

The Perfect Transition Candidate

by Mike Dwyer



Before we explore together the perfect transition candidate, let's set the stage by narrowing our focus so that we can be precise about the process. For today's column, let's discuss the **perfect**, single-pilot, turbojet, transition candidate. We can adapt the process and principles to any transition and we intend to do that in subsequent columns. Let's also expand the concept and not think exclusively about the pilot and his logbook. Let's broaden our scope for the moment to include the operating environment and the airplane.

Since perfection can be an intimidating concept, let's have a little fun and go overboard to make a point. I have a business mentor who once gave me the advice that, "the price of perfection is bankruptcy." Let's remove that constraint for a few minutes.

First, our man or woman has to be wealthy – and I'm not talking about 30 car dealerships and a professional sports franchise wealthy; I am talking wealthy like Warren Buffet and Bill Gates combined with an attitude that says airplanes come first. This wealth

also allows our pilot the luxury of never having to be anywhere at any particular time. Forget about working for a living, our pilot is too busy accumulating ratings, everything from Advanced Ground Instructor to Multi-Engine Airship Transport Instructor Check Airman.

Our pilot's lifestyle also affords 10 hours of sleep each night, which contributes to his emotional /psychological balance that is on a par with say, Buddha. Naturally our candidate runs marathons, eats raw vegetables, has a negative cholesterol level and has a resting heart rate of 4.

You can see where we are going with the environment and airplane. Our home airport, which we built, has 12,000 feet of runway, an FSS weather station, no traffic, a control tower, fire department, rescue equipment, no mountains or structures taller than our organic Dunkin Donuts franchise and a heated hangar with a three-shift, Part 43 maintenance facility. Retired Air Force, Navy, corporate and airline pilots are always hanging around to dispense advice or ride shotgun if we feel the need for company.

Lastly the airplane. Of course with this kind of wealth, we can fly anything we want but the jewel of the hangar is a jet that the FAA says we can fly single pilot. Today it would be a Raytheon Premier I or one of several Citations. Tomorrow, an Adam 700, Safire, Eclipse or Javelin, to name a few.

Every imaginable safety device has been added to this airplane to scour the earth for terrain, traffic and weather and naturally the integrated FMS will draw our course line from pulling the chalks to shutting down at our destination FBO. We even have some toys from NASA/CIA that Honeywell and Collins don't even know about yet but, er... we can't tell you about them.

Notice that I have said nothing yet about our mythical pilot's logbook. Back to the real world, which involves insurance underwriting. This is a great place to start because, at the moment, insurance requirements are typically the long pole in the tent when it comes to blasting off solo in a jet.

Our guest columnist, Sean Kallsen will tell you much more about insurance, I only intend to make some very broad comments and then move off insurance to where the emphasis really belongs.

A perfect, single-pilot jet candidate has about 1,500 hours total

time in 500-hour chunks. The first 500 is single-engine piston with some high performance (the higher the better), followed by 500 hours of multi-engine piston and capped by 500 of multi-engine turboprop. Fifteen hundred is a nice round number because it accommodates the ATP rating, which is easily added when you attend the simulator training for the jet type rating. Let's also assume that our perfect candidate started to attend simulator training sometime during his twin-engine flying and continued it through the turboprop. This shows a pilot that has years of experience in several models and has transitioned, in round numbers, from 160 KIAS to 200 KIAS to 250 KIAS.

Moving to 350 KIAS in a jet is not a quantum leap especially when you consider that while speed increases, workload typically decreases. This is a very sensible, easy transition to manage with the tools that we discuss in greater detail during the course of our column.

Before I close with how to bridge the gap from a perfect candidate to what resides in your own logbook, it will be instructive to tell you what makes us cringe in the transition business. The conversation usually goes something like this.

Enterprising Pilot: "How soon can I fly single pilot?"

Guardian Jet: "What does your logbook look like?"

EP: "250 hours in a Waco."

GJ: "Ouch."

EP: "What will the insurance company require?"

GJ: "Why is that important?"

EP: "They have minimums that they need to protect their investment."

GJ: "I'm interested in protecting you and your passengers."

EP: "Oh. How much do you charge

per day?"

GJ: "\$700 per day."

EP: "That's ridiculous"

GJ: "Oh."

EP: "I can find someone for \$350 per day!"

GJ: "Wow, that's great."

EP: "Will you do it for \$350 per day?"

GJ: "No."

EP: "Why should I pay you more money?"

GJ: "Read the course content."

From the three scenarios I have presented, the zillionaire, the fictitious perfect candidate and the Evil, oops, Enterprising Pilot, let's now extract the perfect, single-pilot, turbojet, transition candidate.

This will sound simplistic but pardon me; we have had some very interesting conversations in the last two years of pilot training. Start with the attitude of, what is the absolute best way to move from where I am to where I want to go.

It is refreshing how many pilots we work with in that category and operate jet aircraft with the highest levels of safety and excellence. The focus needs to be on the smartest strategy as opposed to the shortest distance between two points or the lowest cost. Obviously, capitalism should always prevail, but let's get the lowest price on the best strategy or plan. Your jet-training partner ought to be selected the way you pick your heart surgeons.

Listen to your transition training provider and let them make custom recommendations that fit what you are doing. You have a wealth of tools in your toolbox and it makes sense to bring the right process to your particular transition. Light on total time but heavy on single-engine turbine time? Go with Plan A. Lots of total time but

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it's all piston? Plan B is your answer. Light on high-performance but strong in the rating department? Plan C. Light on everything? Plan ABC.

Listen, plan, and ask a lot of questions of whomever you assemble as your transition team. The farther down the road you are thinking, the better. That goes for what is your next airplane, as well as the ongoing pieces of your jet operations.

Let me revisit the insurance question briefly one more time. **Never** ask what you need; present a plan to the underwriter. If your transition team has done a thorough job, every concern that will arise has been addressed and put to rest. Let's impress the underwriter and raise his eyebrows in amazement rather than knit his brow with concern. While most aviation underwriters are pilots, they are not jet instructors and therefore should not be the person

building your transition plan.

I said in the first paragraph that I wanted to broaden your scope. Let me close by saying an unprecedented number of single-pilot jets are coming and frankly we as individuals and an industry are not ready for them.

Let's eliminate the distinction between owner-pilots and professionals; it is not as hard as you think. The **perfect**, single-pilot, turbojet, transition candidate has

an ongoing attitude of seeking perfection in operating the aircraft. Perfection is intimidating, aspiring to it is not.

Dedicating the required time and resources to the endeavor will add the deep satisfaction of operating at a world-class level to the thrill of flying jet aircraft.

Twin and Turbine, through this column wants to be your partner in this process.



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