



MONDAY MOTIVATOR

CREATED BY PERFORMANCE STRATEGIES
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Business and Aviation

Welcome to our 38th edition of The Monday Motivator. The weekly business journal that serves you a mental cup of java for the management mind. In this special six-page edition we're going to look at the similarities that exist between the air transportation system and corporate America. To be sure these points can be applied to entire global enterprises. To get us started I'm going to tell you a story.



When I was only 10 years old I spent my summers on a farm run by extended family in a place called Ringgold, GA. I have many fond memories of my youthful years there playing with aunts and uncles, cousins and neighbors. One day one of the men in the area stopped by and mentioned that he had bought an old military surplus light aircraft. As I recall it was a

Taylor-Craft. This is a lightweight, single engine two seater that was by any measure, a really basic flying machine. Farmers sometimes used them just to fly around their property as the farms tended to be spread out over many parcels of land.

Being curious, I asked to see this airplane and the next thing I knew I not only saw it, I was sitting in it on the lap of the owner / pilot. We took off from a grassy strip on a nearby farm. I recall the man telling me we were going to hit the trees coming up if I did not pull back on the stick in front of me. So I got a good grip on this stick and pulled back. To my amazement, the little plane with us inside it, and my dad in the back seat, all flew over those trees with room to spare.

I was hooked. I wanted to fly planes for the rest of my life, and I have done that. But to become a modern pilot one has to take a lot of courses and learn half a dozen topics that are all part of the

flying experience. They are: How airplanes work. About weather. About communications. About navigation. About planning. About instruments. These six topics were important to the aviator.

The first thing I had to do was complete a course called Ground School. There I learned about safety and these six topics but only in a safe, comfortable class room, not the tight cockpit of a real airplane. It was fun! I still have the books from that class taken decades ago.

Soon it was time to get into a real airplane. This time I was in a two seat Cessna 150 with an instructor by my side. For the next 40 hours of flying my instructor taught me about pre-flight, navigation, communication, trip planning, starting the engine, taxiing to the takeoff position, how to take off, how to make turns, climbs or descents and how to approach an airport, and then how to land the plane safely. (A “good landing” is one you can walk away from. A really good landing is one where the aircraft can be used again.) One day the instructor got out of the plane and told me to do it myself. With just me in the aircraft and my stomach full of butterflies, I took off. I then followed every direction I’d been given during those 40 hours of instruction. Within 10 minutes I landed the plane and taxied to the parking area for the celebration.

That was over 4,000 flight hours ago. Since then I served many years in the US Airforce and I’ve learned to fly many different types of aircraft including twin engine planes and what are called complex aircraft. These are meant for pilots who want to fly “on instruments” or in a variety of weather conditions. I also introduced a lot of my friends to aviation, some of whom went on to become very accomplished pilots.



I still fly every couple of weeks with a longtime friend and pilot who owns a beautiful modern Cirrus SR-22-G fixed gear, high performance engine, composite, all glass panel avionics aircraft that cruises at about 200 MPH all day long. I have logged 680 hours with him in that aircraft.

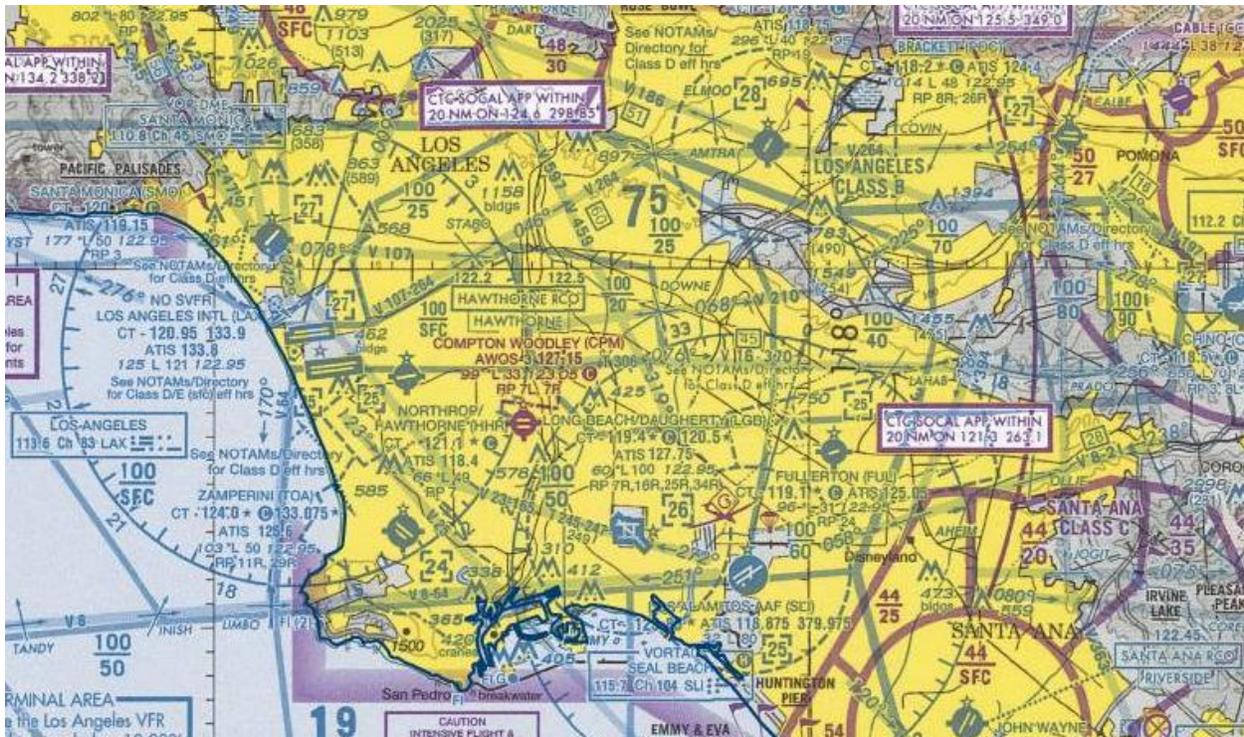
So what are the lessons that apply to both business management as well as aviation? There are five we’re going to examine.

1. About weather (business conditions that are beyond your control)
2. About communications (the importance of clear, accountable two-way communications all the time)
3. About navigation (how to steer your company in the direction you want it to go)
4. About planning (the role of leadership to anticipate change)
5. About instruments (using Key Productivity Indicators – or metrics – and responding accordingly)

So let’s begin with WEATHER. To a pilot weather is everything. Small planes are at the mercy of wind, rain, storms, snow, sleet and a list of other weather considerations. Business is like that too. Except in this case weather is the sum total of the business conditions you are operating in. When about to fly, pilots check half a dozen online weather reporting sites to know in advance what to expect all along the planned route plus the conditions at the destination airport. Business

should be doing the same thing. What is your destination? Where do you want to be and by when? What are your business conditions all along the way? Are you prepared to handle them?

Next we have COMMUNICATIONS. The image on your left is the communications “stack” inside the Cirrus that my friend and I fly in. What you are looking at amounts to 2 talk radios, 2 navigation radios, 2 GPS units, 1 transponder unit and a switching unit to determine which of these radios are going to be in use at any given time. Federal aviation law requires a pilot to have certain radios on board in order to maintain the safety of flying for everyone. Pilots love the radios because someone on the ground (air traffic controller) can see all the other airplanes around you and warn you in advance of their proximity. Business needs the same type of planning for communications with upline and downline teams. As a manager how much importance do you place on communications? Do you tell your teams where you’re headed as a company and what they should expect along the way? Are you able to warn your teams of competitive or regulatory issues that might require a change of course at some point?



Now let’s talk about NAVIGATION. Pilots need to know in advance what their route is going to include. Before modern GPS units, pilots depended on aviation charts like the one you see above. These are paper maps with a lot of data on them and the pilot has to take classes to learn how to read them. This sample shows the area around my neighborhood between Los Angeles on the left and Santa Ana (John Wayne) at the bottom right. GPS makes everything easier but pilots still carry these paper maps of the planned route with them in the aircraft when they depart. In business the role of leadership includes knowing in advance what the conditions are before, during and after a new marketing campaign or product / service introduction. In a merger, acquisition or change of control the business landscape changes. How informed do you want to be? Do you plan in advance or hold others accountable for giving you reports of what lies ahead?

Of course PLANNING is everything to a pilot... here we are talking about the sum of all conditions along the way plus fuel requirements. Federal aviation law states that a pilot must have 45 minutes of reserve fuel on board the aircraft when reaching the destination. This is in case something pops up to keep the pilot from landing there. If a pilot is flying into the wind the ground speed will be less and the fuel use will be more. If flying with the wind the opposite is true. But the pilot needs to plan for this in advance with no room for error. Business is like this too, but the fuel is your budget and staffing. As a leader you need to know in advance what a project, such as a marketing campaign, is going to cost. You can't run a company by adding up the receipts at the end of the month to see if you have hit your budget forecast or not. Planning is everything in business as it is in aviation.

Finally we have something in an aircraft called instruments. This is a typical twin engine panel.



Pilots depend on the information that instruments provide during flight. Even if you have limited or no visibility outside the aircraft windows these instruments tell you where you are and how you are. A pilot learns to read these dials and gauges very carefully, taking note of what the data adds up to. This is a never ending process when the aircraft is in flight. If the data being

presented to you is ignored you assume huge risks. If the data is simply misinterpreted you add even bigger risks.

So a pilot learns to pay constant attention to what we in business call METRICS. Some businesses call them KPIs (Key Productivity Indicators). No matter what we call them, the data tells us where we are and how we are in business. As a manager it is your role to scan the data, determine how it impacts your planning, your budgets, your staffing and your goals. In aviation there is a cute little saying that pilots toss at each other regarding flying.. “Keep the blue side up!” If you look at the sample instrument panel image you’ll see at the top center an instrument with a blue half circle and a brown half circle. The blue side represents the sky above you. The brown side represents the ground below you. This is a critical instrument because it tells you the attitude of your aircraft at all times. Are you climbing, descending or turning, and if so, in which direction? Right or left? By keeping the blue side up you are in control of the aircraft.



Other instruments tell you how fast you’re going, what direction you’re heading, how high you are and whether or not you’re going up or down. Other instruments tell you if you’re on your intended track or off that course so you can make corrections as needed.

In business your metrics provide similar important data so you can make corrections as well and steer your company to the destination on time and on budget. Do you pay attention to your instruments?

In summary business is a lot like aviation; you must plan, communicate, coordinate and lead your company to the destination safely. The best advice we can offer is this: Keep the blue side up!

Want to know more about business planning for managers? Check out these links:

Business is like an airplane:

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/quora/2013/10/01/how-a-business-is-like-an-airplane/#3b11bdbafa41>

Jay and I are both flyers and love the comparison to business. In our coaching work we help guide founders, CEOs, COOs, CMOs and their directors, Vice Presidents and senior level managers to handle the five aviation topics we had to learn when we started flying. As Jay likes to say, “We are flying in formation.” (The plane below is an ultramodern Gulfstream G-650)



Until next week, if you know of any business that would benefit with a little coaching in the areas of organization, time and task management, social media, sales, marketing, customer service, operations, HR, leadership or team-building, have them give us a call at 562-577-7000 or send us an email. We will keep you in the loop on how the landings are going.

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Our consulting and coaching focus supports management, sales, customer service and operations. Included are sales and management assessment surveys as well as leadership, teambuilding, sales operations efficiency and online

tracking projects. Our other team members bring additional disciplines as well. We will showcase them in future editions of this business journal. We are all committed to driving the results you want.