



Jumpseat

Pilots, Professionalism, and Priorities

“Don’t confuse getting paid to fly with being a professional pilot.”

That’s what Captain Gene Cernan, NASA (Ret.), told us at the *Bombardier Safety Standdown*. I attended *Standdown* last October, along with FAA Administrator Randy Babbitt and hundreds of other pilots who traveled to Wichita to improve their piloting performance, knowledge, and understanding.

Bombardier holds *Standdown* every year to address improving human performance in the cockpit. Expert speakers present seminars on topics applicable to all pilots—whether you’re in a one-seat Pitts for fun or in a corporate jet for your job. Bombardier and the speakers develop the seminars based on Dr. Tony Kern’s Airmanship Model. Dr. Kern’s model, detailed in his book *Redefining Airmanship*, is widely acclaimed. The book outlines ten elements of airmanship excellence and adheres to Kern’s conviction that individuals vary greatly and “one-size-fits-all” programs are doomed to produce marginal results.

Redefining Airmanship is one of several excellent resources on how to address the human element and improve performance and professionalism across the aviation community. In this issue’s “Checklist” column, Editor Susan Parson writes about the Aviator’s Model Code of Conduct developed by Michael Baum. FAA endorses the Aviator’s Model Code of Conduct in its *Aviation Instructor’s Handbook* and explains that the code is not a standard, but it is a personal commitment to professional development and continuing education.

Through the extensive research he did to produce the Airmanship Model, Dr. Kern identified a number of challenges to improving airmanship. For general aviation pilots, he has said the certification requirements “do little to inspire an aviator to seek high levels of personal achievement. Once a particular rating or certificate is obtained, the external motivation is gone, unless one seeks a higher certification or rating or is lucky enough to have

mentors or peers to inspire them to higher goals.”

Dr. Kern addresses these challenges head on through his model. All ten principles center on the individual—on you, on me, and on everyone who climbs into a cockpit, picks up a wrench, fuels a plane, controls traffic, or does a host of activities across the aviation community. Airmanship requires individual skill, proficiency, judgment, commitment, and, just as, or more, important, a professional approach and attitude. These are all human factors, which is the focus of this issue of *FAA Aviation News*.

At the *Standdown* I heard a number of experts and, like Captain Cernan, they talked about professionalism, about discipline, and about making a personal commitment to improvement. Yet, the person who expressed it best, and, yes, this could come across as brownnosing, was FAA Administrator Randy Babbitt, who was speaking from 14,000 hours of experience. He said, “If you’re an aviation professional, you’ve got to do the right thing even when no one else is looking; *especially* when no one else is looking.”

We must do the right thing, the best thing, each and every time. Our lives, the lives of our loved ones, just may depend on it.

In short, be a professional. Make it a priority to take advantage of the many resources available, such as this publication, the Aviation Learning Center at www.faasafety.gov, and our own Safety Stand Down the FAA Safety Team will hold on April 17.

I look forward to seeing you there.

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