

Seven Habits of Highly Effective PA46 Pilots

by
Dick Rochfort, ATP, CFII
Master Instructor

Habit 1: Be Proactive

Change starts from within, and highly effective pilots make the decision to improve their performance through the things that they can influence rather than by simply reacting to external forces. Endeavor to experience NO surprises. Do this by actively considering how your assessment may be flawed and what may occur next.

Habit 2: Begin with the End in Mind

Develop a principle-centered mission statement; that is, have a plan. Extend the mission statement into a detailed tactical plan based on detailed Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). Know what results you expect and exactly how you intend to achieve them and what actions you will take if the desired result is in jeopardy.

Habit 3: Put First Things First

Spend time observing the proper balance between “doing” and “managing”. Identify the key roles that you take on during the flight, and make time for each of them in real time, in the proper sequence. This requires studied and consistent use of checklists, flows, and memory items (not necessarily in that order).

Habit 4: Think Win/Win

Seek agreement and relationships that are mutually beneficial with everyone you encounter. In cases where a "win/win" deal cannot be achieved, accept the fact that agreeing to make "no deal" may be the best alternative. You are the pilot in command and are solely responsible for the safety of the flight. Do what is necessary to maintain the safety of flight, no matter whom you have to disagree with. Never violate this principle.

Habit 5: Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood

First seek to understand your instructor/mentor, and only then try to be understood. This habit will be the best way to spot a conditioned error on your part or on that of the instructor/mentor. This habit is essential in learning more effective skills and procedures.

Habit 6: Synergize

Through thoughtful planning, find ways to leverage the vast array of systems and avionics available to you. Create a whole that is greater than the sum of the parts. Use all of the resources at your disposal to the fullest extent possible, including the autopilot. Trust, but verify. Do it the same way each .. every time (SWEET).

Habit 7: Sharpen the Saw

Take time to build your aviation knowledge, skills and procedural discipline by training in your aircraft at least twice per year with an experienced, type specific instructor. Maintain a balanced state of improvement by reading and studying related topics on a regular basis.