

Stepping Up to Your First Jet

CitationJet Training
Expert Sid Tucker
Discusses Strategies for
Transitioning to Turbojets



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Photo by Dan Moore

by Mike Dwyer

If the best safety device is a well-trained pilot, then the best training device is a highly experienced instructor who knows how to transform a green pilot into an excellent airman. One of the best in the light-jet training business is Sid Tucker, retired manager of Wichita's FlightSafety Citation Learning Center. Sid was one of the first FAA-designated check airmen in the CitationJet. During his 11-year tour as manager at FSI, he oversaw the training of the majority of 525 pilots who are flying today.

I have asked Sid to share his observations about transitioning into a turboprop aircraft, as well as his insights in regard to owner-pilots. No one has better credentials to discuss this topic than Sid. And with his well-known reputation for candor, he is qualified to tell it the way it is.

To establish my credentials as author of this article, I am a graduate of FlightSafety's 525 course. In 1994, with 2,500 hours of essentially Mooney time, a diploma from a slam-dunk twin school and a fresh ATP written completed at American Flyers, I arrived in Wichita as a new CitationJet salesman. As part of my job training, I was sent to FlightSafety to obtain my CJ type rating.

My instructor was Brian Curry, who is still actively tutoring 525 candidates. I took the course with Mark Gardner, a CitationJet/Bravo/Mustang area sales manager extraordinaire, who continues to fly and sell for Cessna in Denver.

During our CitationJet training, the following comments were recorded on the cockpit voice recorder.

During the first V1 engine cut:

Instructor Curry: "Ride 'em cowboy."

During first dark-panel approach:

Gardner (co-pilot): "Mike, start right turn."

Dwyer (pilot): "Starting right turn."

Gardner: "Turn right, you are turning left."

Dwyer: "I am not, I'm turning right."

Gardner: "No, you are turning left!"

Instructor Curry: "Dwyer, your other right, please."

After second dark-panel approach:

Gardner (pilot): "Wow, we were hauling a** when we hit the ground..."

Last minute check ride advice:

Instructor Curry: "Mike, draw an L and R on the back of the appropriate hand."

I wanted to write an article on transition-to-jet training for two reasons: First, I think it is a compelling topic at a time when pilots are gaining an unprecedented access to light jets. Second, to provide aspiring turboprop operators a blueprint for successful transitioning. Sid asked that I make clear that these opinions are his and that he is not speaking on behalf of his former employer.



Dwyer: What has been your experience with the owner-pilot customers that went through Wichita during your time as manager?

Tucker: Owners are very energetic and a pleasant group to work with. They can also be very demanding in terms of time and effort required to get them up to ATP standards, which some owners couldn't understand. The FAA requires that the type rating have all the elements in it that a captain checking out in a 767 meets.

I did find that they were interested in safety. Many or all owners are going to have their families in the back. Therefore, they take safety very seriously.

We've met a lot of very interesting pilots; people who have done many fascinating things in their lives. So the overall experience was good.

Dwyer: How do owner-pilots differ from professional pilots? Are owners easier or more difficult to train than professional pilots?

Tucker: Just to be able to buy the airplane, most owners have very successful careers. So they are not exactly dumb. Some folks can be a little bit egotistical, but you can wear that ego down pretty quick once you get in a simulator. My attitude is, look, we're not playing games, we're playing with your life and the life of your fami-

ly so we've got to get this right. We have had some customers come with chips on their shoulders, but that didn't last very long. We weren't being mean about it; we were just being professional about it. They respect that.

Proficiency can be an issue for a transition customer. It's just natural. If a person has a private license or a commercial, he or she probably never had a real check ride since getting the ticket the first time.

Dwyer: What are some of the weaknesses that you see in owner-pilots versus professional pilots?

Tucker: Here again, we go back to the proficiency level. The professional pilot has probably been undergoing a thorough check ride every six months or every year. He's getting paid for it; it is his livelihood.

Dwyer: What are some of the strengths of owner-pilots?

Tucker: I have to say that owners are generally more enthusiastic because they've paid for their airplanes. They are the ones who are flying with their families. Our job is to improve proficiency; attitude is something else. I think their attitudes, overall, are great.

Dwyer: What is it like training a pilot who doesn't like to take no for an answer?

Tucker: Not as difficult as you might think. By the third or fourth simulator ride, we both know where we stand. If single-pilot flying is going to be difficult for a customer, we both know it. I give owners that credit almost without exception.

You have to remember, when it comes to a contest, the simulator instructor is always going to win. The instructor has to be aware that he cannot overload students or do something completely off the wall. If you want to challenge a pilot and if he's that good, go ahead and give him four or five emergencies. Make sure that he knows that this is an exercise to see where his limits are, not necessarily part of curriculum.

Dwyer: You make an interesting point about standards. FlightSafety is a training business, but it is still a business. How did you handle the pressure of flunking a customer? Was it hard for you to say no?

Tucker: It was hard, but we didn't compromise. I know that we've bent over backwards to try to get all of our customers through the course. Extra time is built into the contract and we often take advantage of that with both owner and professional pilots.

We always stressed the standards. FlightSafety is about safety – we didn't let anyone slide. There were even some pilots with whom we could not get up to the standards for Captain, even with a First Officer. We would suggest, and there were only a handful of these in my memory, "You can qualify as an FO but you must fly with a qualified Captain." The experience was usually enjoyable. If it took extra time, then that's what it took. At FlightSafety, we train to proficiency.

Dwyer: From a personal perspective, are owners easier or more difficult than professional pilots to deal with?

Tucker: Owners are easier in some ways because of their attitude; because they want to do it.

It's just the way it is. You're going to get some pilots who challenge you just because of personalities. It is not necessarily a function of wealth. I've met some very wealthy people, and I've found that money doesn't seem to have much to do with personality.

Dwyer: What advice do you have for a pilot stepping into his or her first jet?

Tucker: I suggest you get with an instructor – someone who is really knowledgeable – and get up to speed in your current airplane. When you sign a contract with FSI, get the manuals. I suggest at least reading through them, but don't try to teach yourself the course. The more familiar you are with the procedures, flow of the checklist and the systems, the better. Don't go too far, however. You don't want to develop any bad habits. Just get familiar with the material.

Another important area today is automation. If you can get familiar with the type of flight management system that you will have, it will put you a step ahead. One-third of the training is the flight management system. Today, you have to use it.

Dwyer: What are the biggest challenges that pilots have coming into a turbine aircraft?

Tucker: Instrument skills have to be up to standards because the type-rating course is not an instrument-training course. It's a type-rating course where flying instruments is a given. You've got to have it. Candidates have to meet the ATP standards and you've got to be able to fly instruments because most of the type-rating check rides and the training is on instruments or at night. When you're having emergencies thrown at you, and there are a lot, you have to be able to fly the airplane on instruments.

Dwyer: Describe an ideal transition candidate.

Tucker: At a minimum, a private

pilot with instrument and a multi-engine rating. Ideally however, you ought to come to FlightSafety with the commercial, multiengine and instrument. If you have the time requirement of 1,500 hours and meet the requirements of FAR 61.159, take the ATP written before starting the type-rating course. When you get the type rating, you end up with an ATP. To me, that is very important. Go to one of the weekend schools to pass the written if you don't have time to study on your own. Then when you come to get your type rating, it's all the same; there's no difference.

A lot of owners say, "I don't have a first-class medical." You don't have to have a first-class; you can have an ATP with a third-class. You just can't exercise the privileges of an ATP. I really stressed that as much as I could, because I think it really pays off.

Dwyer: Talk about your philosophy on hand flying versus using the autopilot during training.

Tucker: This is a shift from years back when I first started. We now encourage, even demand, the use of autopilots. In the old days we wanted to see if you could fly the airplane. Today, you must show proficiency in using the autopilot and we let customers use it as much as required. Some things have to be done by hand on a check ride, such as the single-engine approach. But having a strong handle on the flight management system is important.

Dwyer: What are your thoughts on single-pilot jet operations?

Tucker: A single-pilot jet operation is safe, much safer than flying a multi-engine piston because there are fewer things that can go wrong.

To be successful in single-pilot jet operations, you've got to be proficient in ATC communications.

You also must be proficient in the flight management systems because when you file one of those

magic suffixes in your FAA flight plan after your type of aircraft, you are expected to be able to use that system.

Pre-planning your route, what charts you need, what time of the day you are flying. I mean, it's stupid to try to go to the New York area alone at night. I own an open cockpit biplane and I don't ever try to unfold or refold a map in the cockpit. Use common sense.

One thing I do not recommend in the front seat of a single-pilot airplane is a cell phone. If I had to say one thing derogatory about owner-operators coming to school, they can't get away from that cell phone. That's the nature of the

Altitude Chambers

The FAA, in cooperation with the U. S. Air Force, offers Aviation Physiology courses at the following locations:

- Andrews AFB, MD
- Beale AFB, CA
- Brooks AFB, TX
- Columbus AFB, MS
- Fairchild AFB, WA
- Fort Rucker (Army), AL
- Holloman AFB, NM
- Langley AFB, VA
- Laughlin AFB, TX
- Little Rock AFB, AR
- Offutt AFB, NE
- Peterson AFB, CO
- Randolph AFB, TX
- Shaw AFB, SC
- Tyndall AFB, FL
- Vance AFB, OK

To schedule a training date, contact the Civil Aerospace Medical Institute (CAMI), at (405) 954-4837 in Oklahoma City. CAMI also offers a one-day course in Oklahoma City that includes altitude chamber and spatial disorientation demonstrations. You can learn more about the courses at www.cami.jecbi.gov/aam-400/aseophys.html



beast I guess, but it doesn't have a place in an airplane unless you're sitting in the back.

One more point that's important to make. (I'm going to get on my soapbox here.) I came out of the U.S. Air Force after 25 years. I did my first altitude chamber ride in 1955 and went through a rapid decompression to 41,000 feet. In the course of my U.S. Air Force flying, I had one decompression in a jet and survived it.

I strongly suggest that anyone planning to fly single pilot in a jet should go through an altitude chamber course. To me, it should be a given. I can't imagine a pilot, flying at 41,000 feet with the family on board, not being able to handle a decompression and not knowing what it's like to get hypoxia.

The course has a nominal fee. I would strongly suggest anyone who is learning to fly a jet go through that course. You should at least get an idea of what it's like to have hypoxia; to see your fingernails turn blue; to see how much you can write when they take your oxygen mask off. If you've done it, then you know it can be kind of funny.

Dwyer: What else should an owner-pilot be especially wary of?

Tucker: Good health. Don't fly when you don't feel like it. Don't go up when you've got a lot of things on your mind. This is a real hard one for an owner-pilot. But you've got to remember, when you get on an airplane, you have to put everything on the side. If you don't feel comfortable about going somewhere or the weather is bad, wait.

Dwyer: Any advice on equipment that a single-pilot should have?

Tucker: Oxygen equipment. There are several different kinds of oxygen masks. When flying single pilot, remember that you have to wear it when you are flying Part 91 above Flight Level 350. You have to have that mask on. Some masks are more comfortable than others, get one and get it adjusted where you can be comfortable wearing it. If you're not comfortable wearing it and you don't want to wear it, then go down and don't fly above Flight Level 350.

Dwyer: What advice do you have for an owner regarding recurrent training? Is once a year adequate or is more worthwhile?

Tucker: After attaining your type rating, come back at least within

six months the first time. We would have guys come back in six months after they have flown the airplane a little bit and go through the three- or four-day recurrent. Often, they would say, "I didn't realize how much more I could learn in this session because I'm really not under pressure; I've got some experience under my belt; I just feel so much better about it." They go away with smiles on their face. I strongly recommend recurrent training at least two six-month sessions and then if you feel good about it, depending on your level, attend once a year. We have a lot of pilots who come back every six months.

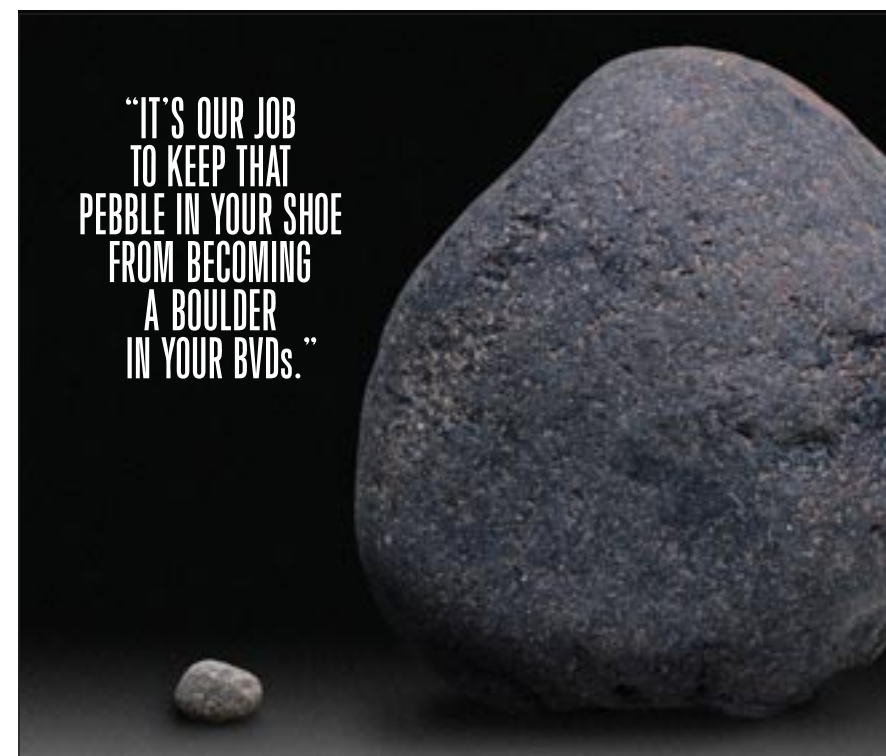
Dwyer: Is there value in training in the aircraft to supplement simulator training?

Tucker: I don't have any problem with that. Prior to the simulator training or prior to starting on the type-rating course, it probably ought to be held to a minimum; just as a familiarization. In other words, it's too easy to learn bad habits.

After the type-rating course, I highly recommend having someone fly along with you. It should be someone of a high caliber who is going to use the same cockpit procedures that you learned while you were in school. If a pilot is getting a single-pilot type rating and is going to have a pilot in the right seat; the person in the right seat should not be making any decisions. The person in the left seat should be making the decisions with the right seat serving as a safety pilot. If the pilot-in-command has a sticky wicket in the air, then the right-seat pilot can step in and help out. But the pilot in the left seat has got to remember that eventually he or she is in charge. If a person says to me in the simulator, "What should I do?" I say, "Look, I'm not here, this is an airplane, and I'm not here."



Mike Dwyer is the president of Guardian Jet, a consulting and brokerage firm that offers transition pilot services along with an umbrella of services for light-jet operators. Mike has held sales positions at Mooney Aircraft, Cessna Citation and Gulfstream Aircraft before starting Guardian Jet with a team of specialists. He is an ATP with 2,500 hours of which about 2,000 has been spent demonstrating aircraft to new owners. Mike earned a CitationJet type rating in 1994. Go to www.guardianjet.com to find out more about Guardian or call them at (203) 458-2500.



If you operate a business aircraft — or plan to — you are already good at looking down the road. At Guardian Jet, we can help tackle the tough issues associated with owning a turbine airplane before the pebbles turn into boulders. What is the pebble in your shoe? Whether it's aircraft insurance, transition training, overseeing maintenance or tax questions, we want to help.

These are the kinds of issues we handle at Guardian Jet.

They typically start out as small pebbles of irritation — simple questions, requests, or uncertainties — but they can quickly turn into real pain-in-the-shorts dilemmas under the pressure of a busy schedule.

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