



High-Trust Leadership & Followership:

Who is the very best leader you ever worked for?

by George Dom

Great leaders, managers, teammates and followers come in all shapes, sizes and styles. But there is one ingredient they all have in common. The great ones—the ones you remember fondly and would gladly work with again—possess a high level of trustworthiness.

There are two great misconceptions regarding trust:

1. Being reasonably honest and technically competent at your job is all that is necessary to be trusted.
2. Trust occurs naturally on teams simply by putting “good people” together.

High performance leaders and teams don't view trust-building as some sort of warm and fuzzy idea cooked up by Human Resources. Great teams view a high-trust cul-

ture as a non-negotiable core value that is absolutely critical for success. They recruit for trustworthiness, they train to build it, they reward, promote and follow those who have it, and they quickly fire anyone who loses it.

More broadly, trust is the water in which all relationships swim. When the trust is high, the water is clear, the relationship is strong, everyone moves quickly with

confidence and camaraderie. But when there is mistrust, the water darkens and everything is slowed by uncertainty, anxiety, anger and fear.

TRUST MATTERS

Why should you care? Because trust is rewarded and the levels of trust have rarely been so low across all dimensions of modern life. Many have lost trust in government, media, business, banking, financial services, religious institutions, etc. Anyone who consciously works to build a reputation of trustworthiness will enjoy a significant professional and personal advantage.

Trust is especially important in aviation because, as the saying goes, it is "unforgiving of any carelessness, incapacity or neglect."

Flight departments are in the trust business. Period. Everything they do is designed to earn and keep the trust of the people they serve. Imagine the impact if a pilot was not trusted to fly the company jet safely, a maintenance technician was not trusted to comply with airworthiness requirements, or an aviation manager was not trusted to control costs and accurately project future requirements.

Measuring our own trustworthiness is a challenge because trust is dynamic and requires continual attention and investment:

- You may be trusted today, but not tomorrow.
- You may be trusted by some colleagues, but not others.
- You may be trusted in some areas, but not all areas.

Too often we misjudge our trustworthiness by measuring it based on the people who trust us the most. "John trusts me, therefore I'm trustworthy. Bob doesn't trust me – he must have trust issues."

What we believe about our own trustworthiness may be interesting, but it is not sufficient. What matters is what others think. Trust is a gift that must be regularly earned – it can't be bought, demanded, expected or coerced.

EARNING TRUST

How can trust be achieved? What are the ingredients required to become highly trusted? Sometimes the best place to look for answers and insights is to examine extreme circumstances for universal principles.

My 26-year career flying Navy strike-fighters off and on aircraft carriers, in combat, intense Topgun flight training, and high-speed/low-altitude Blue Angels flight demonstrations provided a living laboratory regarding building and preserving a high level of trust. In these life-and-death experi-

ences there is no compromise when it comes to trust. It must be a non-negotiable core value for mission success and survival. And the lessons that are revealed can be applied to all our relationships – professional and personal – to make them stronger.

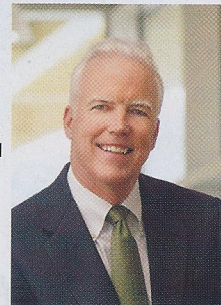
My Navy experience taught me there are five interrelated ingredients regarding trust-building. All five must be addressed – none can be neglected – and working on one contributes to the other four. For each element of trust there is a question your team, your boss, your partners and even your family members are asking about you consciously or unconsciously. Depending on the answers, they decide how much they will trust you.

The five components of trustworthiness are: character, commitment, competence, connection and communication.

- Character – Do you walk your talk?
- Commitment – Will you be there when times are rough?
- Competence – Are you skilled and relevant?
- Connection – Do they believe you understand them?
- Communication – Do they understand you?

Over the forthcoming issues of *World Aircraft Sales Magazine*, we will cover each component and discuss how you can raise the level of trust in your team and all your relationships.

➤ Captain George Dom, USN(Ret) is president and founder of NFS Advisors, an aviation consultancy that exclusively represents buyers of business jets and aviation services. During his military career, he served as Commander, Carrier Air Wing Seven; flight leader of the U.S. Navy Flight Demonstration Squadron—the Blue Angels – and instructor pilot at the Navy Fighter Weapons School ("Topgun"). A nationally-known speaker on leadership and teamwork, including NBAA Leadership, International Operators, and Flight Attendants/Flight Engineers conferences, he can be reached at gdom@NFSjets.com or www.NFSjets.com.



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CULTIVATE AND NURTURE TRUST RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH THE 'FIVE CS'.



High-Trust Leadership:

The importance
of character
and commitment.

by George Dom

Last month we covered misconceptions regarding trust—including why trust matters and the challenges of measuring our trustworthiness.

We ended with a summary of the key ingredients to earn trust: “The Five ‘Cs’ of Trustworthiness” (Character, Commitment, Competence, Connection and

Communication). All five are necessary, and working on one reinforces the other four. For each there was a question my team was asking about me to make a judgment of my trustworthiness as leader of the U.S. Navy’s Blue Angels Flight Demonstration Squadron. Your team, your boss, your spouse and your teenager are asking the same questions about you.

This month we will address the first two elements of the Five Cs—Character and Commitment—including training tips to help build habits that improve your trust reputation.

CHARACTER: DO YOU WALK YOUR TALK?

First is your talk. What do you say are

your values, priorities, goals, commitments and promises? Not referring to a pretty document or mission statement hanging on the wall, what do you claim to be your flight department's shared values?

The second part of the question is the hard part: the walk. Because talk is cheap and teams judge each other's trustworthiness based on their actions, what you actually do is critical. My team watched my behavior every day to see if it conformed to our shared values, priorities, commitments and promises.

When my actions fell short, the challenge was to overcome a natural inclination to grade myself by a different and more accommodating standard. Rather than face the truth about my behavior, I could try to rationalize away my shortcomings and guilt by grading myself with a different yardstick. Was I content to focus on my intentions or my effort? Was I excusing my actions by saying "I didn't mean to make that mistake" or "Hey, I'm trying as hard as I can"?

While your team and your boss may give you a mulligan or two based on your intentions or effort, soon your trustworthiness will decline in their eyes. During one episode of frustration my teammates held up a mirror and gave me the gift of truth (even though I didn't want to hear it). "We know you mean well and are trying hard, but we grade on performance."

A question I ask in my leadership seminars is "When is a person's character set? At what stage in life is character established and unchangeable?" After some discussion the participants invariably conclude that a person's character is never completely established; it is being developed throughout one's life. We move our character needle one direction or the other - positive or negative - in the hundreds of choices we make every day. Do I choose to act in accordance with my values or not? Unfortunately, we have many examples of leaders in all walks of modern life that choose to sacrifice their self-respect for their self-interest.

Training tip: Pick one core value to proactively demonstrate at every opportunity for a week. For example, if your flight department values respect, make it a point to show respect for each co-worker in a small, tangible way daily.

COMMITMENT - WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH...?

When the going gets tough will you be with us and play to win? Preparing for my first Blue Angels airshow season, my team had no doubt I would fly well when the sun was shining and the air was smooth.

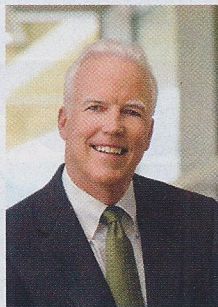
But they knew during the long season we would face difficult challenges and storms in the air and on the ground. What they wanted to know was, "How will I lead when we are facing a crisis?"

Where does commitment come from? If character is born out of living one's values, how does someone build the high level of commitment that athletes and soldiers refer to as having "heart"; the ability to get up after a knockdown and overcome adversity?

Commitment comes from a very deep, intense and crystal-clear purpose. In the military, we have cascading purposes at each level. From the very broad at the strategic level - e.g., "defend the Constitution against all enemies" - down to the very narrow at the unit-level. For the Blue Angels, the unit-level commitment is to "show the pride and professionalism of Naval Aviation by flying the world's best airshow safely". The broad, strategic purpose is critical for perspective and inspiration, but it is the narrow purpose to accomplish a specific mission and take care of teammates that carries the day during a crisis.

Training tip: Write down your flight department's cascading purposes and why they are important; then share those commitments with a teammate.

In next month's Flight Department Management Skills article, we'll focus on two more of the Five Cs - Competence and Connection.



› Captain George Dom, USN(Ret) is president and founder of NFS Advisors, an aviation consultancy that exclusively represents buyers of business jets and aviation services. During his military career, he served as Commander, Carrier Air Wing Seven; flight leader of the U.S. Navy

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"Where does commitment come from? If character is born out of living one's values, how does someone build the high level of commitment that athletes and soldiers refer to as having 'heart'...?"





High-Trust Leadership:

Leaders establish patterns of behavior
that motivate others to follow.

by George Dom

This is the third article in a four-part series addressing trust in situations requiring effective leadership. In July we covered why trust matters, and in August we summarized key ingredients to earn trust—the 5C's of Trustworthiness: Character, Commitment, Competence,

Connection and Communication, with a focus on Character and Commitment. We established that for each element of trust there was a question my teams were asking about me in my capacity of Flight Leader of the Blue Angels in order to make judgments about my trustworthiness as we flew our precision demonstrations. Your team, your boss, your

vendors and your professional colleagues are undoubtedly asking the same questions as you manage your flight department.

This month we will address Competence and Connection, including training tips to improve your trustworthiness, the effectiveness of your leadership and the efficacy of your professional reputation.

COMPETENCE: ARE YOU SKILLED AND RELEVANT?

Resumes provide an applicant's qualifications and list of previous jobs, all important factors in assessing someone's suitability for holding a position requiring trustworthiness. In building a high performance team, however, vitally important characteristics such as qualifications and experience are not as significant as character and commitment, followed closely by the individual's competence.

Without competence, qualifications and experience are not sufficient. And without character and commitment, competence doesn't matter. Someone who lacks an honorable character or is not committed to the team's success becomes a cancer to team cohesion and performance. Conversely, if new hires "walk their talk" and are fully committed and engaged, you can teach them what they need to know to be competent.

Every day before our Blue Angel pre-flight briefing, I would look around the table and see the same questions in all of my wingmen's eyes: Are you good enough to be our leader today? Are you better than you were yesterday, but not as good as you will be tomorrow? If we were going to achieve and sustain the highest levels of excellence, we all needed to continuously improve our skills in every aspect of our roles on the team.

Unfortunately, too many leaders reach a level of success and then stop learning, stop growing and lose their relevance as the world changes around them. Such stagnation says something about their character and commitment, and leads to a loss of competence. Think about how different your job is today compared with a few years ago. Will it stay the same in the years ahead?

How many leaders do you know who claim to have 15 years of experience, but really have only one year of experience repeated 15 times?

Training tip: Identify one key skill that would significantly improve your competence. Make it a priority for the next month. Repeat.

CONNECTION: DO THEY BELIEVE YOU UNDERSTAND THEM?

Doing formation aerobatics, my wingmen and I flew only 24-36 inches apart at 300-400mph, and at very low altitude. As the leader in the #1 jet, I could change the trajectory of maneuvers as necessary to avoid clouds, buildings and ridgelines, simply by changing the inflection of my voice on the radio. It sounds incredible, but it was possible because my wingmen knew I

understood what I was asking them to do. If there had been any doubt, there would have been hesitancy, separation and disengagement. Hopefully, such connectivity is not dissimilar for you and your team.

You'll notice the question wasn't, "Do I believe I understand them?" What mattered was "What do *THEY* think?" When teammates believe they are understood by their leader, where the leader intuits their challenges, their sacrifices, their ideas and their recommendations, they will follow enthusiastically. People don't need to get their way all the time, but they do need to feel heard and understood.

Most leaders miss this concept of connectivity, a key component of leadership, because they are unable - or unwilling - to see the world through their teammates' eyes. Leaders can become isolated, get defensive and act too busy to pay attention. You may not agree with your teammates' point of view, but they need to believe that you can see the situation as they see it.

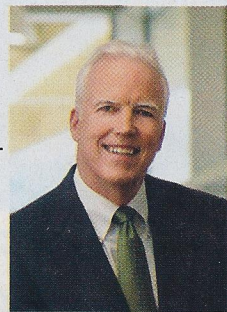
The importance of connection also applies in your relationship with your boss. Does he or she feel understood? How do you know?

Training tip: Take a walk with one of your teammates or your boss this week and ask a few open-ended questions to gain greater understanding of his or her

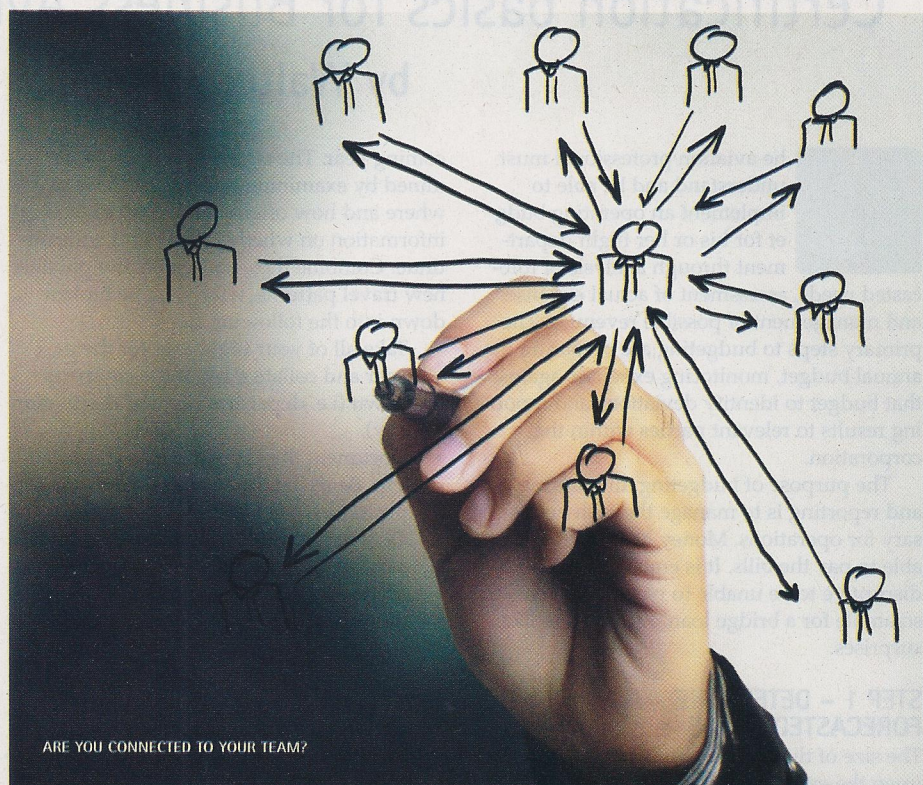
challenges, ideas and concerns. Do NOT defend, deny or seek to persuade him or her to your point of view. Seek only to show you understand theirs.

Next month we will conclude this Four-Part series on high-trust leadership with the final C: 'Communication'. Remember, Business Aviation is in the trust business.

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Be a Smooth Leader

You want higher morale, greater engagement and more productivity?
George Dom continues his good advice for Flight Department managers...

What could learning to be a successful pilot-in-command leader in the air have to do with being a successful flight department leader on the ground? Everything.

How many leaders do you know who, when promoted to become the "big cheese" in the flight department believe they now have the prerogative to change direction and shift gears on a whim? They think it is up to everyone else on the team to keep up.

And what if they also hoard information - due to insecurity or insensitivity - so the team is always in a reactive state of partial understanding? They seem to be saying, "Hey, I'm now the boss, everybody needs to keep up with me, adapt to my orders, and I'll tell them what I think they need to know."

As flight leader of the Blue Angels, I believed my job was to fly as smoothly and predictably as I could, so my wingmen could fly in formation as close as humanly possible to show the world what incredible pilots they were.

There were four keys to becoming a smooth formation flight leader:

1. **Standardization:** We had an established flight routine that I adhered to religiously unless there was a reason to make a change.
2. **Anticipation:** Thinking ahead of how the terrain and conditions would affect the next maneuver.
3. **Transparency:** I continually updated the wingmen on where we were and where we were going so they always had "situational awareness". Armed with this awareness, they could seize the initiative to perform at their best.
4. **Communication:** I was clear, concise and direct in giving commands of preparation and execution during each maneuver. And my actions exactly matched my words.

As the pilot-in-command of a corporate jet, your job is to achieve the smoothest possible flight for the passengers, following the same four ingredients:

1. Standardization in planning, training, and operations.
2. Staying ahead of the aircraft, anticipating changes to the route and turbulence.
3. Transparency in keeping the team and passengers informed of issues that may affect the trip.
4. Communicating clearly with fellow aircrew, ATC, dispatch, passengers, FBO, etc.

The same qualities, discipline and actions that make you a smooth pilot-in-command can also make you a smooth leader on the ground.

- **Route planning** – what are the company's goals and objectives for the flight department this quarter? This year? Next year? What's the best path to get there?
- **Weather and NOTAMS** – what are the potential challenges and barriers to achieving the flight department's goals and objectives?
- **Crew coordination** – clearly identify roles and responsibilities so everyone knows their specific role and what to expect from you as the leader.
- **Communication** – build the team's situational awareness with routine, effective two-way communication. Think of it like your briefings before, during and after a trip.
- **Stay ahead of the flight department** – plan and think ahead of upcoming tasks: budget preparation/reconciliation, hiring, maintenance/inspections, upgrades, training, etc. Poor planners become reactionary to expected and unexpected events, causing them to be rough leaders.
- **Preserve margin** - it is not good headwork to fly your jet on the edge of its capabilities with no room to adapt to unforeseen developments (e.g., headwinds, icing, thunderstorms, fuel). Similarly, the flight department needs to be managed on the ground to preserve the capacity to smoothly adapt to inevitable changes.

Being smooth doesn't mean NOT being an agile or dynamic leader. When you're a trusted, smooth leader you can make timely adjustments and rapid changes that enable your team to follow you in close formation.

But if you're not smooth, your wingmen will hesitate, separate and ultimately disengage from the formation if maintaining alignment becomes too frantic and too hard to do their job. You may find yourself all alone and frustrated, wondering why your team isn't following with full engagement.

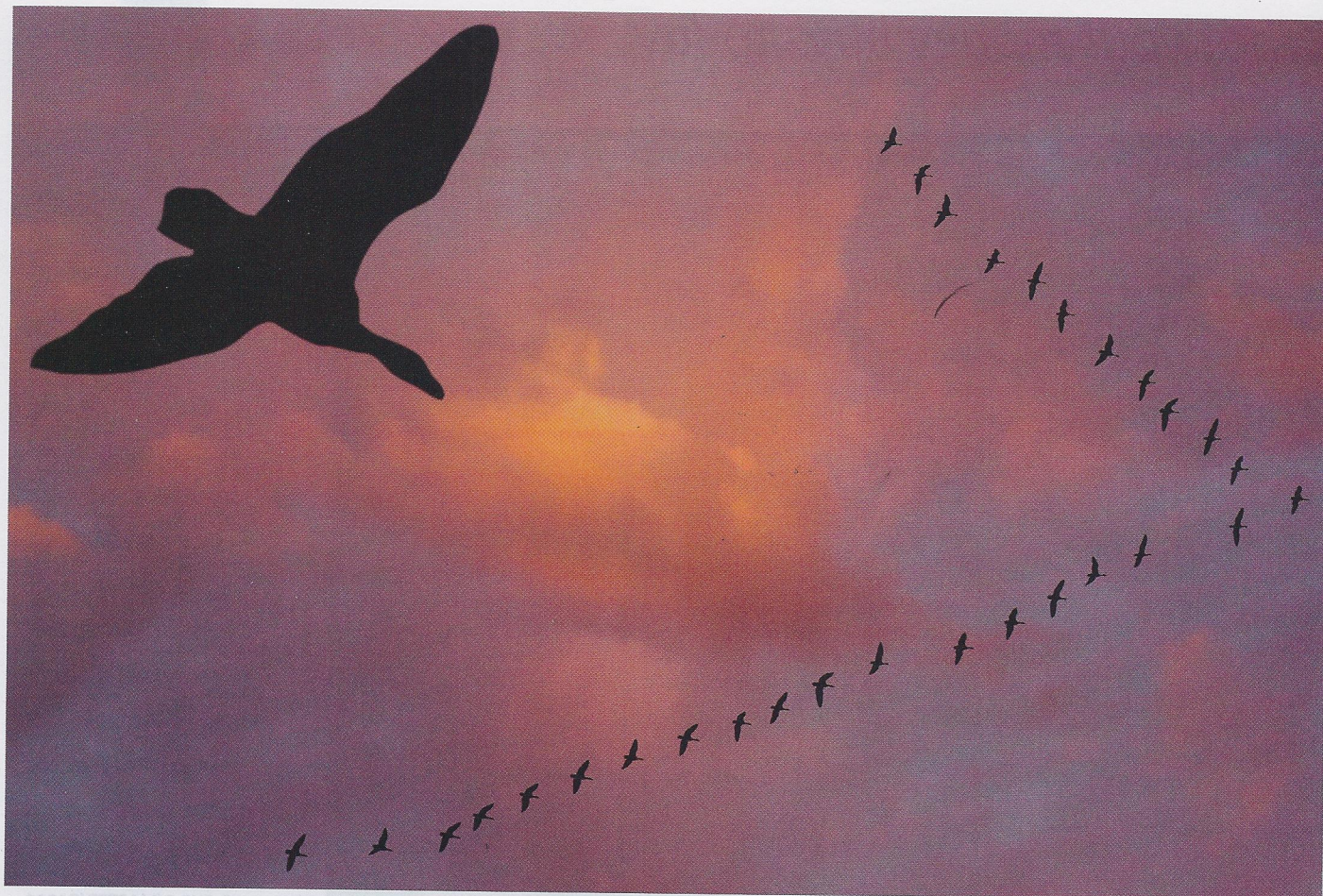
Be a smooth leader and allow your team to show the world how great they are. ■

Are you looking for more articles on Flight Department Management? Visit www.avbuyer.com/articles/flight-department-management/

"The same qualities, discipline and actions that make you a smooth pilot-in-command can also make you a smooth leader on the ground."



George Dom USN(Ret) has over 30 years aviation leadership experience, was Sr VP of an industry-leading consulting firm and is president & founder of NFS Advisors, where he represents buyers of business aircraft and services. Email gdom@nfsjets.com



Great Leaders Often Follow

Leaders depend on followers but must also be good followers themselves. by George Dom

In an unchanging world of unvarying routine and repetition, a manager could settle into a role at the top of the organization and always be directing actions with great situational awareness. However, we don't live in such a world. In fact, the rate of change in all aspects of our work and lives is accelerating.

Successful flight departments must learn to operate as an adaptive, agile team, with leadership assumed by the most appropriate person at any given time. Leaders began their careers as followers and will continue to spend a significant amount of their day as a follower - following their boss, clients, customers and stakeholders.

During my single-seat strike-fighter days

in the US Navy, the basic combat formation was 2-4 fighters flying abeam with a separation of approximately 1-2nm. Each pilot was assigned a unique sector to search visually and with his or her air-to-air radar. As the flight leader, I would be searching the sector with the highest probability of detecting the enemy. Because preflight intelligence is never 100% accurate, however, the "bandits" sometimes would be detected outside my sector by my wingman at relatively close range.

With mission success depending on rapid reaction in a matter of seconds, we had a specific protocol for passing tactical flight leadership to the pilot with the best situational awareness. Here's an example of a flight of two FA-18s—call signs Wildcat 1 (leader) and Wildcat 2 (wingman or follower):

Wildcat 2: "Wildcat 1, threat, 020, 15, twelve thousand, hot!"

(Translation: "Enemy aircraft bearing 020 degrees, 15nm away, 12 thousand feet, heading our way!")

Wildcat 1: "Wildcat 2, press!"

(Translation: "You are now the leader and I'm supporting you.")

Corporate pilots have a similar method for passing positive control of the aircraft from PIC to SIC, ensuring there is no doubt concerning who is flying the jet.

TEAM FOCUS

High performance teams operate best when positional leaders are prepared to temporarily

be a follower and subordinates are prepared to temporarily assume a leadership role when conditions warrant. This act of dynamic leadership sharing requires planning and training...

• **Planning:**

- o Under what conditions will leadership be passed?
- o How will the transfer be communicated and acknowledged?
- o What are the new leader's responsibilities, authority and limits?
- o What are the new follower's responsibilities, authority and limits?
- o Under what conditions will leadership be returned or assumed by the original leader?
- o How will the reestablishment of the original leader-follower roles be communicated and acknowledged?

• **Training:**

- o Discuss and review the items above.
- o Seek opportunities to practice.
- o Debrief occasions when leadership was transferred (or should have been) and lessons learned.

A GOOD FOLLOWER

If being a good follower is crucial to the success of the team, what are the traits of a good follower? After a review of the literature, Dr. Patsy Blackshear noted eight characteristics of exemplary followers. They are:

1. Willing to set ego aside and function as a team player,
2. Self-empowered with initiative and a willingness to act,
3. Persist or have staying power,
4. Entrepreneurial in approach and spirit with a focus on results and doing what's necessary to get things done,
5. Proactive problem-fixer rather than reactive as a problem identifier,
6. Adaptable, flexible,
7. Optimistic or positive in approach, and
8. Seeking continuous improvement and personal development.

It's interesting to note how these eight traits are also important to being an effective leader.

TAKING ACTION

Consider these steps that you can take to develop better followers on your team and become a better follower yourself.

- **Develop your team.** Review the list of exemplary follower traits with your team and discuss how you can help team members improve.
- **Seek feedback.** Have the courage to ask your boss or a trusted colleague to provide feedback on your performance as a follower.
- **Plan.** Cover the list of planning items to achieve dynamic leadership with a member of your team. Be clear on each item and ensure he or she understands.
- **Practice.** Look for opportunities to pass the lead on a few projects and areas of

responsibility to members of your team. Seek lessons and improvement.

As flight department manager, you cannot delegate ultimate responsibility for the performance of your team. You will (and should) be held accountable for your decisions. However, if you plan, prepare and practice dynamic leadership and followership, you will be pleasantly surprised that performance, productivity, agility and resilience will significantly improve. You might just be able to take a few days off now and then!

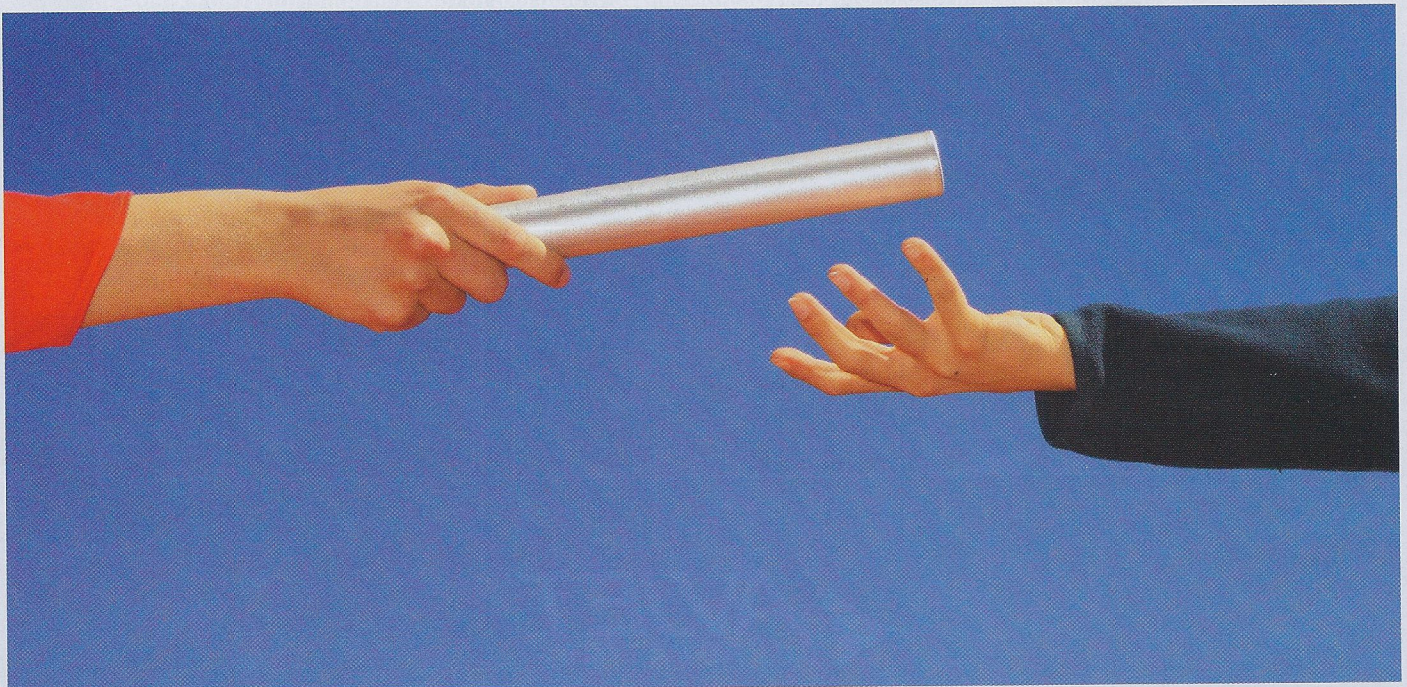
Reference: "The Followership Continuum: A Model for Increasing Organizational Productivity" by Patsy Baker Blackshear, Ph.D.

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Buying A Business Jet: Ten Common Mistakes



George Dom reviews the basics for Board Members and those who seek advice in buying a suitable pre-owned business jet.

Selecting the right aircraft, at the right price, with the right terms, and avoiding unpleasant surprises is a complex project that requires discipline, focus and persistent attention-to-detail. A successful acquisition is a team-effort requiring expertise in operations, market research and analysis, legal, tax, insurance, finance and project management. Unfortunately, aircraft buyers routinely make one or more of the following ten mistakes:

1. **Not considering all options.** Today there are lots of ways to fly privately—charter, jet cards, fractional ownership, whole ownership, and more—with new programs, aircraft and operators

regularly coming and going. Objectively compare all travel options to achieve the best value and safety while meeting your requirements, budget and preferences.

2. **Not selecting the right airplane for the mission.** Defining operational requirements with an understanding of real-world contingencies is necessary to avoid costly surprises and frustrations. For example, headwinds flying west in the winter, ATC delays on congested air routes and airports, customs port-of-entry requirements, and challenging destinations (mountainous terrain, hot/high elevations, runway length, etc.) can all adversely impact the optimistic ranges advertised by aircraft manufacturers, brokers and dealers.

3. **Becoming emotionally attached.** Emotional attachment to one specific aircraft during the search and negotiation process would be a mistake; especially in the current market, there are plenty of other fish in the sea. When a seller becomes aware you have an emotional attachment to his or her aircraft, your negotiating position is substantially diminished. Keep your ego in check.
4. **Not completing a thorough pre-purchase evaluation.** This is a great example of being penny-wise and pound-foolish. Even if purchasing the aircraft from a friend or colleague, inspect the most common problem areas of the aircraft and its logs and records. The records must be comprehensive and complete. The devil is in the details of documentation. Damage history, life-limited components, and conformance with the manufacturer's maintenance program are just three key areas that could pose high-risk to an inattentive buyer.
5. **Not hiring an experienced aviation attorney and tax advisor.** These professionals will ensure compliance with FAA and IRS regulations, often misunderstood by those not familiar with aviation. An example of a common violation is the "flight department company" — acquiring an aircraft to operate under FAR Part 91 and placing it in a single-purpose entity with no other use than to hold and operate the aircraft. According to the FAA, a flight department company is considered a commercial operation and subject to the rules and regulations of FAR Part 135, exposing the pilots to license revocation and the owners to penalties as well as tax and insurance consequences.
6. **Not being available and responsive.** It is essential to be available to your advisors at milestone decision-points with clear, concise and direct communication. "Time kills deals". Poor communication risks unpleasant surprises and misaligned expectations.
7. **Not understanding the all-in acquisition cost.** These include capital and operating costs, refurbishment/upgrades, and upcoming scheduled maintenance. Don't overestimate the benefit of chartering the aircraft to offset costs (chartering has inherent costs associated with additional flight hours, inspections, wear and tear, Part 135 certificate management, possibly additional flight crew, etc.). Budget conservatively for upgrades and incorporation of desirable optional service bulletins and unscheduled maintenance. Consider enrolling the aircraft in a maintenance services program.
8. **Inattention to insurance liability limits, exclusions and endorsements.** Take the time to discuss "what-if" scenarios with your insurance broker to stress-test your coverage. Keep your broker informed of every contract you sign regarding operations and maintenance of the



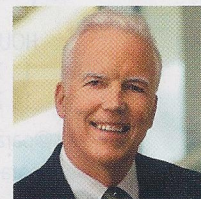
aircraft to ensure you do not inadvertently void your insurance coverage.

9. **Not applying early for financing.** If applicable, application for financing sooner is better as it takes longer to complete the process these days. Many a closing has been delayed because the buyer procrastinated in arranging for financing.
10. **Rushing to complete an immediate refurbishment/upgrade project.** When buying a pre-owned aircraft, avoid major refurbishment until you have flown in your new steed for a few months, unless the aircraft is acquired as an immediate "refurb project". Take time to think through all the changes/upgrades you would like to make and then schedule it to achieve the greatest financial efficiency with minimal downtime by aligning the refurbishment with an upcoming maintenance period for sufficient lead-time to acquire the necessary equipment, parts and materials.

Today's Bonus Point

Not seeking an experienced, trustworthy advisor. The opinions of those who haven't been involved in the aircraft market are interesting, but inadequate and potentially misleading.

As a commercial pilot and former military fighter aviator, I have sufficient flight experience that I could safely take off and land a Gulfstream G550, but it wouldn't be as smooth as I'd like. That doesn't mean I'm not a good pilot, I'm just not trained with recent experience in the G550. The same reasoning applies to your relative, your friend, and even your chief pilot if they are not trained or current in the aircraft marketplace and the complexities of the transaction process. ■



Captain George Dom USN(Ret) is president and founder of NFS Advisors, representing buyers of business aircraft and Business Aviation services with factory-new and pre-owned aircraft purchases (whole aircraft or fractional shares). Contact him via gdom@nfsjets.com or www.nfsjets.com