November 2025

Aero Crew News™

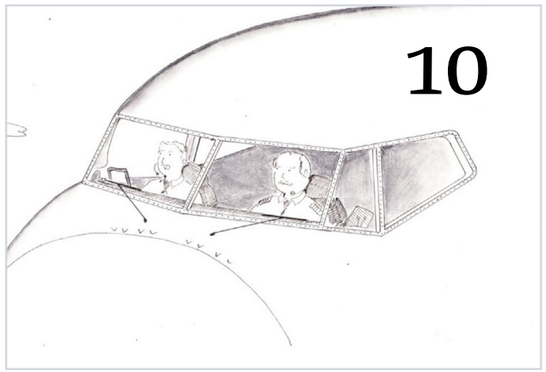
Your Industry Connection



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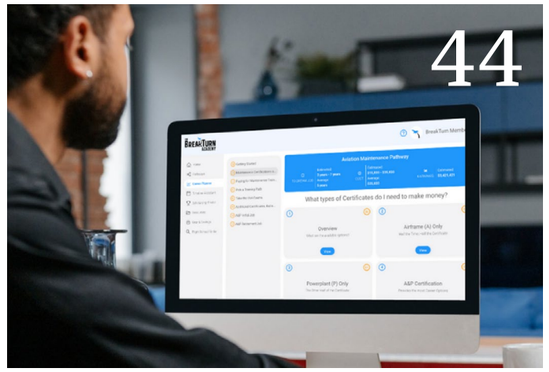
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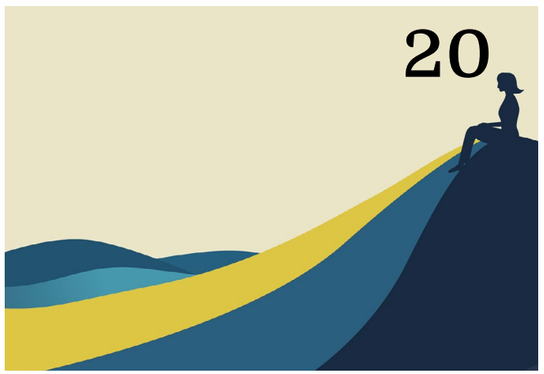
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The Grid (contract comparisons, pay charts, company details, etc.) has moved online. Click on the airlines above to go directly to that airline’s information, or go to www. AeroCrewNews.com/go/thegrid.

Dear readers,

The Aero Crew News 2026 Photo Contest is just around the corner. Have your cameras ready and start clicking! The 2026 photo contest theme is, AIRPORTS. We want to see your perspective of airports, runways, ATC towers, ramp life, and taxiways. Anything related to an airport, you can submit. It need not include aircraft but certainly can. The choice is yours!

Stay tuned for official rules to be announced on January 1, 2026. There remain some sponsorship opportunities for our 2026 Photo Contest. Email me at info@AeroCrewNews.com.

Veterans Day, on November 11, 2025, marks the 107th anniversary of the cessation of fighting in World War I. First known as Armistice Day, it was declared a national holiday in 1938. In 1954, after the Korean War, the name was changed to Veterans Day—a day set aside to honor all veterans, living or deceased, who served in any of the U.S. armed forces.

Remember to thank any veteran you encounter for their service.

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.

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Baggage – Explore nine ways to improve your small-talk skills.

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Coffee & Pretzels – Maybe we should revive the stickers-on-luggage trend.

Fitness – If fat is like coal and you want to burn it, just walk!

Food Bites – Maryland is for crabs, and G&M Restaurant near BWI is for crab cakes.

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Knowledge Base – Examine the impact center of gravity has on an aircraft's flight characteristics.

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Mortgage – Looking ahead to mortgage trends and economic indicators can mean savings.

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Alaska Airlines and Hawaiian Airlines reach major integration milestone: a single operating certificate

Alaska Airlines received a single operating certificate (SOC) from the Federal Aviation Administration to operate alongside Hawaiian Airlines as two separate brands. Read More



JetBlue Announces Third Quarter 2025 Results

JetBlue Airways Corporation reported its financial results for the third quarter of 2025. “JetBlue’s progress toward profitability is gaining momentum as a result of the swift actions we’ve taken to implement our JetForward strategy and set a strong foundation for 2026,” said Joanna Geraghty, JetBlue’s chief executive officer. Read More



American Airlines reports third-quarter 2025 financial results

American Airlines Group Inc. today reported its third-quarter 2025 financial results, including: Record third-quarter revenue of $13.7 billion, Third-quarter GAAP net loss of $114 million, or ($0.17) per diluted share... Read More



United Airlines Continues to Win Brand-Loyal Customers as Q3 Profit and Q4 Outlook Both Exceed Wall Street Expectations

United Airlines reported a third-quarter profit ahead of Wall Street expectations. The company had third-quarter pre-tax earnings of $1.3 billion, with a pre-tax margin of 8.2% and adjusted pre-tax... Read More



Spirit Airlines Receives Court Approval for $475 Million Debtor-in-Possession Financing and Key Agreement with its Largest Aircraft Lessor

Spirit Aviation Holdings, Inc., parent company of Spirit Airlines, LLC, announced it has received approval from the U.S. Bankruptcy Court... Read More



United Adds Flights to New Cities in Croatia, Italy, Scotland and Spain next Summer

United Airlines announced its Summer 2026 schedule with service to four new cities across Croatia, Italy, Scotland and Spain – leading the way with the most destinations across the Atlantic... Read More



Delta Air Lines Announces September Quarter 2025 Financial Results

Delta Air Lines today reported financial results for the September quarter and provided its outlook for the December quarter and full year 2025. Highlights of the September quarter, including both GAAP and adjusted metrics, are on page five and incorporated here. Read More



American Airlines unveils first international route for the game-changing Airbus A321XLR

American Airlines is expanding international access with new seasonal service from New York (JFK) to Edinburgh, Scotland (EDI), starting March 2026. With convenient flights to Scotland's awe-inspiring landscapes and majestic castles straight out of a fairy tale, Edinburgh has become... Read More



Spirit Airlines Announces Significant Progress Toward a Successful Restructuring

Spirit Aviation Holdings, Inc., parent company of Spirit Airlines, LLC, continues to advance the Company's transformation to position the airline for the future. At a hearing [on Tuesday, September 30] before the U.S. Bankruptcy Court... Read More



Airbus reports Nine-Month (9m) 2025 results

Airbus SE (stock exchange symbol: AIR) reported consolidated financial results for the nine months ended 30 September 2025. "Our nine-month results reflect the level of commercial aircraft deliveries and a solid performance in the Defence and Space and Helicopters businesses," said Guillaume Faury, Airbus Chief Executive Officer. Read More



ALPA NEWS: Message on the government shutdown

As we begin yet another U.S. Federal Government shutdown, we face a setback not just for our country but also for aviation safety. As a result of inaction in Washington, our partners, like air traffic controllers and transportation security officers, will be working without pay. Other federal employees who... Read More

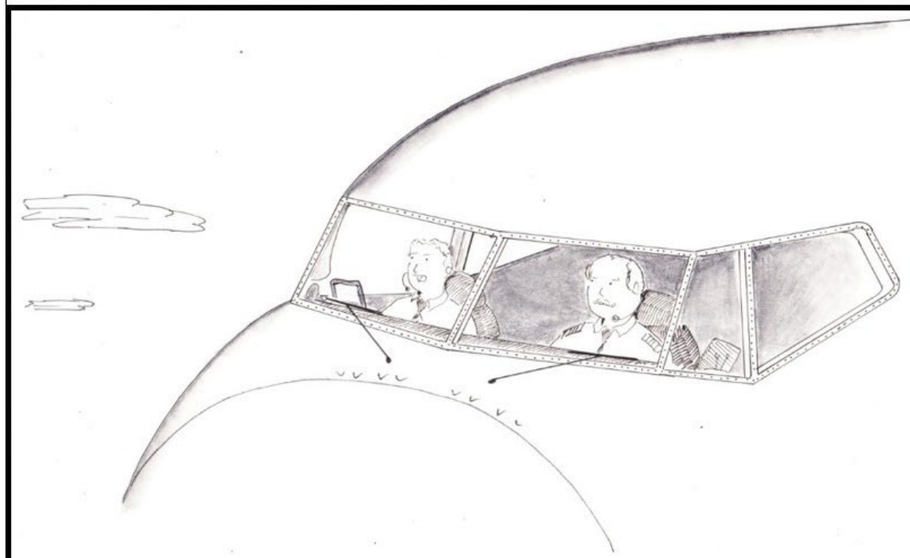


Boeing Reports Third Quarter Results

The Boeing Company [NYSE: BA] recorded third quarter revenue of $23.3 billion, reflecting improved operational performance and higher commercial delivery volume. GAAP loss per share of ($7.14) and core loss per share (non-GAAP)* of ($7.47) primarily reflect a pre-tax... Read More

coffee & pretzels

Greg Kaley



I had to get out of corporate flying. Sure the equipment and layovers were better, but here I can maintain the illusion that I'm not working class most of the time.



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...



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Prepping for Airline Training

There’s more to getting ready than study in anticipation of the next big step.

Written by: John McDermott

Towards the end of September, I finally received the long-awaited email that I would soon begin company training at a U.S. regional airline. Almost two years after passing my initial flight instructor checkride, it suddenly became time to take the next step in my career.

A lot of preparation goes into airline training. I have already submitted multiple background checks, fingerprints, and drug tests, and I have a somewhat-expedited timeline to start studying for the ATP written exam ahead of my ATP-CTP course.

Behind the scenes, however, other preparations are taking place. Besides beginning the process of handing students off to other instructors (save one or two whom I shall attempt to prepare for checkrides in the next few weeks), I must consider how I must prepare my personal life for the change.

Almost immediately, I booked a trip to visit family back home, as I also began planning my drive from Pennsylvania to the training center in Utah. Included is a consideration as to whether to get maintenance on my car beforehand, as well as where I should stop along the way and what to pack.

Having learned from current and former employees of my soon-to-be airline, I am aware that the initial type and ATP training is a rigorous process—training is purposely intense. I must balance, as best I can, my current job with the family and friends around me. Perhaps the biggest challenge in this process will be managing the relationship between the work I must do—considering the remaining students whose training supplies my paycheck, the study and preparation I must continue—and spending quality time with the most important people in my life.

With under a month until my journey out west begins, I must consider how I will spend my time over the next few weeks. In terms of physical distance, I will be almost as far from the rest of my family as I can be. Therefore, spending quality time with friends and family is as much a part of my preparation as completing documentation and reviewing for written exams. But I am looking forward to the opportunity to relax, take a brief step back from work, and reset my focus to make sure I’m alert and undistracted heading into training.

Critical to preparing for air-carrier class is allowing time for breaking away from the workaday rhythm to restore and replenish the considerable energy necessary for an intense, focused period of study and training. Though I am not completely stepping away from the work until soon before training starts, I recognize that spending time relaxing is vital. It’s worth noting how significant a break this will be for me as it has been for so many instructors whose intense time-building period consumed them for a significant period.

As I write this, I still have over a month until I begin. Meanwhile, I prepare, as I reasonably can, to get a clear picture of the coming weeks. Just as when I’m flying, I think as far ahead as possible, anticipating my next stage in order to navigate the transition smoothly. The more I can be aware of what to expect, the more easily it will be to plan the work, rest, and travel I’ll need to succeed.

I do look forward to the new challenges of airline training and am grateful for all the experiences that have led to this point in my career. My next big step is about to begin and I couldn’t be more excited. I fully expect that all my anticipation and planning will serve me well contributing to my success.



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

Mental Health in the Aviation Industry

Treatment and trust



RITTEN BY: RICHARD SWINDELL

Regular readers of our Grey Matter column may recall the December 2023 article, The Actual Tragedy of Flight 2059, where we wrote about a nearly catastrophic event for a Horizon Air flight on October 22, 2023; and the actual, as well as figurative, catastrophe of Captain Joseph Emerson's mental state and the difficulty he, and other pilots, faced in seeking mental health treatment within the draconian confines of FAA certification. Since that event, Joseph Emerson (no longer a pilot, and in fact, not allowed within 25 feet of any airplane) pled guilty and no contest to the associated charges, fully acknowledged his responsibility as well as the mental health challenges that led him to that fateful flight. Further and pursuant to a Oregon state plea agreement in September, he will spend the next five years on probation, is compelled to complete 664 hours of community service, and pay $60,000 in restitution. He is still facing federal sentencing on November 17, which will likely involve prison time.

So, what has the FAA done in the two years since this watershed event? By June 2024, the FAA had decided to reduce its immediate involvement in 11 conditions (mostly "anxiety" based and some transient depressive episodes) for which an Aeromedical Examiner (AME) could issue medical certification without having to send the pilot's records to the FAA Aeromedical Certification Division for review and approval. They also indicated that aviators diagnosed with depression could take one (and only one) of four approved SSRIs, one of three SNRIs, one NDRI, or one SSRI 5-HT1A RPA in hopes of potentially being re-certified to fly after about six months—although anyone familiar with the special issuance process will know that this is like the small print at the bottom of an exercise program or weight loss ad that says, "Results not typical." (And good on you for looking up the drug types to understand what they are and why these medications are important—and complicated.)

To be clear though, this does mean that there exists the potential for a pilot to be openly treated, but they will likely be in an un-paid status for the duration of the special issuance medical-certification process. Although this certainly represents progress for mental health treatment and the agency, it's probably a step best characterized by Capt. Dennis Tajer, a spokesman for the Allied Pilots Association, who stated that, "FAA was kind of stuck in the 1970s—they've lunged themselves into maybe the '90s, and I'm being generous."

Fast forward to September of this year and the bipartisan Mental Health in Aviation Act (MHAA) is pending review in the Senate after passing the House. The MHAA is a result of the Mental Health Aviation Rulemaking Committee's consensus recommendations aimed at reducing the stigma associated with mental health in the aviation industry, improving access to mental health care, enhancing the special issuance process, all in an effort to advance aviation safety by ensuring pilots and air traffic controllers are mentally as well as physically healthy.

The overarching tenants of this bill include:

- Requiring the FAA to review and update its regulations and policies on mental health for aviation professionals
- Establishing a task force to develop recommendations for improving mental health care in the aviation industry
- Providing funding for training and support for AMEs who specialize in mental health
- Requiring the FAA to report annually on its progress in implementing the MHAA's provisions

Although Air Line Pilots Association (ALPA) President Capt. Jason Ambrosi, rightly stated that the MHAA "...represents a crucial step

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forward to improving aviation safety and maintaining a healthy work environment for pilots," the reality is that there is still a long way to go in process and practice which is subtly captured in a final bullet point for the bill:

- Encourage pilots and air traffic controllers to disclose mental health conditions and seek treatment without fear of job loss.

The very fact that this has to be included speaks volumes. There remains (and likely will even if the MHAA is ultimately signed into law) a significant number of barriers for pilots and air traffic controllers to overcome to secure mental health assistance, the most significant of which is encapsulated in this point above—trust.

Good luck finding a single pilot at any airline who believes that if they disclose having anxiety, depression, or express the need for counseling to their AME (and by extension the FAA's Aeromedical Certification Division), that they will not significantly risk losing their medical certificate and spend years—unpaid and unable to work as a pilot—struggling to get it back in a genuine effort to improve their mental health. This is not an industry that is imbued with trust in their regulator for professional conditions, much less personal ones; something that in my view is an environment and sentiment fostered by the agency itself. The industry quip regarding the FAA, "We're not happy until you're not happy," rather says it all.

Should aviators and controllers be physically and mentally healthy to execute safely on the mission of a critical public-trust endeavor? Absolutely. Should the pathway to disclosure, acceptance, and effective treatment be trustworthy and vigorous as well? Absolutely.

We'll check in again on this topic as the MHAA advances through the legislative process and see where we all land.

Before closing though, Joseph Emerson and his wife have started a nonprofit, Clear Skies Ahead, aimed at improving pilot health and wellness. Check it out: https://www.clearskiesaheadnonprofit.org/



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



Introduction to Light Multi-Engine Aircraft

Written By: Sergio Sovero

Photo credit: BlueBarronPhoto / Shutterstock.com

Multi-engine airplanes are generally capable of carrying heavier loads than single-engine aircraft, as well as flying faster and higher. However, they also present additional challenges to pilots, making it essential to remain proficient in emergency procedures and to understand how to respond in the event of an engine failure.

One ground-handling advantage of multi-engine airplanes over single-engine aircraft is their ability to use differential power. Turning with the assistance of differential power reduces the need to apply brakes during ground turns. Operating a multi-engine airplane with one engine inoperative results in significant penalties in both performance and control. From a performance standpoint, a loss of 50 percent of power results in a disproportionate loss of climb capability, while directional control is greatly affected by the asymmetrical thrust being produced.

After liftoff, gaining altitude should take priority over increasing airspeed. Experience has shown that trading excess speed for altitude after an engine failure is a complex and often ineffective maneuver. Altitude gives the pilot valuable time to think and react. Additionally, if an engine fails shortly after takeoff and runway remains available, it is preferable to abort the takeoff rather than continue the climb, provided the landing gear has not yet been retracted. For safety, the airplane should never rotate before reaching and exceeding the published Vmc (minimum controllable airspeed). An engine failure during climb at a speed below Vmc will result in the immediate loss of directional control. Pilots should always use the rotation or liftoff speeds recommended by the aircraft manufacturer; if no specific value is published, adding five knots to Vmc is recommended.

Unlike single-engine airplanes, multi-engine aircraft are more susceptible to turning tendencies. To counteract these tendencies, many designs use counter-rotating propellers, where the propellers spin in opposite directions. This cancels out the turning forces, reducing the amount of rudder required to maintain control.

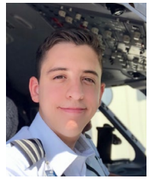
Consider a left engine failure. The airplane will immediately yaw to the left due to asymmetrical thrust. The yaw causes the right wing to travel faster than the left, creating a rolling movement toward the inoperative engine. Additionally, increased induced flow over the right wing, combined with reduced lift over the left wing, results in a roll toward the failed engine.

Another key concept is Vmc, the minimum controllable speed with one engine inoperative. As airspeed decreases, rudder effectiveness diminishes, requiring greater rudder inputs to maintain directional control. Below a certain speed, further decreases lead to a loss of directional control. Vmc addresses control, not performance. Certification of Vmc typically considers the most unfavorable weight, which is not necessarily the maximum takeoff weight, the most aft center of gravity, and specific aircraft configurations and power settings.

Pilots should be able to recognize the signs of an impending Vmc loss of control, which include yawing and loss of directional control, stall buffet or warning horn activation, and decreasing rudder effectiveness. To recover from a Vmc loss of control, reduce power on the operative engine to idle to lessen asymmetrical thrust, then lower the nose to increase airspeed and restore control effectiveness.

Several factors affect Vmc, including aircraft configuration, weight, center of gravity, density altitude, and power setting. As a pilot, a lower Vmc is generally desirable, as it provides more controllability at lower speeds. Banking two to three degrees toward the operative engine typically results in a zero-sideslip condition, where the relative wind is perpendicular to the aircraft's longitudinal axis. This minimizes Vmc and improves performance. Conversely, maintaining zero bank, using only rudder to hold heading, leads to a higher Vmc and lower performance, due to the large rudder deflections required. This reduces the rudder's effective angle of attack, making it less effective at countering asymmetric thrust.

It is essential to understand the aerodynamics of single-engine operations when transitioning to multi-engine aircraft. While the advantages of having an additional engine, such as higher cruise speeds and greater payload, are clear, pilots must also be prepared for engine failure scenarios and the aerodynamic principles behind them. A thorough understanding of these concepts is critical to ensuring the safe operation of multi-engine airplanes.

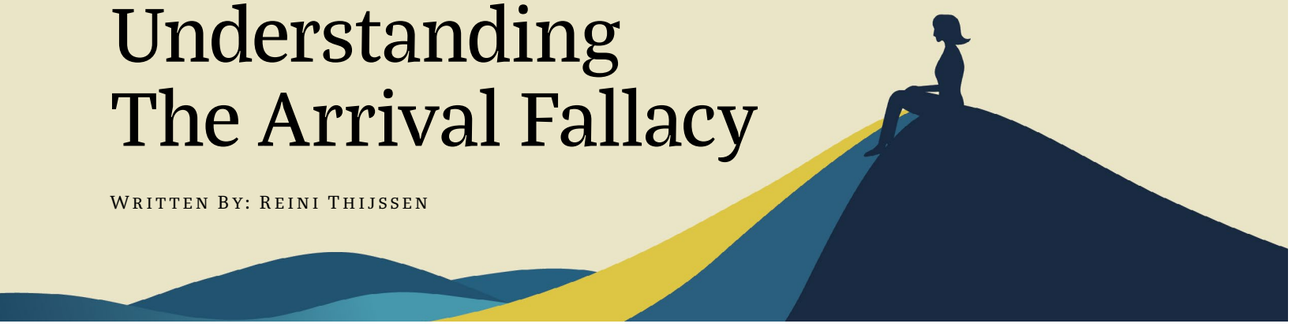


About the Author

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

BAGGAGE

You Made It, And Now What? Understanding The Arrival Fallacy



Written By: Reini Thijssen

After achieving a personal milestone, upgrading, or completing a long-term project, you might expect a wave of fulfillment. Instead, many people feel a surprising sense of emptiness or uncertainty, and the surprising, often quiet question comes up: "Why do I not feel the way I thought I would?" This is a widespread phenomenon, called the "Arrival Fallacy." This article explores the often-overlooked emotional aftermath of success and delves into the question: Once we reach our goal, what comes next?

- Once I have enough money, I can buy a bigger house where I will finally be happy.
- Once I get hired by my dream airline, everything will fall into place.
- Once I become a captain, I will finally feel confident and respected.
- Once my startup is successful, I will stop feeling like I'm behind.
- Once I finish my type rating, I will not feel this pressure anymore.
- Once I have a stable schedule, my personal life will sort itself out.
- Once I lose 10 kilos, I will be happy with how I look.

Who has never experienced one of these thoughts? People like setting goals for themselves. Having something to strive for can be motivating and helps drive personal growth. In fact, it is highly valued in our goal-oriented society. Achieving results and personal success are often seen as the keys to happiness, and maybe now even more than ever, due to the daily exposure to social media.

Where it gets tricky is that we often set goals with the expectation that once we achieve them, we will be happier. In other words, we tie a strong sense of anticipated outcome to these goals. Reaching the goal may bring a sense of euphoria, but it is frequently short-lived. That euphoric feeling can quickly be replaced by feelings of disappointment, emptiness, or even sadness. Research shows that external achievements do not lead to lasting happiness, especially compared to deeper sources of happiness like meaningful relationships or personal growth.

Arrival Fallacy Explained

Coined by positive psychology expert Tal Ben-Shahar, this term Arrival Fallacy describes the *"illusion that once we make it, once we attain our goal or reach our destination, we will reach lasting happiness,"* - Tal Ben-Shahar (Harvard)

The complexity of the arrival fallacy stems from the fact that while we work toward a goal, we already begin to form the expectation that we will actually achieve it. As a result, the brain's reward centers are already activated before the goal is reached. In a sense, we experience the reward in advance. When the moment of achievement finally arrives, it turns out to be less satisfying than expected. Every time we chase something expecting it to bring us happiness, only to be let down, our overall happiness takes another hit. When we are unhappy, we tend to chase happiness, thinking we will find it in external things like success or material goods. However, there is always another goal lurking just beyond reach; once a goal is achieved, it can always be more, better, or bigger.

Goals we want to achieve are often about wanting to heal from pain, stress, and sadness, and we subconsciously search for relief in (external) goals. There is the misconception that external achievements, such as money, performance improvements, or status, will make us happy.
However, research shows that these factors are not decisive in determining our sense of happiness, at least not in the long term. What has been shown to contribute to lasting wellbeing is experiencing meaningful relationships, celebrating small everyday wins, being able to let go of discomforts and irritations, and paying attention to simple things.

How the Arrival Fallacy Can Be Harmful
The Arrival Fallacy does not just leave us disappointed; it can actually cause real emotional harm in several ways.

- **Endless Dissatisfaction:** When we put off happiness until some future goal is met, we miss out on enjoying the present. This constant feeling of wanting more can wear us down, leading to stress and exhaustion.
- **Fading Drive:** If finally reaching a goal does not bring the joy we expected, it can make us question why we are even trying. That doubt can drain our motivation and cause us to lose interest or give up altogether.
- **Harsh Self-Judgment:** Achieving something big but still feeling empty often leads us to blame ourselves, instead of realizing that our expectations about happiness might be unrealistic.

- **Neglected Connections:** When we are always focused on the next goal, the important people around us can get pushed aside. Over time, this can cause loneliness and regret for lost time.

Arrival Fallacy in Aviation

For pilots in particular, reaching a long-anticipated goal can feel less satisfying than expected, and the ongoing pressure to perform at a high level adds complexity to this experience. This is an overview of how the arrival fallacy can uniquely impact pilots:

1. **Aviation Is Built on Milestones**
   From the first solo flight to type ratings, flight hours, promotions, and ultimately reaching a legacy carrier or captain seat, the pilot's journey is often linear, goal-driven, and tightly structured. Each step is clearly defined and treated as a significant accomplishment. This naturally sets up the belief: "Once I reach X, I will feel fulfilled."

2. **Sacrifice**
   Pilots often sacrifice years of personal time, financial stability, and relationships to climb the ladder. When the payoff finally comes, the emotional expectation is high, and if the lived reality does not match the expectation, it can feel both disappointing and disorienting.

3. **External Validation**
   Much of a pilot's value in the aviation world is tied to external measures of success: hours flown, airline status, aircraft type, and seniority. This makes it easier to equate self-worth with achievement and harder to find fulfillment outside of professional progress.

4. **Cultural Pressure**
   The aviation community, especially among high achievers, often reinforces the message: Keep climbing. Next upgrade. Better schedule. More seniority. This treadmill encourages constant forward motion, but rarely provides space for reflection or emotional integration.

5. **Emotional Suppression as a Norm**
   Pilots are trained to regulate emotion for safety and performance. While this is essential in the flight deck, it can also lead to numbing or dismissing personal emotional signals, like dissatisfaction or burnout, even when those feelings are valid.

6. **Isolation**
   Aviation careers often lead to disrupted personal routines and limited social connections, making it harder to build emotional support systems. So when the "arrival fallacy" hits, many pilots process it alone, feeling like they "should" be happy.

The Cliché of the Journey and the Destination

As cliché as it may sound, it is about the journey—taking small steps and learning lessons along the way, not the destination. Happiness can only be experienced in the present moment. You do not know yet what will make you happy a month or several years from now. You do know what brings you joy right now. That might even be something you are looking forward to, but the feeling itself is happening now.

How To Reduce the Trap

There is nothing wrong with setting goals, and with some adjustments their effects can be more impactful. The following tips and reflections may help:

Reconnect with your intrinsic motivation. Ask yourself the deeper "why." When setting a goal, consider your inner intention. How does this larger goal support your personal growth? What will it truly bring you? Why does it matter to you?

Focus on the process (the journey). What can you do daily, and what will you commit to? Notice the small victories along the way. Pause to reflect and enjoy them.

Celebrate intentionally. Mark the transition with rituals or shared experiences that give meaning to the change.

Do what you do with full attention. Be present in the moment. Joy and fulfillment are found in the now, not just in future results.

Diversify your sense of purpose. Expanding your focus to include areas like relationships, mentorship, creativity, or community engagement help you build a more resilient and well-rounded identity—not a single role or achievement. This broader foundation can offer stability during transitions and sustain motivation over time.

Check in with yourself regularly: When do I feel most alive? Is what I am doing now contributing to that feeling?

Ask yourself often: *What am I grateful for today?*

Put goals into a broader context. Try not to become focused on the outcome, making the journey itself become unenjoyable. Ride the highs and the lows. Keep in mind there is always a bigger picture and purpose behind your efforts. When you reach one goal, take time to re-evaluate and set your sights on the next.

Let go of "I will be happy when..." Instead consider the phrases professional athletes often use when training; *"trust the process"* or *"embrace the process."* Live by that mindset. Often, the biggest growth happens during the journey, not at the finish line.

Reframe. Reflect on what the achievement taught you, not just what you accomplished.

Final Thoughts

The pursuit of future goals can create a cycle of dissatisfaction, where happiness continuously seems just out of reach. Mindfulness exercises offer an alternative by shifting attention from future achievements

to present fulfillment. Success is often more sustainable when it is rooted in personal growth.

When all the focus is placed on the finish line, it can heighten pressure and expectations, which can lead to discouragement when it is not met. That sense of "falling short" can easily trigger self-defeating thoughts like "I am not doing it right" or "I am not capable," which is counterproductive, especially in the therapeutic or coaching process.Instead of aiming for fixed outcomes, in life and in therapy, it is often more effective to explore a general direction. The aim is to gently shift the focus to what is wanted, what feels helpful, hopeful, and possible, even if it is still unclear and far off.

"Attaining lasting happiness requires that we enjoy the journey on our way toward a destination we deem valuable. Happiness is not about making it to the peak of the mountain, nor is it about climbing aimlessly around the mountain; happiness is the experience of climbing toward the peak." – Tal Ben-Shahar (Harvard)

If you find yourself constantly striving for the next goal, yet still feeling unfulfilled, the good news is that there are other ways. Emerald Mental Health can help you shift away from pressure-filled goal-setting and instead explore a meaningful direction, an aim that feels nourishing, hopeful, and aligned with who you are. At Emerald Mental Health, the focus is not on chasing achievements, but on building a deeper connection to what matters to you. Whether you are feeling stuck, overwhelmed, or simply unsure of your next step, support is available to help you with more clarity and purpose. Reach out to reini@emeraldmentalhealth.com or visit www.emeraldmentalhealth.com to learn more.

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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...

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Aspartame: Villain or Low-Cal Hero

Written By: Scott Darragh

It's 8 p.m., ten minutes to pushback, and you know what I could go for? My outstanding flight attendant asks before closing the door, "Do you guys need anything?"

I wryly reply, "Some *high-quality ASPARTAME*—an ice-cold Diet Coke." Most flight attendants miss the Adam Sandler *Waterboy* reference when I drop that line. But it's true. I love a Diet Coke before a night leg. Now the question is: *Should* I love it?

Artificial sweeteners get praised and vilified about as often as Taylor Swift drops a new album. Do we have to pick a side, or can we just look at the data and decide where aspartame really fits into our lives? As a nutrition coach—and self-confessed Diet Coke fiend—here's what I've found.

The Bad:

In 2022, a large French study (Debras et al., *PLOS Medicine*) followed more than 100,000 adults and found that higher intakes of artificial sweeteners—especially aspartame and acesulfame-K—were associated with an increased risk of cancer, particularly breast and obesity-related cancers.
Sounds bad, right? Yeah, I didn't love reading that either. My defensive ego thinks, "Well, the sun causes cancer too." But let's unpack it.

People who drank the most artificial sweeteners had about a **13% higher relative risk** of developing cancer than non-users. That sounds scary until you remember this: it's an **observational study**, not proof of cause and effect. In plain English—researchers saw a pattern, but they can't say aspartame *caused* cancer. Other lifestyle factors, like body weight or diet quality, could easily play a role.

And for context? Even light alcohol use increases certain cancer risks by **20–30%**, and heavy drinking can **double** them. If aspartame were truly harmful, it would still be light turbulence compared to the storm alcohol creates for your cells.

Regulatory bodies like the **U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)** and the **World Health Organization's Joint Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA)** continue to state that **aspartame is safe at current consumption levels**. So, is aspartame "good" for you? Probably not. But is it *better* than the alternative? That's where the story changes.

The Good:

Let's talk about sugar—the real villain in this story.

A regular 12-ounce Coke contains about 39 grams of sugar, or 10 teaspoons—that's more sugar than the American Heart Association recommends for an entire day. Decades of research show what that does to your body: A 2020 meta-analysis in JAMA (formerly known as the Journal of the American Medical Association) Internal Medicine found that people who drank one or more sugary beverages per day had a 26% higher risk of developing type 2 diabetes. A 2019 Circulation study linked each daily soda to a 21% higher risk of heart disease and increased all-cause mortality.

Other data connect sugar-sweetened drinks to higher risks of dementia, weight gain, and fatty liver disease.

For pilots and flight attendants—people living on the edge of fatigue, irregular meals, and long sits—sugar spikes and crashes are the last thing we need. In comparison, artificial sweeteners don't raise blood sugar or insulin and have even shown weight-management benefits when used to replace sugar.

Now, there is such thing as TOO much aspartame. Both JECFA and the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) set the Acceptable Daily Intake (ADI) for aspartame at 40 milligrams per kilogram of body weight per day. To visualize that: One 12-ounce (355 mL) can of Diet Coke has about 180 mg of aspartame. So, a 150-pound (68 kg) person would have to drink roughly 15 to 18 cans every single day to hit the ADI—still considered safe by global standards.

So, let's sum this up: Large studies like NutriNet-Santé show minor risk associations at very high intakes, but controlled trials—our gold standard—show no measurable harm to metabolism and even positive effects for weight control when sugar is swapped for zero-calorie alternatives.

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So where does that leave us? What is the definition of health really? Ultimately that's a very personal decision. Our job puts us in positions often degrading our health. Diet Coke, water, or low-calorie snacks, can help you on your health journey but will never be all encompassing.

My goal is to give you the facts so that you can make the decision for yourself rather than join the "good" or "bad" bandwagons. All drinks and foods that don't make you sick, can serve a purpose in your nutrition. It's up to you to decide what that purpose is—not to label them as "bad" or "good."

So, if you're craving something fizzy at cruise altitude, and you know that Diet Coke keeps you sane, focused, and away from the sugary stuff—relax. You're doing just fine. Aspartame isn't the hero nor is it the villain. It's simply a tool—one that, when used in moderation, can help you fly a little lighter.





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...

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Preparing for the Annual Compensation Review

What you should know about compensation and benefits

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

Once again, it's the time of year for budget building, compensation planning, compensation reviews, and personnel reviews. While some companies do not align their fiscal year with the calendar year, most do, which makes the months from August through February particularly hectic for those of us in the compensation space.

Over the past few months and years, I've discussed several elements of compensation and benefits programs, but I've never compiled them into a ready reference for aviation managers and professionals. However, I recently developed a professional development program (PDP) course for the National Business Aviation Association (NBAA) that consolidates all the elements of typical total-rewards programs. As I contemplated the content for this month's article, it occurred to me that using some of that material to provide a reference for my colleagues in the industry might be beneficial.

First of all, it's important to get the terminology correct. HR and compensation professionals talk about compensation and benefits in terms of a company's total-rewards strategy. Total rewards are defined as: "The monetary and nonmonetary return provided to employees in exchange for their time, talents, efforts, and results" (World at Work, SC. , 2021, p. 13). Total-rewards programs typically consist of five elements:

- **Compensation -** Pay in exchange for work performed and consists of base and variable pay
- **Benefits -** Programs through which employers provide for the health and welfare of their employees and include health insurance, retirement programs, and the like
- **Well-Being** - Focused on keeping employees comfortable, happy, and healthy so that the workforce is more productive. These programs can include quality-of-life initiatives
- **Development (Careers)** - Allow employees to advance their skills, knowledge, education, abilities, and contributions. These are largely career-focused, but can also encompass programs that enhance employees' lives, e.g. graduate degrees, certification programs, etc., and
- **Recognition** - Formal and informal programs that celebrate individual and group accomplishments and demonstrate to employees that their actions are noticed and valued.

Compensation is the element that we seem to discuss most often, and it's here where we'll spend the most time. Compensation is defined as: "pay provided by an employer to workers in exchange for services such as time, effort and talent. This includes both fixed and variable pay tied to overall contributions" (World at Work, TRM, 2021, p. 29).

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Types of Compensation

The most common types of compensation are hourly wages, salaries, and bonuses Compensation categories include:

- Fixed Pay (Base Pay)
  - Can be either salary or an hourly rate
  - Non-discretionary – employees are paid a fixed amount regardless of results
- Variable Pay
  - Typically, a function of employee and/or organizational performance
  - Includes short-term incentive payments, bonuses, and long-term incentive payments
  - Allows managers and HR professionals to be more creative

Base Pay and Associated Issues

The key point to remember about base-pay rates is that they typically operate within elaborate base-pay structures, which have required significant time and effort to develop. If those structures place aviation department personnel at the same compensation grades as non-aviation personnel, market-driven pressure on aviation personnel's compensation can drive those compensation levels to the top of their respective compensation grades. In contrast, non-aviation personnel remain comfortably within their grade. This limits aviation personnel to the highest level of compensation within their grade and may keep them below the market level for their respective positions.

Base pay can be increased for a variety of reasons. The most common include:

- **Merit Increase -** yearly increase given to employees based on company performance and compensation philosophy
- **Cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) -** payments made to allow employees to stay apace with the rate of inflation
  - It's essential to recognize that the cost of living is distinct from the cost of labor. The cost of living can drive the cost of labor, but the two indices do not always correlate.
- **Equity Adjustments** - adjustments made to pay grades when compression issues occur between superiors and subordinates or peers with dissimilar lengths of service
  - Compression occurs when pay ranges get too close together and/or have too much overlap.
- **General Increases** a.k.a. Market-Driven Increases - occur when the organization finds itself behind the market rate for certain positions
  - Happens when compensation increases rapidly for positions with "hot jobs;"
  - Increases can sometimes result in the employee reaching the top of a pay band and rendering the company unable to raise compensation without promoting the employee or changing the pay structure; and
- **Lump-Sum Payment - used when the situation described above occurs**
  - Provided instead of a percentage increase, these payments are made annually to bring an employee's base pay into a competitive range without exceeding the upper level of an employee's current pay band.

There are three solutions to base-pay structural limits

1. **Increase variable pay** – while there may be structural limits incurred with variable pay as well, these actions are usually the easiest to accomplish.
2. **Promote the employee to the next higher grade** – this is one of the reasons why job titles like senior captain exist – to overcome grade limitations on base pay; and
3. **Create a separate pay structure for the aviation department to allow for more flexibility**. More and more aviation departments are resorting to this option.

Variable Pay

Variable pay comes in three basic forms: bonuses, short-term incentives (STI), and long-term incentives (LTI). STI and bonuses are often used interchangeably, but they are actually quite different.

- **Short-term incentives**
  - Usually formulaic and are paid over a single-year period
  - Criteria to receive them is determined in advance and framed with direct performance measures. The different performance measures can be weighted differently, and the payouts can vary depending on the employee's level in the organization.
- **Bonuses**
  - Typically, more informal and more discretionary – still paid over a single-year period
  - Could be awarded based on a holistic view of an employee's performance, or just because the boss likes to reward employees at the end of the year
  - Some are paid for the completion of a specific task, like hiring bonuses, referral bonuses, retention bonuses, etc.

Long-term incentives can be paid in equity or cash and typically vest over a three-to-five-year period. Equity is the usual mechanism of publicly held companies, while cash is used by privately held companies.

And that's a quick summary! Next month, we'll look at benefits, and then you'll have everything you need!



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...



Should You Hire a Financial Advisor?

Written by: Charlie Mattingly

I just returned from the RTAG (Rotary to Airline Group) National convention in Denver this weekend. My initial thought was, “What pilot shortage?!?” I don’t know the official attendance, but it was well into the thousands. The lines of people in custom-fit suites for each airline seemed hours long.

I enjoyed speaking with all the pilots looking to transition from the military to the airlines, as well as those currently employed in airline jobs seeking to advance to the next level of aviation. And for their sake, I hope the airlines and fractional carriers open the hiring floodgates sooner rather than later!

It reminded me how blessed those who currently have their dream airline job are and how fortunate (and old) I am to have had a dream military and airline career already in the rear-view mirror!

Fortunately, I attended the RTAG convention to answer financial questions and represent our financial-planning firm for pilots, Leading Edge Financial Planning.

During our conversations with pilots, we not only discussed the potential of their next airline job, but also explored their potential future professional pilot journey, the challenges and opportunities of the airline industry, and how to maximize their massive financial potential.

One of the most frequently asked questions we addressed during the convention was, “Do I need a financial planner?” Or “Why might I consider working with a financial planner?”

Clearly, as the business owner of a financial planning firm that works with pilots, I wanted to knock this question out of the park. However, I always answer this question the same way – “Not everyone needs a financial planner.” There are some DIY investors who do a great job. In fact, I found a few of those at the RTAG convention, and I quickly asked them to come to work with us to help other pilots!

Here are a few thoughts and considerations to help you determine whether a financial planner is right for you or whether you should “go it alone.”

In my experience, it seems that many professional pilots reach a point in their career where the dollar amounts are larger than they ever anticipated. This adds a sense of heaviness to managing their finances alone. They know that small mistakes with very large numbers are now more significant than they were when they were perhaps a brand-new first officer. This is akin to your first flights in the Cessna 172 versus the 787 Dreamliner with 250 passengers. It’s serious now!

On the other hand, personal finance DIYers, unlike flying a Dreamliner, can be successful with the right mindset and aptitude. If someone enjoys reading financial books (watching YouTube/Tik-Tok/Facebook doesn’t count for obvious reasons), keeping up with their airline benefits, IRS changes, and work to understand investment basics, I believe they can be successful. And I’ve met many pilots who are doing just that. It’s impressive!

Knowing the nuts and bolts of investing, taxation, and airline benefits is important. However, I think the most essential characteristic of a capable DIY investor is the right mindset.

Investing and personal finance can be like sports or other challenging endeavors where the result may have turned out well in the short term, but the execution was poor. For example, my airline buddy tells me about a hot stock tip. I invest in said stock—the price goes through the roof! Voila! We’re both geniuses! In other words, a good DIY investor knows the difference between luck and skill. And they don’t let their ego or their pride mislead them. The more a good DIY investor learns about investing, the humbler they will be.

Finally, DIY investors know that making investment decisions based on gut feelings or emotions is a big no-no. Your gut may work well in other major decisions of your life, but it can work against you in the long-term world of investing. For example, if you’re tempted to buy any investment solely because it’s gone up in price, you may reconsider the DIY path.

I believe avoiding the emotional side of investing is the most challenging part of being a DIY investor. Evidently, Vanguard does too. They recently conducted a study called Vanguard Advisor's Alpha. In the study, they attempted to put a numerical value on the net returns a trusted advisor can add to their client's portfolio. Keep in mind that Vanguard has its own slew of financial advisors, so they're not completely conflict-free in their study. As you can see in the chart below, "behavioral coaching" adds the most value by far, ranging from 0 to 200 basis points (2%).

Recently, one of my favorite Morningstar financial columnists and personal finance guru, Christine Benz, published an article titled "Why I Have a Financial Planner...Even dedicated DIYers might benefit from a second opinion."

In the article, she listed five reasons she found value in the services of a trusted financial planner.

1. We wanted a second opinion on a few important decisions.
2. We found a business model that makes sense for our situation.
3. It gave us impetus to get, and stay, organized.
4. We love having a succession plan.
5. A third party can help give us "permission to spend."

I encourage you to read her short article. It may also help you decide whether the DIY path is right for you.

If you decide you would like to explore the path of finding a trusted professional to partner with, here are a few essential questions to ask during the interview process:

Vanguard Advisor's Alpha strategy	Module	Typical value added for client (basis points)
Suitable asset allocation using broadly diversified funds/ETFs	1	> 0*
Cost-effective implementation (expense ratios)	2	30
Rebalancing	3	14
Behavioral coaching	4	0 to > 200
Asset location	5	0 to 60
Spending strategy (withdrawal order)	6	0 to 120
Total return versus income investing	7	> 0*
Range of potential value added (basis points)		Up to, or even exceed, 3% in net returns

* Value is deemed significant but too unique to each investor to quantify.

Notes: We believe implementing the Vanguard Advisor's Alpha framework can add up to, or even exceed, 3% in net returns for your clients and also allow you to differentiate your skills and practice. The actual amount of value added may vary significantly depending on client circumstances and time horizon.

Source: Vanguard.

1. How are you compensated for your services?
   - This will make any conflicts of interest immediately crystal clear. For example, "I get paid when you buy an annuity." Guess what the solution to all your financial challenges will be?
2. How can you add value commensurate with the fees I pay?
   - Are you getting what you pay for? Oftentimes, clients pay high fees for investment management only. We believe that comprehensive planning services should be integrated with investment management.
3. What is the personal profile of the typical client you serve?
   - Does the advisor you're interviewing understand airline benefits and retirement plans? Most advisors do not.
4. What are your conflicts of interest?
   - Most of these questions will be cleared up in question number one. However, this is the advisor's chance to be honest and forthcoming with potential conflicts. If they say they don't have any conflicts to disclose, then don't just walk, run away!
5. What services should I expect?
   - This is important to know so that your expectations are met. If you're not satisfied with the level of service they offer, don't feel like it's because your expectations are too high or unrealistic.
6. What are your professional designations?
   - In my opinion, if an advisor does not have the CFP®, CFA®, or CPA/PFS designation, then you should find someone else. They may be great people, but if you had to put tons of money, time, and effort into your flying ratings, then you should expect the same from the financial professional that you might entrust your life savings to.

Fly safe!



About the Author

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

How to Maximize Your Income for Mortgage Approval

Pilot-specific strategies to boost your buying power without working more hours

Written by: Jonathan Kulak

One of the most important factors in determining how much home you can qualify for is your income. But for pilots, that's where things can get unnecessarily complicated. Unlike salaried W-2 employees, airline pay isn't always consistent on paper—even though your job and income trajectory may be rock solid.

One of the most important factors in determining how much home you can qualify for is your income. But for pilots, that's where things can get unnecessarily complicated. Unlike salaried W-2 employees, airline pay isn't always consistent on paper—even though your job and income trajectory may be rock solid.

The good news? If you're working with a lender who understands aviation, you can unlock income strategies that drastically improve your loan approval odds—and help you qualify for more house without stretching your budget.

Let's break down how to do it.

Income Isn't One-Size-Fits-All (Especially for Pilots)

The mortgage industry tends to view non-salaried borrowers with skepticism. Underwriters want predictability. But as pilots, your income might fluctuate month to month—even if it's guaranteed over the long haul.

That's why knowing how to properly document and calculate your income is the key to unlocking maximum purchasing power. (At Trident, we specialize in showing underwriters how to do that—correctly and consistently—for pilots at every stage of their career.)

Option 1: Use Guaranteed Hours × Current Pay Rate

This is often the cleanest approach—and one we use frequently for newer pilots or those without a strong W-2 history. We take your minimum guarantee (typically 75 to 85 hours depending on your airline) and multiply it by your current hourly rate. That figure becomes your monthly income used for underwriting purposes.

Example: A first officer earning $95/hour with a 75-hour monthly guarantee = $7,125/month gross qualifying income. This strategy is ideal for:

- New hires without two years of W-2 history
- Pilots with variable monthly hours
- Those wanting to keep things simple

Option 2: Use Average Hours (Documented Over 12 Months)

If you've consistently flown more than your minimum guarantee, you may benefit from using your average hours over the past 12 months instead. We still multiply that average by your current hourly rate—but this method requires a little more documentation.

What we need:

- 12 months of pay stubs (can be e-documentation)
- Possibly your airline's year-end income summary

Example: Let's say your 12-month average is 88 hours/month at $100/hour = $8,800/month qualifying income. That's a $1,700/month bump vs just using guarantee.

Option 3: Use Future Pay Increases (Longevity or Upgrade)

You don't have to wait until your new pay rate kicks in to benefit from it—we can use that future income now, as long as we structure the loan properly.

The key rule: Your first mortgage payment must be after your pay increase takes effect.

Example:

- Pay bump from $100/hour to $120/hour starts Nov 1
- Close in October
- First payment due Dec 1
- Result: You qualify using $120/hour even though you're not earning it yet at closing

This also applies to:

- Captain upgrades
- Annual contractual raises
- Time-based step increases (e.g. 2nd year FO pay)

What we need:

- Letter from your airline or contract showing the pay increase date and rate
- A clean close date and first payment calculation

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Which Option Should You Use?

There's no one right answer—it depends on your specific situation. But here's a general guide:

Scenario—Best Option:

New pilot with limited W-2 history | Guaranteed Hours × Rate

Senior FO or Captain flying 90+ hrs/month | 12-Month Average Hours

Upgrading or receiving contract raise soon | Future Pay Increase

Want to get the best of all worlds? We can often show all three scenarios to underwriting and use the one that helps you qualify for the best loan structure.

Pro Tip: Don't Let an Underwriter Misclassify You

One of the biggest mistakes I see from other lenders is that they classify pilots as *variable income borrowers*—like self-employed salespeople or rideshare drivers. That triggers unnecessary requirements and may hurt your approval chances.

At Trident, our underwriters know better. We document everything correctly and close loans without unnecessary friction.

Final Approach—Use Every Advantage You've Earned

Your compensation is strong, your career track is clear, and your earning potential is growing. Unless your lender knows how to work with that, you could be leaving thousands on the table. Whether you're buying your first house, moving bases, or upgrading homes, the smartest move is to work with someone who understands how to qualify pilots correctly.

Have questions or want to explore your options?

Email me at jk@mythl.com or call/text 850-377-1114 or visit my website tridenthomeloans.com/jonathan-kulak — I'm always happy to help a fellow pilot navigate the mortgage skies.

This article is part of my ongoing mortgage series for Aero Crew News — helping pilots build smarter financial flight plans.



About the Author

Jonathan Kulak is a Senior Loan Originator at Trident Home Loans, a pilot/veteran-owned/operated mortgage lender licensed in 47 states which is located in Pensacola, Fla. He also holds an FAA Airline Transport Pilot and is a first officer with a major... Read More...





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Free, Accessible, Actionable: *How BreakTurn Is Redefining Aviation Career Mentorship*

Written by: Aero Crew News writers



A New Way to Launch and Sustain Aviation Careers

Inspiring the next generation of aviation professionals might just start with a few clicks. That's the idea behind **The BreakTurn Academy**, a free, online hub designed to help anyone, from high school students to retiring airline captains, discover and navigate their place in aviation.

Hosted at app.breakturn.com, The Academy is the newest initiative from **BreakTurn**, the company that pioneered the first aviation-specific Department of Defense (DoD) SkillBridge program. After years of helping service members transition into civilian aerospace careers, BreakTurn is using that same expertise to make aviation guidance accessible to everyone.

"The BreakTurn Academy is a way for us to provide real information in an easily digestible and lasting format," says Austin Roth, co-founder and President of BreakTurn and The BreakTurn Foundation. "It's based on our experience counseling thousands of service members transitioning into the civil aerospace sector, and we want to expand that to veterans and non-veterans alike."

Three words sum up the platform's mission: **Free. Accessible. Actionable.**

Scaling SkillBridge Success

BreakTurn's story began with a simple mission: help military aviators and maintainers bridge the gap between service and civilian careers. The company built its foundation around the Department of Defense SkillBridge program, which allows service members to spend up to their final six months of active duty in civilian internships, training programs, or gaining on-the-job experience, all while still being paid by the military.

Before BreakTurn, aviation-specific SkillBridge opportunities were rare. Roth and co-founder Landon Cheben saw an unmet need and built partnerships with flight schools, maintenance programs, helicopter air ambulance operators, and Part 91 and 135 flight departments to create a pipeline for transitioning military members. "We didn't start with a big business plan," Roth recalls. "**We just wanted to help people**. It snowballed from there."

In just a few years, BreakTurn became the first and largest aviation-specific SkillBridge provider, facilitating hundreds of placements and offering free career counseling to thousands more. Those sessions often became less about job placement and more about confidence, identity, and understanding value in the civilian market.

"Someone might have 3,000 flight hours or ten years maintaining multimillion-dollar aircraft and still have no idea how to present that to a civilian employer," Cheben explains. "Sometimes all they need is five minutes of honest guidance."

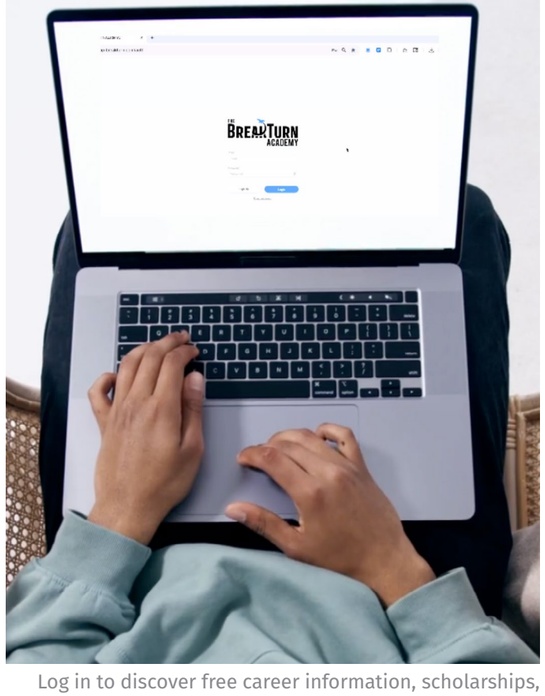
Cheben's mantra is simple: **"Action beats deliberation."** For him, the hardest part of any career change is starting. "For many people, it could be as simple as logging on one time and spending five or ten minutes educating yourself on a possible career," he says. "That small action—just looking—can open doors you didn't know existed."

The Birth of The BreakTurn Academy

As BreakTurn grew, the team faced a new challenge: scalability. The hands-on counseling that defined their early work could only reach so many people. They needed a way to turn their hard-earned knowledge into something widely available—and still free. That idea became **The BreakTurn Academy**.

Built as a comprehensive online resource, The Academy offers clear, practical guidance for anyone exploring or advancing an aviation career. It's more than a collection of web pages—it's a mission-driven platform designed to expand opportunity across the entire aerospace sector. "We see this as a useful tool for everyone—from high schoolers considering a career in aviation to professionals who've been in the industry for years," says Roth. "**And we want them all to be able to use it for free.**"

At its core, the Academy represents a bold idea: **Career knowledge should be free, accessible, and actionable.**



Log in to discover free career information, scholarships, and training opportunities.

Inside The BreakTurn Academy

Unlike traditional training sites or career portals, The BreakTurn Academy doesn't charge fees or hide information behind memberships. Instead, it focuses on clarity, relevance, and accessibility, with a design that meets users where they are—whether they're exploring, training, or transitioning.

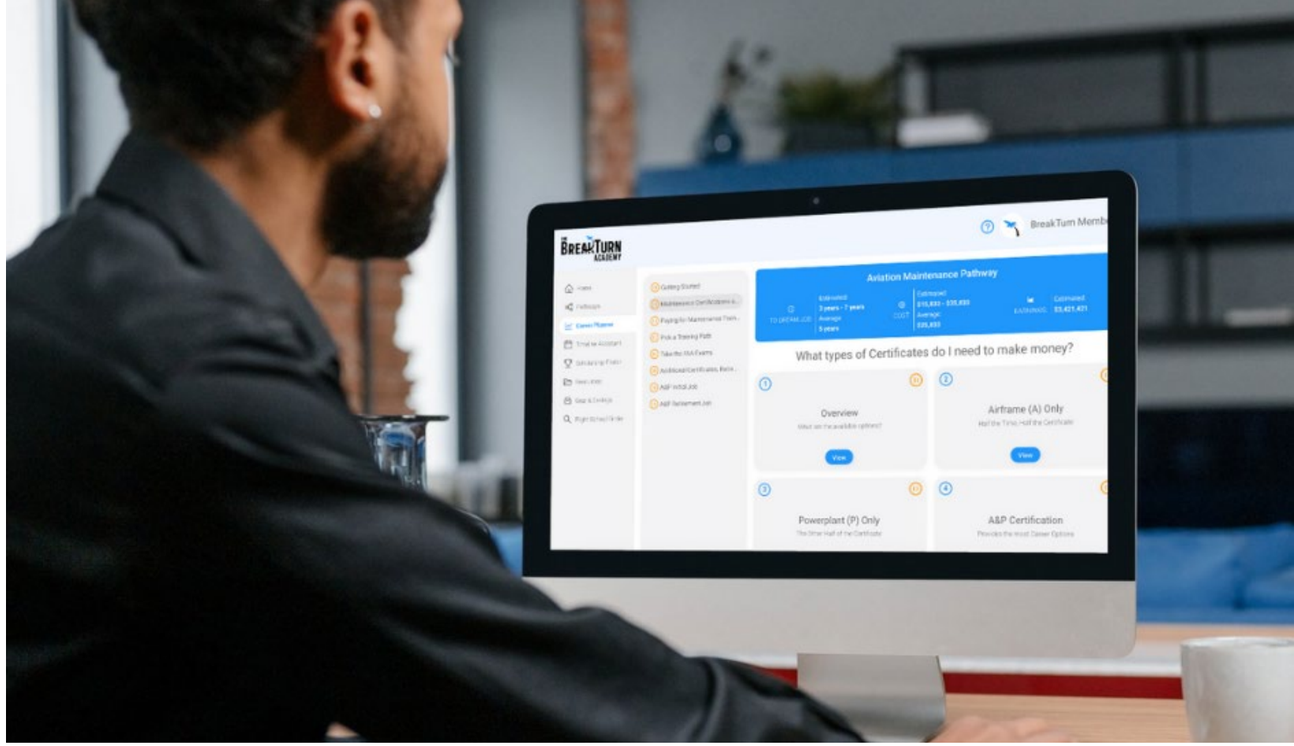
Career Pathways and Custom Modules

Users can create a free profile that tailors content to their background and goals. The system considers prior experience, certificates, education level, and even desired retirement age, then generates personalized guidance on training, funding, and career planning.

Behind the scenes, the platform dynamically adjusts learning modules delivering relevant text, videos, links and other resources that can be revisited anytime. It's designed to answer questions both big and small, from "What's ATP-CTP?" to "How can I use my GI Bill to become an A&P?"

Flight School Finder

Choosing a training path can be overwhelming. The Academy's Flight School Finder helps users **search and compare aviation schools across the U.S.**—from large Part 141 academies to smaller Part 61 operators. Each listing includes details on costs, programs, and certifications offered, making it easier to plan the path to the cockpit.



Personalized modules within The BreakTurn Academy guide users toward the next step in their aviation careers.

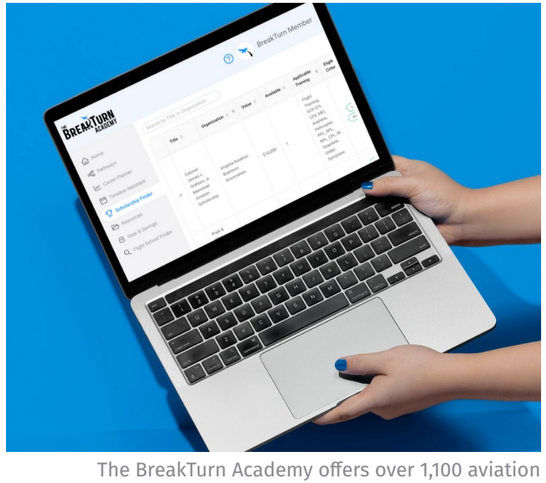
Scholarship Database

Funding is one of aviation's biggest barriers. The BreakTurn Academy's scholarship database tackles that problem head-on, hosting **over 1,100 verified aviation scholarships**. Listings are sorted by category—flight, maintenance, collegiate, and more—and include eligibility, deadlines, and requirements.

Deals and Discounts for Aviation Professionals

The Academy also features an ever-growing list of exclusive discounts from leading aviation brands like **Bose, David Clark, Jetseam, and Amberjack**. It's a small but meaningful way to help professionals save on the tools they need most—whether it's a headset, uniform gear, or training equipment.

Together, these tools make The BreakTurn Academy a true one-stop resource for aviation education, career planning, and professional growth.



The BreakTurn Academy offers over 1,100 aviation scholarships, easily searchable by category, eligibility, and deadline.

The Maintainers: Aviation's Brittle Backbone

Among all the pathways in The BreakTurn Academy, one stands out for its urgency: Aviation Maintenance. "I keep asking CEOs and Presidents of aviation companies to tell me about their hiring needs and they always start with pilots," Roth recounts. "As soon as I ask about maintainers they go on and on about how much worse they need maintainers."

Connecting the dots between the companies needing maintainers and people who are already qualified or interested in a maintenance career is challenging but not impossible.

"As many people are realizing, the trades are less susceptible to the impact of AI and economic downturns than many white-collar jobs," Roth explains. "Jobs in aviation maintenance and drones can be very lucrative and don't require nearly the time or financial investment that many far less lucrative jobs do. They just need someone to chart a course for them and show them the way."

Roth's background as an Army Black Hawk pilot gives him a deep appreciation for the technicians who kept his aircraft mission-ready and a frustration with how often their talents go untapped after military service. "We are very passionate about maintainers," he says. "Many of them don't realize their own value and what they have to offer the industry after their military career. It's a shame that most leave their experience and qualifications behind when they have a six-figure career at their fingertips."



The Academy's **Maintenance Pathway** provides step-by-step guidance on FAA certification, trade schools, and scholarship opportunities in order to help skilled maintainers turn experience into civilian credentials and high-paying jobs.

Beyond Pilots and Mechanics

While much of aviation focuses on flying and fixing, BreakTurn's vision is broader. The Academy's growing library includes, or soon will include career tracks for drone pilots, dispatchers, and air traffic controllers, reflecting the industry's expanding scope.

"Our main goal is to expand the number of people interested in pursuing a career in all aspects of aviation," Roth says. "We want any job that requires an aviation-specific certificate or education to be found inside The Academy and **keeping it free is absolutely critical**."

This holistic approach mirrors the future of aerospace itself: interconnected, technology-driven, and dependent on a wide range of skills.

Career Advice for a Lifetime

The BreakTurn Academy isn't just about starting a career. It's about sustaining one. Aviation is a lifelong journey, and Roth believes guidance shouldn't end once the first job offer arrives.

"You wouldn't believe how many soon-to-be retired airline captains have no idea what, if anything, they can do after they're forced to retire at 65," he says. "The BreakTurn Academy even has something for them. **Career advice doesn't end at your first job. It's necessary through the end of your last.**"

That career-long perspective is what sets BreakTurn apart. The company isn't just helping people enter aviation. It's helping them stay, adapt, and thrive throughout their careers.

Partnering for Progress

As The BreakTurn Academy grows, BreakTurn is looking for partners who share its vision. While the company's SkillBridge placement business continues to thrive, the Academy opens a new frontier where education, industry collaboration, and outreach intersect. "We're looking for partners who are as passionate as we are about growing interest in aviation careers," Roth says. "That includes flight schools, aviation companies, manufacturers, associations, and even marketing partners who believe **we're going to have to do more than find aviation professionals. We're going to have to build them**."

BreakTurn has more than proven that they can connect with potential aviation professionals. They already have over 2,200 users on The Academy app. In three years, they grew a pre-RTAG Conference mixer from 250 people

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Austin Roth addresses the crowd at their pre-RTAG mixer in October 2024.

to over 750 in Denver, Colo. in October this year. Clearly their message is resonating with potential employees.

For potential partners, the opportunity is clear: contribute to a meaningful cause while connecting with a motivated, aviation-focused audience. With pilot and mechanic shortages persisting, BreakTurn's initiative combines authenticity, reach, and purpose in a way few programs can.

From Counseling to Community

What began as a mission to help service members transition into civilian aviation has evolved into something far larger; a community-driven movement to grow and strengthen the entire aerospace workforce.

BreakTurn's journey is one of transformation: from personal counseling to scalable impact. By turning years of one-on-one mentorship into a free, public resource, Roth and Cheben are ensuring that anyone with an interest in aviation can access reliable, actionable guidance. "The Academy is our way of scaling that personal touch," Roth says. "We've seen what happens when people have the right information at the right time. It changes lives."

By keeping The BreakTurn Academy free and open to all, BreakTurn is lowering barriers, sparking curiosity, and inspiring confidence in the next generation of aviators, whether they're fixing turbines, flying taildraggers, or managing towers.

The Future of Flight, Fueled by Community

BreakTurn has already proven that service members can transition seamlessly into civilian aviation with the right guidance. Now, through The BreakTurn Academy, that promise extends to anyone ready to take flight.

For those who have ever looked skyward and wondered where to begin, BreakTurn offers a simple message: you don't have to navigate it alone.

And for partners, educators, and organizations ready to make an impact in aviation's next chapter the invitation is open.

Visit **The BreakTurn Academy** today to explore free, actionable career pathways for pilots, maintainers, drone operators, air traffic controllers, and more. Create your free profile, access over 1,100 aviation scholarships, discover exclusive industry discounts, and take the next step toward your aviation goals.

Want to learn more about how you can partner with BreakTurn on The Academy or have transitioning service members placed at your organization salary-free through SkillBridge? Visit **breakturn.com** to see how BreakTurn is connecting service members, veterans, and civilians to the future of aerospace or email **ops@breakturn.com**.

Ready to Take Flight?

Whether you're a student, veteran, or aviation professional, your next opportunity might be just a few clicks away.

About the Organization

BreakTurn provides free career counseling and mentorship for anyone pursuing an aviation career. Originally focused on service members through the DoD SkillBridge program, it now offers guidance, training... Read More...

The BreakTurn and BreakTurn Foundation team at RTAG 2025





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