that include career consulting, application review, interview prep and résumé services.

Career Services

Application Review Career Consulting

Résumé Critique Interview Prep

Monthly Newsletter

AeroCrewSolutions.com Mail@AeroCrewSolutions.com