

## *Plan the Flight - Fly the Plan. Or Not*

*Early in your training, your instructor tossed this phrase at you: “Plan the flight and then fly the plan.” It is good advice. Take the time, before you lift off, before you taxi out, before you start the engine, before you leave the house for the airport, to decide just exactly what you are going to do in the airplane. Then, with that plan in mind, follow the plan for a successful flight. But sometimes, this is the time for another plan as well.*

*You have a cross-country flight planned for next week. Maybe you are planning to meet a new customer, about 200 miles to the east, just on the other side of the mountains. Maybe you have guests traveling to visit you, and you plan to show fly them to this great barbeque spot about 100 miles away. These are great uses for your skills and airplane, but this is the time to make two plans, not one.*

*Let’s say you are a salesman who has been working with a prospect for several weeks. He called you a month ago from his office about five hundred miles away after he saw your product on the internet. It is exactly what he needs. Just a few impediments. He is having problems convincing his boss that your product will be perfect for their situation. And he hasn’t really seen the product in action either. Easy solution. Pack your bag, your laptop computer with sales presentation, and your product in the back of the plane and hit the road.*

*You work back and forth for a few days to get a time that works at his end and a time that works for your schedule. The result. There is a short window next week in which you can fly out in the morning, and be in his town for lunch, followed by the presentation. You can make a hotel reservation, and be back home by noon the following day.*

*You have not made this trip before, but it is pretty straight-forward. Your airplane has the speed and range and payload capacity to make the trip easily. You take the time to pull out the sectional map as well as the terminal area chart to find the best airport in terms of convenience, fuel availability, rental car, etc. You note all special use areas, all of the pertinent landmarks, and radio frequencies. You check out all of the info about the destination airport. You are ready.*

*At this point, you, the reader, are saying to yourself, “OK, so we go along on this mythical flight and something goes wrong, and we need to come up with a Plan B.” And I say, “No, if you don’t make a Plan B until the circumstances change, you are way behind in your planning.” Pre-flight planning is a good thing, and we need accomplish it. However, the down-side to the planning is that sometimes we have such a good plan that we just can’t let it go when circumstances change.*

*Plan A  
Plan B?  
Something  
Else?*

*There is a lot of pressure to get to that meeting, and leaving a day early or arriving a day late is not a good alternative. But it is an alternative. This is what you would do if you did not have the plane at your disposal. And, of course, you want to impress your prospective customer with your customer service. How much better to impress him than working with him up-front and explaining some of the things that can go wrong, and working with him to chart an alternate course.*

*Yes, the weather could be a factor. Talk to your customer about that in advance so there is no surprise later on if you need to postpone. Tell him that you will call in the morning before you leave and talk about options if you are late. Meet in the evening? Put yours (and his) follow-on activities on notice that there might be a change in plans? In short, put the Plan B in the bag at the same time as you make the Plan A.*

*Most of our flight planning involves other people. We are either meeting them or transporting them. And always part of our self-imposed urgency revolves around meeting their expectations. It revolves around our desire to be seen as the person who can take this magic carpet we call an airplane and make their dreams come true. So there is a strong impetus to hold on the plan until it just no longer makes sense. And sometimes, we hold on way too long.*

*So, the solution is to create the Plan B at the same time as the Plan A. And so that other affected parties will feel just as good about the alternate plan, bring them in on it early. You will be surprised at how many passengers are more impressed with your ability to make safe, well-reasoned decisions rather than your ability to forge on regardless of the changed circumstances. And you will find that you will still enjoy your friend's company, and you will still make the sale. And you will find yourself more relaxed when you do.*

**Don't Practice Until You Get It Right - Practice Until You Don't Get It Wrong**