

THE PROFESSIONAL FLIGHT INSTRUCTOR

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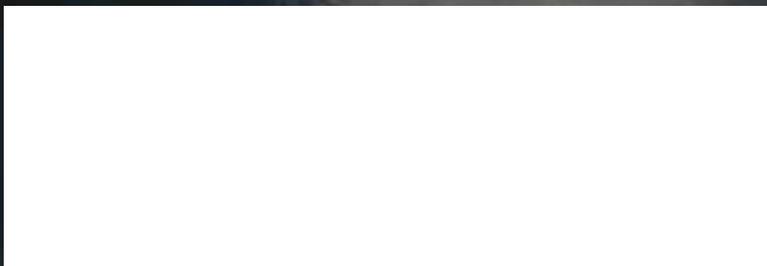
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Hope Is Not a Pilot Strategy



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position Report

The Best Instructors Learn from Their Differences



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Part of being an instructor is being a knowledgeable, capable, experienced pilot who can share his or her knowledge and experience. We work to create an impression in our local pilot circles that we are a resource that others should turn to, a place to get “the right answer,” someone who can “teach me to do it the right way.” Sometimes, however, we take this too far.

I find it interesting to observe what happens when two instructors begin to “discuss” a contentious topic. Many times it results in stubborn, “I am right, and you are wrong” posturing between instructors who simply aren’t willing to see each other’s viewpoint. Recently I have seen this in discussions between instructors (and I will admit to being a part of it on one side or the other) over the proposed training requirements for pilots in airlines. The NPRM proposes credit toward an ATP for pilots from a four-year collegiate or university aviation program. This would reduce the total number of hours a pilot would need compared with just general flight experience.

Instructors working in academic training environments (think large universities and colleges) see significant value in the training programs, indicating that less “total time” is needed with proper training. Instructors who have been airline pilots for decades and aren’t familiar with these programs believe that “experience (time flying around in a real airplane)” is what matters most and that these “wonderkids” with only a few hundred hours can’t be capable pilots for an airline without more experience.

Who’s right? Probably both sides, in some sense. This is true of many of the spirited discussions we have as instructors. Many times we don’t see the other sides of arguments simply because of our different approaches to teaching, different styles of knowledge transferal, and new thought approaches. We need to be cautious to not be blocked to seeing other people’s approaches to issues or methods we think we do best, just because that is how we learned.

It can be hard to step back and recognize that we aren’t all the smartest, best, most revered pilot or instructor in the world. We can learn from each other. Spirited discussions can be helpful, but we need recognize that others have experience that can be valuable, even if it is different from what we know.

The best CFI is one that is always learning. I think the mark of a professional CFI is one who is always going to seek out new knowledge, new experiences, and new approaches to then be able to use in their teaching efforts. Take the time to visit different types of training providers; maybe a Part 142 training center, a provider of jet transitions, a local FBO, or a large collegiate training provider. Each of these environments, and any other you might find, does it a little bit different. They all have learned tips and tricks that work in their environment that help them build what they think is a safe and capable pilot. The more instructors are exposed to different environments, the better they will see that any one position is probably not entirely the best way, but between them all, we

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can continue to develop good training practices.

Sometimes humbleness is a virtue also. I know I have a great deal yet to learn. I may feel sometimes that I have more experience than others, but every day I talk with NAFI members I am reminded that there are a wide variety of differences in experiences that instructors can bring to the table. Next time you see two instructors facing off like bulldogs defending their food bowls, or find yourself doing it, step back and think about the middle ground. You are both probably correct at some level, but as with any two people telling stories, the real one is probably somewhere in the middle. No CFI knows everything, we all have more to learn. Take the time to learn from each other.