

THE PROFESSIONAL FLIGHT INSTRUCTOR

MENTOR



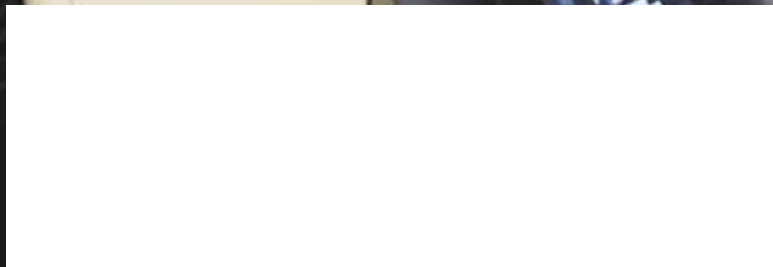
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Flight School Management

7 Ways to Build Your Business

- Your Next Generation of Students
- Thriving as an Independent
- Teaching Adult Ed Classes



position Report

Just Business

Flight instruction is about more than teaching people to fly



Jason Blair, MCFI
Executive Director

Running a flight-training business is hard—really hard. I know exactly what each of you who runs, owns, or manages a flight school goes through. I’ve owned a flight school, too.

Before I joined NAFI, that was my life. I managed instructors, taught students, plowed runways, got called on Sunday morning when the line staff forgot their keys, and did anything else that needed to be done, practically every day of the year, including many major holidays. That’s what we do when we want our businesses to thrive—whatever it takes, on a daily basis, from being a salesperson to a manager to a plumber, if necessary.

For flight school owners, many weeks don’t come with a day off. We’re on call late at night, early in the morning, and when we have something else planned. It can be frustrating, but it’s also rewarding to live our passion. It’s a tough way to make a living, and it’s tough to break away long enough to work on the business not in it, and both are things that many people—including some in the aviation industry itself—don’t understand.

In this issue of *Mentor*, we chose to focus on this business side of flight training. While we work to promote flight instructors and your interests, we’re also motivated to help drive discussions about what can make flight-training businesses more successful, too. These conversations about successful business practices are vital to helping this industry survive.

Indeed, if anyone understands the frustrations that you face, it’s your fellow NAFI members. Many of us have dealt with such complications as, “How am I going to pay my employees this week when we’ve been grounded for two weeks with bad weather?” or, “What am I going to do when an aircraft goes down for maintenance on a Friday, when parts won’t be available until next Tuesday but a student has a checkride on Monday?” These are the tough situations business owners face, and they require actual business-minded solutions.

At the same time, I can say that I never had a day when I woke up wishing I didn’t have to go to the airport. What we do is pretty darn special. We get to work in a field that we love, and sure, there are frustrations,

but there are also some pretty spectacular rewards.

A couple of months ago, I was flying back one Friday night from a meeting in Washington, D.C. In most professions, people would have been well into their weekend plans by that point. While I was technically “traveling for work,” I was flying my own airplane across the country. Somewhere over Ohio, I cracked a smile simply from the realization that we all get to fly for work. The reward in our field is sometimes the “work” itself.

But the intrinsic rewards we get from flying, and teaching flying, isn’t enough; we have to be able to eat, pay our staff, pay our bills, and keep our businesses growing. I know you each work hard, and you’re each experts in your own operations. Toward those ends, we also ask you to share both good and bad experiences to help the entire flight-training industry survive and thrive.

Running flight-training operations is tough, and few owners have become wealthy by doing it. But many have thoroughly enjoyed a career in the field, and they’ve made friends, memories, and hundreds of new pilots along the way.

To help you be as success-

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ful as possible in this field, we’re dedicated to sharing information with you that will help you learn from each other and that you can put to use in your operations. As we grow as an organization, we’ll continue to provide content and services that will help you be as successful as possible in your business endeavors—as individual instructors, as business owners, and as aviation professionals. ■