

Why Won't They Interview Me?

“Why won't they interview me?” is probably the universal cry of unemployed pilots everywhere. We've all heard incredible stories about lucky friends and acquaintances with minimal time and experience getting interviewed for a corporate or airline job. What's their secret? Why are they getting interviews and you're still waiting for the phone to ring?

We recently heard a woe-is-me story from a ground instructor for a large flight-training company. Possessing an unblemished military record, he was eagerly trying to break into civilian airline flying with what he considered to be good credentials and superior skills. He had recently completed a pilot interview with a major air carrier and was stunned to be rejected, whereas two of his buddies with similar backgrounds were busily wading through new-hire ground school at the same airline. Moreover, his lack of additional interview invitations led him to believe that no other airline would interview him without a personal inside contact to ease the way.

What can hold you back

On previous pages I've talked about the value of networking to demonstrate your credibility and dedication to your aviation career. What's important here is to note the proper order of events: demonstrate first, network second.



Said another way, don't expect someone to recommend you without having known you and your abilities for some time. You have to build an impressive resume, with credentials appropriate to the position you're seeking, that shows not only what you've done, but also how you've gone about achieving your aviation career goals.

Your credentials—and how you present them—are very important, as are your enthusiasm and interest in your profession and related disciplines.

Perhaps a lackluster resume is hampering our instructor who can't get an interview. Maybe the personal recommendation that netted him his last interview was accompanied by some ho-hum paperwork. If so, he may now be pointing a finger at the wrong culprit, believing that who you

know will always triumph in the interview game.

Because every pilot's background is unique, we can't give appropriate advice without first getting a full history on each individual, but there are certainly a number of red flags that go up each time we hear this type of lament. Your credentials—and how you present them—are extremely important, as are your enthusiasm and interest in your profession and related disciplines.

Airlines, of course, are interested in your education, flight time, and employment history. Your most recent job, however, can be a real eye-opener to both a chief pilot sorting resumes as well as an interviewer screening applicants. Both are looking for some evidence of your dedication to and sacrifices made for your aviation career.

Building quality flight time

Flight instructors often have an edge when it comes to demonstrating their passion for flying. Building flight time is difficult—particularly getting past that wasteland between 400 and 1,000 hours. It takes time, patience, and persever-

ance, often with low pay and long hours. Airlines realize the sacrifices that CFIs make to achieve their goals.

However, once you've passed the 1,000-hour mark, it's definitely time to start seriously beating the bushes for quality multiengine time. Many airlines consider more than 1,000 hours of single-engine time (whether dual given or PIC) to be worthless and indicative of a real lack of desire to upgrade skills and credentials.

Similarly, *not* obtaining your ATP certificate as soon as you're qualified makes an employer wonder just how serious you are about your airline aspirations.

In the case of our military-pilot-turned-ground instructor, the human resources representative sorting resumes may wonder why this pilot is doing ground training when he should be actively flying and learning the civilian ropes. Perhaps he's not willing to endure the entry-level wages and benefits at a regional airline. Is this type of work beneath the pilot in question? Does he carry with him superiority hang-ups from his previous high-quality flight experience in the military? Does he appear to want all the benefits without paying any of the dues? This *is* a major hurdle that many pilots from both civilian and military backgrounds must overcome to land an interview and secure a job.

Proper preparation is necessary.

We've seen many pilots, tired of the corporate or charter flying they have done comfortably for many years now decide to jump on board the airline bandwagon. They see fellow aviators getting interviews with qualifications similar to their own and talk themselves into the why-not-me mode without carefully analyzing what they have to offer and how to present their credentials in a credible, effective manner. Many times what they consider to be an equal background is actually quite different, requiring a unique and persuasive sales pitch. As we've mentioned before, a good resume, based on excellent qualifications, can be the differ-



ence between an interview and subsequent job offer, on the one hand, or that interminable silence—no phone calls or letters—on the other.

An employment application requires a lot of time and attention to reflect accurately your best attributes. Interview invitations are a confirmation of your successful salesmanship. You've intrigued them with your good qualifications. Now you have to carry the program to its logical conclusion with a positive, upbeat interview that sells your skills in a persuasive, believable manner.

Don't fall into the habit of complaining about your lack of interview opportunities. Take positive steps to steer your career in the right direction. Do some careful evaluating to see what improvements you can make. Interviews aren't impossible to obtain; careful planning and hard work will prepare you for this much sought-after opportunity.