A Comparative Analysis of Professional Pilot Jobs

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A Comparative Analysis of Professional Pilot Jobs

Ryan M. Snoeyink

Western Michigan University
Abstract

Professional Pilots fly aircraft for a living. Just like there are many different types of aircraft, there are many different types of professional pilot jobs. While it is an impossible task to describe every single job a professional pilot could have, there are four "groups" in which most jobs can be classified. These groups are Part 121 Scheduled Airline Service, Part 135 On-demand Charter, Part 91 Corporate/Private, and Part 61/141/142 Flight Instruction. The goal of this thesis is to examine the differences between these four groups; and by doing so, aid in the education and career decision making of those who are training to become professional pilots. This thesis examines and compares the schedules, compensation, location, typical flying day, equipment, destinations, requirements to be hired, and opportunities for advancement that each grouping of professional pilot jobs offers. Interviews were conducted with professional pilots currently in the industry, giving an inside look at each job.
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Overview and Definitions

Professional pilots have many choices when it comes to their career. The schedule, compensation, location, destinations, type of aircraft, and many more things vary between career paths. This thesis will examine and compare these attributes using information supplied by professional pilots currently in the industry. An interview was conducted with a pilot from each different area, and the transcripts are included starting on page 22.

Definitions

Part 121 Scheduled Airline Service is professional flying regulated by 14 CFR (The Federal Aviation Regulations) Part 121. Airline companies provide scheduled flights for the general public OR cargo and are subject to the highest level of federal oversight. This group can be split up into four different sections: Major Airlines, Major Cargo Airlines, Regional Airlines, and Regional Cargo Airlines (also known as “feeders”). Companies like Delta Airlines, American Airlines, United Airlines, and Southwest Airlines are considered Major Airlines. FedEx Express and UPS Airlines are considered Major Cargo Airlines. Regional Airlines are companies like SkyWest Airlines, Endeavor Air, Envoy Air, Republic Airlines, Cape Air, and more. Freight Runners and Ameriflight are considered Regional Cargo Airlines.

Part 135 On-demand Charter is professional flying regulated by 14 CFR Part 135. Charter companies provide unscheduled (charter) flights to the general public. Instead of purchasing one ticket for one seat, the general public is able to purchase use of the entire aircraft capacity for a flight to a destination of their choosing. These flights can either transport passengers or cargo, depending on the customer’s needs. Charter flights typically cost more than an airline ticket. Because of this, charter aircraft are typically used by those who can afford it: companies and/or wealthy individuals. Charter companies can be large, such as Wheels Up and FlexJet, or small, like a family-run operation with only one aircraft. Other companies, like Atlas Air Holdings, provide both cargo and passenger charter transport.

Part 91 Corporate/Private flying is professional flying regulated by 14 CFR Part 91, and is subject to the lowest amount of federal oversight. Pilots working in this area normally fly for one company or aircraft owner. The company or private individual will own or lease at least one aircraft that the pilots will regularly fly. The flights can be for either business or pleasure, depending on the mission of the flight department. These flights will transport company employees, family members, or any guest of the company/individual, but the owner may not charge the passengers for the flight. Companies like Dow Chemical, Wal-Mart, Nike, and Disney have corporate flight departments.

Part 61/141/142 Flight Instruction is an area of employment for professional pilots that focuses on teaching others how to fly. Part 61 and Part 141 Flight Instruction focus primarily on flight training in an aircraft. This includes private pilot instruction, commercial pilot instruction, instrument rating instruction, multi-engine instruction and other specialized instruction. Part 142 Flight Instruction focuses on teaching professional pilots how to fly a specific type of aircraft (i.e. type ratings). This instruction is almost always accomplished in a full motion flight simulator. Flight instructors can work for large organizations, like universities, or small flight schools with one aircraft. Part 142 instructors typically work for large companies like FlightSafety and CAE Simuflite.
In the following sections, these four professional pilot job areas are explained in depth. Schedule, compensation, location, typical flying day, destinations, equipment, requirements to be hired, and opportunities for advancement are expanded upon for each job. After that, data on recent Western Michigan University Aviation Flight Science graduates is analyzed to determine which areas recent graduates typically pursue within a year after graduation. While many of these graduates will most likely change jobs as time goes on, the analysis of this data serves to show the path that many take as they enter the professional pilot workforce. Also included are interview scripts from professional pilots currently in the industry. These interviews provide a candid look into everyday life as a professional pilot.
A Comparative Analysis of Professional Pilot Jobs

Airline Companies in the industry*:

Major Airlines:
- Alaska Airlines, Allegiant, American Airlines, Delta Airlines, Frontier, Hawaiian, JetBlue, Spirit, Southwest Airlines, United Airlines, and Virgin America

Major Cargo Airlines:
- FedEx Express, United Parcel Service

Regional Airlines:
- Endeavor Air, Envoy Airlines, Republic Airways, SkyWest Airlines, and more

Regional Cargo Airlines (feeders):
- Ameriflight, Freight Runners, and more

*This list only includes air carriers based in the United States

Scheduling

Based on seniority, airline pilots place bids for the schedule they desire. If the trips are not taken by the time scheduling gets to their seniority number, they will be assigned that trip. Every company's scheduling process varies, but this is the general practice. Pilots must work a minimum number of hours per month, as specified by the company. This minimum is normally between 72 and 75 hours of flying. Airline pilots have flexibility to pick and choose their schedule style. One could prefer to be gone for a week straight, while another could bid to fly one trip a day and have very few nights on the road. Pilots will know their schedule one month in advance, and this schedule will not change. During their days off, typically at least 12 per month, there is no requirement to be on-call. However, pilots can pick up last minute trips for extra compensation. For examples of airline pilot schedules, see the interview section.

Compensation

In the airline world, compensation depends on how many years one has been with their company and which seat they occupy. Compensation varies from company to company, but generally speaking the larger the airplane, the higher the pay. Airline pilots make hourly wages. This hourly wage is accrued when the aircraft is flying. Time spent on the road is not counted for hourly wages. Regional Cargo Airlines tend to have the lowest hourly wages, with Passenger Regional Airlines coming in just above. First Officers at a regional passenger airline can expect to make, on average, nearly $47,000 their first year with no bonus (Epstein, 2016). Large Major Airlines and Large Cargo Airlines provide a substantial pay increase, with the average yearly compensation for a First Officer at Delta Airlines coming in at just over $150,000 per year, and the average Captain making over $230,000 per year (Airline Pilot Central, 2017). Overall, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that the average annual wage for all airline pilots is $152,770 per year (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). These numbers are strictly hourly wages and do not include any retirement contributions, medical insurance, and per diem
payments. Major Cargo and Passenger Airlines contribute, on average, 15% on top of a pilot’s annual wages to a retirement account (normally a 401K), and will provide a medical insurance plan as well.

**Location**

Location of the major airlines in the US varies. Typically, pilots are based at one of the airline’s domicile airports. These are normally large, international airports spread across the country. For example, Southwest Airlines has domiciles at BWI, DAL, DEN, HOU, LAS, MCO, MDW, OAK, PHX, and ATL. Pilots can bid to be based out of one of these airports. This means that their trips will start and end at their base airport. However, this does not mean that they are required to live near the airport at which they are based. Airline pilots are able to live wherever they choose as long as they are able to be at their base airport at their scheduled show time. This provides flexibility for airline pilots, allowing them to live wherever they please. Almost every airline offers a flight benefits package that includes free airfare for pilots traveling to and from their base for work. If a pilot lives in Grand Rapids, MI but is based in Houston, all they have to do is catch a flight from Grand Rapids to Houston that allows them to be at their airplane when required. However, as flexible as this may sound, most pilots advise that living near one’s base is ideal. Commuting to work can add two days on to a trip (one to get there and one to get home), which translates to less time at home with no additional compensation.

**Typical flying day**

Depending on what schedule was bid, an airline pilot could see six different cities and 10 hours of flying in a single day. Airlines don’t make money when their airplanes sit on the ground, so in order to turn a profit the company must keep the airplanes (and by extension, the pilots) in the air. Normally there will be an hour or so break between flights while the passengers deplane and board, and then it’s back to the air. If flying internationally, pilots could be in the air for 12 hours on a trip to Asia and then fly back the next day. A large amount of variety exists for major airline pilots. See these personal accounts of what day-to-day operations are like for Major and Regional Airline Pilots in the interview section starting on page 23.

**Destinations**

Depending on the company, airline pilots may have the opportunity to fly to destinations around the world. Regional Cargo and Regional Passenger Airlines tend to stay in one region of the United States while Major Cargo and Passenger Airlines travel all over the world. However, there aren’t many times when pilots get to stay at their destination for an extended period of time, making it difficult to explore new places.

**Equipment**

Airlines use many types of transport category aircraft. The largest two companies, Boeing and Airbus, supply most of the aircraft for Major Airlines. These aircraft are classified as either a narrow-body (a Boeing 737 is an example) or a wide-body (an Airbus A330 for example). Generally, the narrow-bodied aircraft are used for domestic routes and the wide-bodied aircraft are used for international routes. Regional Cargo and Passenger Airlines use smaller aircraft normally manufactured by Bombardier and Embraer. Some Regional Cargo operators even use small, turboprop aircraft.
Requirements to be hired

Regional Carriers have much lower entry requirements than Major Carriers. For that reason, the regional airlines are thought of as a stepping stone to the Majors. Every scheduled airline requires pilots to have enough aeronautical experience (hours) to obtain at least a Restricted Airline Transport Pilot certificate (R-ATP). Depending on where one completes their training, this certificate requires a minimum of 1,000 hours total time with 200 of those hours being cross-country flying. These minimums apply to those who completed their training at a Part 141-authorized training center in conjunction with an approved university bachelors program. Without the authorized training center, one needs a minimum of 1,500 hours of flight experience. Regional Airlines will normally hire pilots as soon as they meet these minimums. As an example, below are the published requirements to be hired at Endeavor Air, a large regional carrier:

**Endeavor Air Hiring Requirements as of 10/13/2017**

- Must be at least 21 Years of Age
- Legal authorization to work in the United States
- Must be able to read, write, fluently speak and understand the English Language
- High School Diploma, GED or equivalent
- Valid Passport and the authorization to travel to and from all cities and countries served by Endeavor Air
- Current FAA First Class Medical
- FCC Radio License
- ATP-CTP Training Offered to Qualified Candidates (summarized in table below)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOURS</th>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1,500 hrs [or] Graduate of Restricted ATP authorized institution with:</td>
<td>Total Hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,250 hrs, associate's degree with aviation major</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,000 hrs, bachelor's degree with an aviation major</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>750 flight hours if military-trained and qualified</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Multi-Engine Land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>Night</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>Instrument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500 reducible to 200^^</td>
<td>Cross Country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>250*</td>
<td>PIC Airplane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100*</td>
<td>PIC Airplane Cross Country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25*</td>
<td>PIC Airplane Night</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Endeavor Air, 2017)
These requirements are standard throughout the Regional Airline industry. Major Airlines (both Cargo and Passenger) have higher requirements. Here is an outline of the hiring requirements at FedEx Express, one of the largest cargo airlines:

**FedEx Express Pilot Qualifications as of 10/13/17**

- Commercial Pilot Certificate with Multi-engine and Instrument rating without limitations
- ATP Certificate
- Must pass FAA mandated drug screen
- Must have 20/20 correctable vision
- Recency and type of experience is considered
- Meet requirements for and currently hold First Class Medical certification
- Bachelor’s Degree from an accredited college or university
- Eligibility for rapid visa issuance, issued by offices in the United States to fly to any FedEx destination.
- Eligibility for issuance of US Security Clearance
- 1500 hours total fixed-wing time as pilot-in-command (PIC) or second-in-command in multi-engine turbo-prop A/C or jet A/C or combination thereof (GTOW 12,500). A minimum of 1000 hours total fixed-wing pilot-in-command in multi-engine turbo prop A/C or jet A/C or combination thereof (GTOW 12,500 or greater) is preferred. **Note:** PIC for this purpose is defined as Captain/Aircraft Commander of record, not simply the sole manipulator of the controls. **Note:** FedEx considers only pilot time in fixed wing aircraft toward minimum qualifications. This does not include simulator, helicopter, flight engineer, bombardier, navigator, RIO, EWO, WSO, NFO, or Special Crew.
- All certificates and ratings required to be U.S.A. FAA issued (FedEx Express, 2017)

The experience requirements are much higher for this position than they are at Endeavor Air. Flight times required keep FedEx Express from being an entry level job, with 1,500 hours of turboprop or jet time required. Also, this position requires a bachelors degree. Every airline varies in what exactly is required, but the requirements are rarely waved for any applicant.

**Opportunity for advancement**

Airlines have two positions for professional pilots: First Officer and Captain. New hires start as a First Officer and eventually, when they achieve enough seniority, can upgrade and become a Captain. As mentioned earlier, seniority controls everything in the Major Airlines. To start, pilots are hired as First Officers on a narrow-body. Once they gain enough seniority, they can either upgrade to Captain on a narrow-body or become a First Officer on a wide-body. Or, if one is very fortunate, with enough seniority and the right circumstances, they could upgrade to Captain on a wide-body. This is a very rare occurrence, however. The mandatory retirement age of 65 limits most senior pilots and provides turnover for others to advance up the seniority list.
On-Demand/Charter

Scheduling

The short answer that most charter pilots give to the scheduling question is that there is absolutely no schedule when it comes to charter flying. However, this all depends on one’s company and its policies. Large charter operations (like Atlas Air or WheelsUp), have a rotation where a pilot will have days on-the-job and guaranteed days off-the-job. The industry has termed this “xx on, xx off”. If a pilot is required to work 8 days and then has 6 days off, it would be considered “8 on, 6 off”. During the off days, the company will not require a pilot to work. However, during the days on, that pilot is on-call for any possible pop-up trip. Every company handles this differently, but on average pilots will need to be ready to fly to any destination within a few hours notice. This could mean packing a bag for five days on the road in as little as five minutes. While many companies have adopted this “guaranteed days off” schedule, some smaller outfits have no guaranteed time off. Charter companies can be as small as one airplane with two pilots. In these cases, pilots are typically on-call 24/7, 365 days a year. The only guaranteed days off in this situation would be when a pilot takes a vacation day.

Compensation

Just as scheduling policies vary between charter operators, so do methods of compensation. In general, charter pilots are paid a salary for their work. Still others are paid hourly plus a per diem. Location also plays a factor in determining compensation. Typically, pilots based in high cost-of-living areas will make more than those based in low cost-of-living areas. This is noted in the salary survey conducted by Professional Pilot magazine. Every year, Professional Pilot publishes a compensation study for pilot salaries in the charter business. Following is an excerpt from the 2016 Salary Survey. Pilots are grouped by what aircraft they fly. Again, a general rule of thumb is that the larger the aircraft, the higher the pay. It is important to note that the compensation presented does not include retirement contributions and/or company-provided insurance plans.
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Embraer Phenom 300 captains flying under Part 135 operations earn an average annual salary of $68,000 with a maximum of $81,000 and a minimum of $56,000.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Charter jet</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Captain</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy inflt jets and large jets</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airbus A319</td>
<td>140,000</td>
<td>112,000</td>
<td>156,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boeing 737-800</td>
<td>128,000</td>
<td>108,000</td>
<td>158,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenger 601</td>
<td>99,000</td>
<td>81,000</td>
<td>122,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenger 604/605</td>
<td>114,000</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>134,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falcon 900/900EX</td>
<td>117,000</td>
<td>104,000</td>
<td>136,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falcon 2000/2000EX</td>
<td>116,000</td>
<td>96,000</td>
<td>122,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falcon 7X</td>
<td>140,000</td>
<td>120,000</td>
<td>157,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Express/G5000/G6000</td>
<td>135,000</td>
<td>108,000</td>
<td>149,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gulfstream III</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>85,000</td>
<td>120,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gulfstream IV/IVS</td>
<td>120,000</td>
<td>104,000</td>
<td>145,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gulfstream V/IVS500</td>
<td>130,000</td>
<td>108,000</td>
<td>153,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gulfstream G650</td>
<td>145,000</td>
<td>114,000</td>
<td>183,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supermidsize and midsize jets</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenger 300/350</td>
<td>108,000</td>
<td>86,000</td>
<td>128,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citation Excel/XLS</td>
<td>80,000</td>
<td>67,000</td>
<td>93,000</td>
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<td>Citation Sovereign</td>
<td>87,000</td>
<td>77,000</td>
<td>102,000</td>
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<td>Citation X</td>
<td>94,000</td>
<td>86,000</td>
<td>110,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embraer Legacy 600</td>
<td>92,000</td>
<td>83,000</td>
<td>106,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dassault 60</td>
<td>92,000</td>
<td>83,000</td>
<td>106,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gulfstream G100/G150</td>
<td>82,000</td>
<td>72,000</td>
<td>92,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gulfstream G200/G280</td>
<td>95,000</td>
<td>80,000</td>
<td>112,000</td>
</tr>
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<td>Hawker 800/800XP/1000</td>
<td>87,000</td>
<td>71,000</td>
<td>103,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawker 800/850XP/900/900XP</td>
<td>94,000</td>
<td>77,000</td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learjet 35/36</td>
<td>70,000</td>
<td>60,000</td>
<td>85,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learjet 45/45R/45XR</td>
<td>78,000</td>
<td>68,000</td>
<td>92,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learjet 55/55S</td>
<td>85,000</td>
<td>73,000</td>
<td>104,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learjet 75</td>
<td>90,000</td>
<td>76,000</td>
<td>108,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light jets</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beechjet 400/400XP</td>
<td>73,000</td>
<td>61,000</td>
<td>89,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CitationJet CJ1/CJ2</td>
<td>67,000</td>
<td>56,000</td>
<td>80,000</td>
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<td>72,000</td>
<td>60,000</td>
<td>83,000</td>
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<td>Citation X</td>
<td>74,000</td>
<td>58,000</td>
<td>92,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Embraer Phenom 100</td>
<td>68,000</td>
<td>54,000</td>
<td>74,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embraer Phenom 300</td>
<td>68,000</td>
<td>56,000</td>
<td>81,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

King Air 350 captains under Part 135 ops register average salaries of $65,000 per year. They can earn as high as $81,000 and as low as $56,000.

First officer/copilot

| Heavy inflt and large jets |         |      |      |
| Airbus A319 | 82,000 | 64,000 | 104,000 |
| Boeing 737-800 | 84,000 | 63,000 | 104,000 |
| Boeing 737-700 | 85,000 | 66,000 | 106,000 |
| Challenger 601 | 22,000 | 18,000 | 26,000 |
| Challenger 604/605 | 28,000 | 20,000 | 36,000 |
| Falcon 900/900EX | 84,000 | 65,000 | 100,000 |
| Falcon 2000/2000EX | 79,000 | 62,000 | 95,000 |
| Falcon 7X | 88,000 | 70,000 | 105,000 |
| Global Express/G5000/G6000 | 81,000 | 65,000 | 100,000 |
| Gulfstream III | 82,000 | 64,000 | 92,000 |
| Gulfstream IV/IVS | 73,000 | 58,000 | 87,000 |
| Gulfstream V/IVS500 | 85,000 | 64,000 | 94,000 |
| Gulfstream G650 | 90,000 | 73,000 | 105,000 |

Charter turboprop

| Captain |         |      |      |
| EuroCopter/Com qual | 48,000 | 42,000 | 52,000 |
| King Air 90/100 | 55,000 | 47,000 | 63,000 |
| King Air 200/200D | 61,000 | 53,000 | 72,000 |
| King Air 200/250 | 56,000 | 46,000 | 65,000 |
| Pilatus PC12 | 55,000 | 48,000 | 63,000 |

First officer/copilot

| King Air 90/100 | 39,000 | 35,000 | 43,000 |
| King Air 200/250 | 41,000 | 38,000 | 50,000 |
| King Air 200/250 | 46,000 | 40,000 | 56,000 |

(Professional Pilot, 2017)
Location

Charter pilots are based at hundreds of airports across the country. Because most charter pilots are “on-call”, companies will require pilots to live within a specified drive time to the airport. Therefore, commuting (having to take an airline flight) is generally not possible for charter pilots. Again, all companies vary on their requirements.

Typical flying day

Charter pilots argue that there is no such thing as a “typical day” in charter flying. One day they may be taking passengers to a professional football game and the next they may be transporting a patient in need of medical attention. No two days are the same. However, the pilots will still perform the same duties. Charter pilots will load and unload luggage, prepare the aircraft cabin for passengers, handle passenger requests, flight plan, and more during a day’s shift. This gives the pilot control of almost every aspect of the flight, which comes with a large amount of responsibility. Since charter aircraft are basically “rent-an-airplane” for the general public, pilots could spend long hours waiting at the airport for passengers to finish their meeting or for boxes that are late. The airplane can’t leave without its paying passengers, and if the passengers want to stay three hours longer, the pilots have to wait (all dependent on rest and duty time requirements of the FAA and the specific company). Once the pilots fly their last leg for the day, they may have to clean the airplane and complete paperwork before leaving for home.

Destinations

The general public charters aircraft for many reasons. Sometimes it is to attend a meeting in New York City and a meeting in Orlando in the same day. Other times it could be to go on a family vacation to the Bahamas. The variety of flying lends itself to a variety of destinations. Depending on the company, pilots may get to spend multiple nights in some of the exotic locations where they transport passengers. However, airplanes aren’t making money when they are sitting on the ground and pilots may be required to fly home to be available for other trips.

Equipment

The type of aircraft charter pilots fly varies just as much as their typical days do. Until recently, most charter aircraft were of the twin piston/twin turboprop variety. Some companies still use these aircraft in their charter department, but most have swapped them out for jet aircraft. On the passenger side, pilots could fly aircraft ranging from a light Cessna Citation CJ1 to an ultra-long-range Gulfstream G650ER. These private aircraft normally fly faster, higher, and are more advanced than most airliners. Different aircraft are tasked with different types of flying. The long-range aircraft will normally be flying overseas or across the country, while the light aircraft will normally fly around the region. Gavin Uekert, a First Officer for Northern Jet Management in Grand Rapids, MI, flies a Bombardier Lear 45. This aircraft is equipped to fly eight passengers at FL430 (43,000 feet) to destinations upwards of 2,000 miles away. This aircraft would be considered a mid-size business jet.
Requirements to be hired

Due to regulatory requirements, pilots who wish to act as Pilot in Command or Second in Command of a charter aircraft (operating under 14 CFR 135) must meet the following requirements:

- (2) **Flight crew experience.** The crewmembers must have met the applicable requirements of part 61 of this chapter and have the following experience and ratings:
  - (i) Total flight time for all pilots:
    - (A) Pilot in command—A minimum of 1,500 hours.
    - (B) Second in command—A minimum of 500 hours.
  - (ii) For multi-engine turbine-powered fixed-wing and powered-lift aircraft, the following FAA certification and ratings requirements:
    - (A) Pilot in command—Airline transport pilot and applicable type ratings.
    - (B) Second in command—Commercial pilot and instrument ratings.
  - (iii) For all other aircraft, the following FAA certification and rating requirements:
    - (A) Pilot in command—Commercial pilot and instrument ratings.
    - (B) Second in command—Commercial pilot and instrument ratings.

(Federal Aviation Administration, 2017)

These are the bare minimums for legal operation set by the Federal Aviation Administration. Depending on the company and their insurance provider, these minimums could be much higher. In addition, charter companies may look for someone who will work well with their current employees. Since pilots at a smaller company will be working together closely day after day, many prefer to find the right “fit” for the company. For example, this job posting is for a midsize charter operation:

- **Solairus Aviation is currently searching for a full-time Phenom 300 captain to join a dedicated crew operation in the Beverly, MA area. The aircraft was bought new in 2015 and averages about 300 hours a year on mostly day trips for the three partners. The ideal candidate will need to be a team player assisting the CAM in running the small flight department while seeking excellence in every aspect of his/her performance. Join a hardworking team who strives to safely and professionally meet the travel needs of our clients while adhering to Solairus’ unique culture of safety, service, and integrity.** (Solairus, 2017)

Being a team player in a small group of people can be the one thing that sets an employee apart and makes them the best person for the job. Experience in the field can help as well, either as a pilot or in another aspect. Many current charter pilots once held a position at a local FBO.

**Opportunities for advancement**

Similar to the airlines, charter pilots have the opportunity to upgrade from First Officer to Captain (if the aircraft requires two pilots) or could upgrade to a larger aircraft within their company. A pilot could also move into a management role within the company. This could be as an instructor, Check Airmen, Chief Pilot or Director of Operations. There are multiple “rungs” of the ladder available to charter pilots should they wish to climb.
Corporate/Private

Schedule

In short – there is no schedule for corporate aviation. However, every corporate flight department deals with scheduling a bit differently. Some will have their schedule posted a week before with crew assignments. Others will have “hard days off”, where a pilot can be at home with no chance of being called in. Still, others may be on call 24/7 in case the owner calls and wants to fly to Florida that evening. Trips could be simple day trips to a local airport or a month-long international trip to multiple destinations. The purpose of the aircraft determines the schedule.

Compensation

Corporate pilots are almost exclusively paid a salary. This salary is dependent on location, airplane, time spent on the road, and the position held within the flight department. Chief Pilots make more than Captains, who make more than First Officers. A survey taken once a year by Gallagher Surveys details the average compensation for corporate pilots. According to the 2017 Aviation Compensation Survey, the average compensation for a Co-pilot (First Officer) was $101,077 per year. This is the average over 29 different companies and 60 individual employees. The average compensation for a Captain was $161,550, with 629 employees reporting from 96 different companies. However, the average compensation of a Citation Sovereign Captain was $123,500 while the average Captain on a Gulfstream G650 made $192,588 (21 employees and 23 employees reporting, respectively) (Professional Pilot, 2017). The larger the airplane, the larger the compensation in Corporate Aviation. Also included in compensation is health insurance. Most companies include their salaried pilots in the company health insurance and retirement programs. Each company handles this differently. Companies typically match up to a certain amount of contribution to a 401K or other retirement program.

Location

Corporations tend to prefer that their flight departments are as close as possible to those who use the airplane most. Because companies are based across the country, corporate flight departments are spread across the country. Corporate aircraft typically require less runway than airlines to operate their aircraft safely. Therefore, corporate flight departments can be located at many airports that do not have airline service. However, there are plenty of flight departments that operate out of airports that have airline service as well. Most pilots are required to live within a certain drive time to the airport due to the on-call nature of most jobs.

Typical flying day

Every operation is different when it comes to a typical flying day. If the mission of the airplane is to transport executives to and from meetings across the country, pilots will most likely be required to wait at the airport for the passengers to return and then fly them to the next destination. If the mission is to bring the owner and family on vacation, the day may consist of one flight to the vacation destination and then a hotel stay for however many days the family wishes to be there. Since Corporate aircraft are not “making money” like charter aircraft do, the airplane will normally stay with the passengers until the end of the trip. Most corporations prefer to eliminate as many empty legs (legs with no passengers) as possible. Once a trip has concluded, pilots typically clean and stock the aircraft,
complete paperwork, and make sure everything is in order for the next day of flying. The Corporate Pilot’s responsibility extends far outside of the cockpit.

**Destinations**

Again, the destinations that a corporate pilot will fly to vary depending on the company for which they work. One company may fly back and forth from Detroit to Indianapolis three times a week for meetings, while another may fly to Florida every Thursday and return Sunday afternoon every week in the winter months. The variety of possible destinations is, for many, an upside of the job.

**Equipment**

Corporate pilots, like many Charter pilots, will fly private jets capable of flying higher and faster than an airliner, while landing on a runway half the size. “If the Boeing 737 was a minivan, the Cessna Citation X+ would be a Ferrari”, says one corporate pilot, explaining how private jets relate to typical airliners. While this isn’t the case for all corporate departments, the industry is trending toward technologically advanced aircraft. Flight departments typically choose to operate aircraft that fit their mission. A King Air 350 (twin turboprop, 8 seat aircraft) would be best utilized by a company that flies to destinations within their region and that values short runway capability. A company that regularly flies to Asia would be better suited with a long-range Gulfstream or Bombardier aircraft.

**Requirements to be hired**

Corporate flight departments operate under 14 CFR part 91. Because of this, the minimum certification required to be a corporate pilot is a Commercial Pilot Certificate with an Instrument Rating, and any applicable type rating for the aircraft. There is no minimum amount of hours required other than what is needed to become a commercial pilot. That being said, aircraft insurance companies normally impose much higher requirements to meet their safety standards. These insurance companies generally require a type rating in the aircraft for both pilots (if a type rating is required for the aircraft by the FAA), and a certain amount of flight time. Captains could be required to have an ATP certificate.

The highest requirements for entry, however, are typically set by the company. Companies want to find the most qualified individual for the job and most likely have a large pool of candidates from which to choose. Tim Roberts, a pilot for a company based in Michigan, flies a Gulfstream G550 and a Bombardier Challenger 350. He explains that his company hires pilots only if they have over 2,500 hours. "However," he adds, "we look for people who fit with the department. We’re going to be spending a fair amount of time together on the road, and we want to hire someone who we will enjoy spending time with. Being professional, personable, and passionate are attributes that we look for in a person we want to hire. Odds are, this person will be our coworker for quite some time." As one can see from Mr. Robert’s explanation, it takes more than just flight hours to join a flight department team. Other corporate pilots recommend getting to know the flight departments and pilots around the area. This is a good way to get a foot in the door in many small, tightly knit flight departments.

**Opportunities for advancement**

Corporate pilots typically start as a First Officer and upgrade to Captain when they have the experience. This normally comes with a substantial pay raise. If one desires, a pilot can be hired for a management position (either Chief Pilot or Department Manager) if a position is open. These jobs are
typically “right place, right time” and add a tremendous amount of responsibility to a corporate pilot’s already large workload.
Flight Instruction

Schedule

Dependent on location and type of instruction, Instructors can have a fixed 9-5 Monday through Friday schedule, or they may work afternoons and evenings into the weekend. Primary Flight Instructors are those who work with students on the basics of flying. It is important to keep in mind that most of these students have full-time jobs that require them to work until 5:00 p.m., requiring flight lessons to take place after the standard work day. This means Flight Instructors work during the evening on weekdays and all day on weekends. Also, every flight is dependent on the weather being adequate for the day’s lesson. For a Flight Instructor that works “unscheduled” evenings and weekends, multiple flights may be canceled in a row due to weather. The schedule is quite fluid for the full time Instructor teaching students in an airplane. Instructors in an administrative role, like Mr. Thomas McLaughlin, Assistant Chief Flight Instructor at Western Michigan University’s College of Aviation, have a more fixed schedule (See Mr. McLaughlin’s interview on page 38). Flight Instructors are typically home every night, which is almost non-existent in other professional pilot careers.

Instructors in a Part 142 training center don’t have to worry about weather, because their instruction is accomplished exclusively in simulators. These instructors work at companies like FlightSafety and CAE, Inc., and typically work five days a week. The five days may include both Saturday and Sunday, with days off coming during the week.

Compensation

Full time Flight Instructors are generally paid a salary for their work. The amount is all dependent on the aircraft and type of training one provides, or the position within a flight school. A typical full-time flight instructor makes, on average, $39,000 per year in the Midwest. This instructor provides primary flight instruction to students in an airplane. That number increases in places that have a higher cost of living. In addition to salary, some flight schools will provide instructors with insurance and retirement benefits. A flight instructor in a management position or at a Part 142 training center can expect to make almost double the salary of a primary flight instructor. Salary increases follow increased responsibility.

Location

Most airports have some type of flight school on the field. A simple search using the “AOPA Flight School Finder” produced eleven results for flight schools within a 25-mile radius of Kalamazoo, MI. The possibilities are almost endless when it comes to finding a flight school in need of instructors. As noted in the interview with Mr. McLaughlin, the College of Aviation in Battle Creek, MI is always hiring qualified flight instructors. However, the most popular region for flight instruction is the Southern Region, based off of data collected by the FAA. This data, presented on the next page, shows that the most knowledge tests were taken in the Southern Region of the United States. The most logical explanation for this is the weather found in this region. Southern Regions of the United States have the most favorable weather for flight trainings. Whatever the reason, the Southern Region has the most flight training per year, and as a result has the greatest demand for flight instructors.
A Comparative Analysis of Professional Pilot Jobs

Typical Flying Day

Flight Instructors can fly for up to eight hours a day with students. Flight lessons are typically completed within two hours, meaning an instructor could fly with up to four students a day. However, many flight instructors agree that this rarely happens. Either scheduling, weather, maintenance, or some other factor gets in the way of having back to back flight lessons. An instructor may fly with one student at 9:00 and with another at 15:00. The next day that same flight instructor may not even fly, instead spending their time working with students on their ground knowledge. Every day can be different in the life of a primary flight instructor.

For flight instructors employed with a Part 142 training center, weather does not determine their schedules. They instruct in full motion simulators, teaching pilots how to fly a specific type of aircraft. These training centers, like FlightSafety and CAE, help pilots achieve thousands of type ratings a year. In order to do so, instructors work around the clock to fit students into their schedules. Dan Boylan, an instructor for FlightSafety in Wichita, KS, reports to work at 5:00 and finishes his day at 14:00. In this time, he instructs two sets of pilots in four-hour simulator sessions. He has this schedule Wednesday through Sunday. In addition to providing instruction in simulators, Dan also teaches ground school classes detailing systems and operating procedures of a certain aircraft. One week he may be in the simulator and the next week he may be assigned to teach a ground school class.

Destinations

Flight instructors do not typically fly more than a few hundred miles away from their base airport. Instructors will accompany students during their cross-country flights; however, not much time is typically spent at a destination. The airplane may be refueled for the return trip and student and instructor will check the en-route weather and advisories. They then set off for their home airport. Very rarely, those in a management position need to stay at a destination overnight. When this happens, expenses are normally covered by the flight school.

Equipment

Training aircraft are typically simple, small, inexpensive single- and multi-engine aircraft. The Cessna 172 and Piper Cherokee are two of the most widely-used single engine training aircraft in the world. Instructors fly aircraft that the flight school or students own, so the exact fleet varies from school to school. Western Michigan University uses Cirrus SR-20 single engine aircraft equipped with the latest avionics from Avidyne for their private pilot and instrument pilot courses, and the Piper Seminole PA-44 for their multi-engine course. These aircraft are highly advanced compared to most in the training world, and instructors enjoy the aircrafts’ capabilities. Part 142 training centers do not use aircraft, but rather full motion simulators that imitate aircraft movement. Instructors typically sit in a seat behind the pilots in these simulators, programming the computer to present the trainees with a multitude of situations.
Requirements to be hired

Certified Flight Instructors are required to take an FAA check ride to earn their Flight Instructor Certificate. In order to take this check ride, the applicant must first have a Commercial Pilot Certificate with an Instrument Rating. Once the applicant passes the flight instructor check ride, they are legally authorized to provide flight instruction. Flight instructors may also take another check ride that allows them to instruct a student for an instrument rating (called a CFII). Yet another check ride can be taken which allows a flight instructor to give instruction in a multi-engine aircraft (called an MEI). Here is a listing of what is required to be a flight instructor at Western Michigan University:

- To be hired as a flight instructor
  - Hold a Commercial Pilot or Airline Transport Pilot Certificate
  - Have a CFI Certificate
  - Hold a valid 2nd Class FAA Medical

The requirements make this an entry level position. Many aspiring professional pilots start their career by instructing. This helps them build the hours and experience required to move to become an airline, charter or corporate pilot.

Opportunities for advancement

Flight instructors typically don’t have many opportunities for advancement. Dependent on the school they work for, they may be able to instruct in different airplanes as they gain experience. In larger flight schools, an instructor may have the opportunity to move in to a management position, such as Chief Flight Instructor or Assistant Chief Flight Instructor.
A Comparative Analysis of Professional Pilot Jobs

Comparative Analysis

Schedule

Professional pilots have choices when it comes to their type of schedule. Airline pilots have a guaranteed schedule. While they may be gone more than a corporate pilot, they know their schedule a month ahead of time with very little chance of changes. Charter and corporate pilots typically don't have this luxury, and may be on-call at all times of the day. Flight instructors typically work during the week and over weekends, but can expect to be home almost every night. If a pilot desires to spend a good amount of time on the road but wants to know when they will be gone, airlines seem to be the best fit. If a pilot desires to travel to sometimes exotic places and isn't worried about knowing when they will be gone, charter/corporate flying would most likely best fit their preferences. Those who want to have a generally fixed schedule, flight instruction may be the best option.

Compensation

As seen in the above analysis of each job, airline pilots have by far the highest earning potential. Charter pilot and corporate pilots are somewhat evenly matched, but corporate generally compensates more than charter. Flight instruction has the lowest earning potential but can be competitive with entry level charter positions.

Locations

Airline pilots enjoy the most flexibility when determining where they would like to live. However, their quality of life may be impacted if they have to travel long distances to work. Charter and corporate pilots normally live near the aircraft base, but aircraft are based all over the country. Flight instructors also typically live near their flight school. There are flight schools all over the country, but a majority are in areas with good flying weather. If location is a factor in determining the ideal position, a professional pilot will either need to find a corporate/charter/flight instruction job in their desired location or be willing to commute to an airline domicile.

Typical Flying Day

As shown in the interview section, it’s difficult to determine a typical flying day for a charter or corporate pilot. Corporate and charter pilots can expect to have a different task each day. Airline pilots, however, do have a typical flying day. Normally this consists of three to five flights per day if flying domestically, or one flight per day if flying internationally. Flight instructors can expect to fly with multiple students per day, with ground instruction supplementing flights on occasion. For those that desire to have a fixed routine, airlines may be the best option. For those desiring to have a new assignment each day, corporate and charter could be the best fit. Flight instruction can be placed somewhere between the three other jobs. While the schedule each day may be similar, the mission of each flight lesson will vary.

Destinations

Airline pilots have the opportunity to fly all over the world. However, their layovers are typically short. Pilots could see six destinations in one day, but never leave the airport terminal. Charter and corporate flying have so many variations, it's difficult to generalize typical destinations. Depending on the mission of the aircraft, destinations can range from a vacation hotspot to a small country airport.
Every corporate and charter department has different typical destinations. Flight instructors typically stay close to base, as the mission of the flight is not to get somewhere, but teach a new lesson. That being said, flight instructors may fly to various destinations on cross country flights with their students.

**Equipment**

Airlines fly many types of aircraft, from large Boeing 777-300s to small Bombardier CRJ-200s. If a professional pilot desires to fly a large aircraft, their best option is to work for an airline. Charter and corporate departments typically use small multi-engine piston or jet aircraft. New private jet aircraft employ cutting-edge technology not yet found in aircraft used by airlines. For professional pilots desiring to fly higher and faster than most other aircraft, corporate or charter flying may be the best fit. Flight instructors typically instruct in small, simple aircraft. These aircraft can be either single or multi engine, and are almost always piston driven. Some instructors use simulators rather than an airplane, cutting down on costs and increasing safety. Simulators are almost always used to train pilots to fly jet aircraft.

**Requirements to be hired**

Airlines have the highest legal barriers to entry. With federal laws requiring at least 1,500 hours, professional pilots typically need to find a time-building job in order to reach this minimum. Charter flying has the same minimums for Captains, but the minimum for First Officers is lowered to 500 hours total flight time. Less time-building needs to happen for a pilot to be hired for a charter job. Corporate flying doesn't have any minimum flight time requirement except that to become a commercial pilot. However, corporate departments have been historically picky when hiring pilots. Some departments look for 2,500 hours with previous time in a jet. This is obviously not an entry level position. Also, corporate and charter departments normally look for an individual that will work well with the existing team. Since these departments are normally small, it is desirable for employees to enjoy working together. Flight instruction has the same basic minimums as a corporate department, with the addition of a flight instructor rating. Flight instructor jobs are the typical way that aspiring airline pilots build their flight time.

**Opportunities for advancement**

Not including flight instruction, opportunities for advancement in these jobs are generally the same. Pilots will almost always start as a First Officer, upgrading to Captain once staffing and experience permits. Many pilots will remain a Captain for the rest of their career. However, if a pilot desires to take on more responsibility, they have the opportunity to be hired as a Chief Pilot, Director of Operations, Director of Aviation, Department Manager, or have additional responsibilities associated with their Captain position. These can be positions like Training Captain, International Captain, Standards Captain, or Safety Officer. Flight Instructors typically don't hold a title of First Officer or Captain, but can become a Check Instructor or a Chief Flight Instructor.
Graduation Survey Results

This section analyzes data from the past eight graduating classes of Western Michigan University Aviation Flight Science Majors. Within a year after graduation, graduates are asked to complete a survey about their current employment situation (known as the “Post-Graduation Activity Report” [PGAR], produced by the office of Career and Student Employment Services). Graduates are asked to provide their current job, location, as well as employment status (part time/full time). From 2009 to 2017, 145 graduates were surveyed. Of these 145 graduates, 73 were employed as either a part-time or full-time flight instructor (PGAR 2009-2017). These flight instructors were employed around the country, with a majority of them being employed in Michigan. This is most likely due to the high number of flight instructors that Western Michigan University employs. Of those left, 14 were employed as airline pilots, and another 12 were employed as corporate pilots. Only 3 graduates surveyed indicated that they were employed as charter pilots. The survey results indicated that many of these pilots were required to leave Michigan to find these jobs; corporate pilots especially, with only two of the 12 surveyed employed in Michigan. These numbers translate to 50.3% of graduates being employed as flight instructors, 9.6% as airline pilots, 8.2% as corporate pilots, and 2.0% as charter pilots.

These statistics show that, within a year after graduation, Flight Instruction employs a majority of Western Michigan University College of Aviation graduates. This number is deceiving, however, because this pattern does not continue as their careers progress. As mentioned above, flight instruction is typically a stepping stone for professional pilots. The hiring minimums are low, so those fresh out of school are able to be hired with very little flight time. As time goes on, the number of flight instructors in the surveyed group will shrink and the other areas will grow.

Another number to note is the number of Flight Science Majors working in an aviation-related position, but not as a pilot. These roles are considered “stepping-stones”, as graduates typically work these jobs while learning to fly and building hours. Of the 145 surveyed, 10 reported working in a position that would eventually lead to a flying position. These jobs include ramp agent, line crew, scheduler, and more. It is important to take note of these positions.
Interviews

This section provides transcripts for interviews with current professional pilots. Their answers give a glimpse into the everyday life of a professional pilot.

Airline

*These answers have been provided by a First Officer at Southwest Airlines, a major airline:*

1. What is your current job?
   - First Officer at Southwest Airlines.

2. How long have you been employed in this particular position?
   - I started with Southwest May 1st of this year. 6 months.

3. What is your weekly schedule? An average weekly schedule for the company?
   - The company uses one to four day trips. Approximately 70% are three day trips with the one, two, and four day trips making up the other 30%. The most common week is to fly three days with four days off.

4. How does scheduling work with your company?
   - There is a great deal of flexibility with our system. After you have bid and been awarded your monthly schedule you have a great number of options for changing trips. You can switch trips within a bank of unassigned company trips, trade with other pilots or give your trip away (unpaid). You are able to completely alter your schedule to accommodate your personal life.

5. What is the average trip length?
   - See question 3.

6. What are the limits on duty day (time flying per day)?
   - We are limited by the new FAA Part 117 rules governing 121 operations. It is a very difficult system to interpret because it works on a rolling clock taking into account daily, weekly and monthly hours.

7. What type of accommodations does your company provide while on the road? (If overnights are required)
   - The hotel accommodations are very nice and must be approved by a board of pilots and flight attendants before being used. The most common are full service Marriotts, Hiltons and Hyatts. We often have two or more hotels at any destination. We utilize a short stay hotel, often on or very near the field for short overnights and a long layover hotel for longer overnights. The longer stay hotels are on beaches, near attractions or in downtown areas so crews have things to do during their stay.
8. What type of equipment does the company fly?
   - Boeing 737-700’s, 800’s and MAX 8’s

9. What is the primary mission of the flights?
   - Business and personal revenue travel.

10. What are the normal destinations of trips?
    - Domestic and International destinations throughout the US, Mexico and the Caribbean.

11. Do you have time on the road? If so, what are you able to do with that time (as allowed by your company)?
    - We have longer overnights, often 22 hours, which allow you to do anything you wish provided you are to the airport in time for your flight. Tours, golf, snowboarding, etc.

12. Where is the company based/what bases are available for pilots?
    - We currently have ten pilot domiciles but you can live wherever you like and commute if you wish. OAK, PHX, LAS, DEN, HOU, DAL, MDW, ATL, MCO and BWI.

13. Does promotion happen in your job, and if so how long does it normally take?
    - It is seniority based and the upgrade time fluctuates over time depending on many factors including hiring, expansion and retirements. The current upgrade projection is 6-7 years.

14. What are the different choices when it comes to promotion?
    - Captain, Check Airman, Chief Pilot and Assistant Chief Pilot. There are also opportunities to work in the training department and corporate offices.

15. What are the requirements to be hired at your company?
    - Turbine experience is required with a preference of 1000 hours of turbine pilot in command time.

16. Are there any travel benefits that your company offers to employees?
    - There are a great deal of travel benefits. Myself, my wife, children (until age 23) and parents all fly for free anywhere on Southwest. My immediate family can also fly standby on any other participating carrier in the world. I also receive a great deal of large discounts on hotels.

17. Is your company hiring or planning to hire in the near future?
    - Yes, the plan is to hire 1000 in 2018 and an additional 2000 over the following two years.

These answers are provided by a First Officer at Endeavor Air, a regional airline:

1. What is your current job?
   - I am a First Officer with Endeavor Air, a wholly owned subsidiary of Delta Airlines
2. How long have you been employed in this particular position?
   - Just over one year

3. What is your weekly schedule? An average weekly schedule for the company?
   - It really depends if I’m sitting reserve, holding a line, or on a CDO (Constant Duty Overnight). Typically, reserve is five days at a time and there are three different reserve schedules throughout the day. Reserve will have 11 scheduled days off per month. I could do anywhere from one to six-day trips holding a line with 14-18 days off a month. A CDO line will schedule three night flights in a row and have 12 days off per month.

4. How does scheduling work with your company?
   - We bid for our schedule, which is based off seniority through a program called Pilot Bidding System (PBS).

5. What is the average trip length?
   - One to six days

6. What are the limits on duty day (time flying per day)?
   - We are regulated under FAR Part 117 ruled. Duty time and flight time limits are different under this rule. We can fly up to nine hours of flight time depending on the time we start. As far as flight duty limits go, they are determined by schedule time of start and number of flight segments for the day. It ranges from 9 to 14 hours.

7. What type of accommodations does your company provide while on the road? (If overnights are required)
   - They provide us with hotel rooms. Some are nicer than others, but they all must include a refrigerator and a microwave.

8. What type of equipment does the company fly?
   - We currently operate the CRJ200 and CRJ900 aircraft. We are scheduled to purchase three CRJ700 aircraft next year.

9. What is the primary mission of the flights?
   - Safely transporting paying customers from one location to another

10. What are the normal destinations of trips?
    - Most commercially served airports east of the Mississippi with a heavy emphasis on the east coast. We do have a few Canadian destinations and will be flying to the Caribbean soon.

11. Do you have time on the road? If so, what are you able to do with that time (as allowed by your company)?
    - We don’t typically have more than 12 hours on the road. We do have some 30-hour layovers, but in places that usually don’t have much to do.
12. Where is the company based/what bases are available for pilots?
   - The company is based in Minneapolis, MN currently. We have pilot bases at MSP, DTW, ATL, JFK, and LGA currently.

13. Does promotion happen in your job, and if so how long does it normally take?
   - Promotions happen, most notably the upgrade from First Officer to Captain. I’ve seen people with previous airline experience upgrade in as little as four months, but 18-24 months in the reality for someone who started with zero airline experience.

14. What are the different choices when it comes to promotion?
   - First Officer to Captain, to Check Airmen, to Assistant Chief Pilot, to Chief Pilot, and possible Management.

15. What are the requirements to be hired at your company?
   - 1,500 total time/50 multi, 1,000 total time/50 multi if you graduate from an accredited Part 141 College flight program.

16. Are there any travel benefits that your company offers to employees?
   - I wouldn’t call them as much a benefit as a pain. We can travel free of charge on any carrier in the Delta family. It’s standby and based off your seniority. Retired Delta pilots have priority over Endeavor pilots. The only people that Endeavor pilots have seniority over are those on buddy passes.

17. Is your company hiring or planning to hire in the near future?
   - Yes. We are currently hiring around 60 pilots per month and will be for the foreseeable future.

The following are explanations of a typical “Day in the Life of an Airline Pilot”, provided by the Airline Pilots Association. Daily schedules are provided by Kandy Bernskoetter, a pilot for a large cargo airline, Costas Sivyllis, a pilot for a major airline, and Justin Dahan, a pilot for a regional airline.

**A Day in the Life of a Cargo Pilot**

*(Bernskoetter, 2017)*

**F/O Kandy Bernskoetter**

*As a cargo pilot, any type of schedule you can imagine is available—domestic, international, 1-day trips, 14-day trips, all-daytime flying, all-nighttime flying, and every combination of these. It is a myth that we only fly in the middle of the night! We fly a lot of U.S. mail, and therefore, have an extensive day flight schedule in the United States.*

*Each aircraft has a different mission, and seniority dictates your monthly bid award (your likelihood of getting your desired schedule). At my airline currently, new hires are being assigned to every type of aircraft, including the B-777.*

*We fly four- and five-week bid months (28 days and 35 days) that don't align with calendar months. All “months” start on a Monday.*
My flight schedule changes depending on business and contracts with companies. In any given month, the type of aircraft that services a particular city could change. B-757 and B-767 are separate bid packs, though you may fly either version of the aircraft when you show for work. On the B-777 and MD-11, first officers can bid and fly as relief flight officers when scheduled flight legs exceed eight hours.

Memphis is by far the largest domicile (home base for pilots) in our system. Pilots will never be forced to be domiciled in a foreign duty assignment, but sometimes there are special international bid awards to cover flying outside the United States. These routes vary, but could be Central/South America, Europe, or Asia.

Show time at the ramp for all trips and flights is one hour prior to scheduled departure. Oftentimes we must depart the hotel up to two hours prior to that, but this usually isn’t a bad thing! It means the crew hotel is in a city center, away from the airport. For example, Paris and Shanghai are two cities where the hotels are far from the airport. Currently, FAR Part 117 rest requirements for U.S. pilots do not apply to cargo pilots like myself, so local travel time does not count as duty time. If layovers are shorter than 14 hours, we usually stay at a hotel closer to the airport.

Flight planning, especially for international flights, may start even before departing the hotel. At my airline, each pilot has a company-issued iPad and can access the Flight Planning tools and Jeppesen charts at any time.

As a cargo pilot, you can find every type of flying schedule in a variety of aircraft. There is something for everyone here!

A Day in the Life of a Mainline Pilot

F/O Costas Sivyllis

T minus 10 hours before departure

My day begins with my alarm clock going off at 9:30 a.m. next to my comfortable bed in Florida. Today, I am scheduled to fly from Newark to Paris and have a show time of 6:00 p.m. That’s the time I will meet with the other two pilots to begin flight planning for the journey across the Atlantic before our 7:30 p.m. scheduled pushback time.

Rewind back to waking up. Like many crew members, I don’t live where I am based, and I will spend part of the day commuting to work. It is my responsibility to get work on time in whatever way possible. Today, I am utilizing another airline’s jumpseat to get from Florida to New Jersey.

“Jumpseating” is an industry term that affords commuting pilots the ability to sit in a small, fold-down seat in the cockpit behind the pilots. If there are no available seats in the cabin, we can sit in this jumpseat to get to work. My company requires that I plan at least two flight options to get to work in case something goes wrong (e.g., delays, weather, etc.).

I get ready at home, finish packing my suitcase for this three-day trip, and begin my hour drive to the airport. I pull into the employee parking lot in Florida just over an hour before my jumpseat flight’s scheduled departure time of 12:30 p.m.

T minus 8 hours before departure

I board my flight, and it’s actually not full—so I look very much like a passenger in a window seat and relax for the two-hour flight to Newark.

Upon landing, I take the airport tram to change terminals to my airline’s main area. There, I descend into the bowels of the terminal where our crew room is located. With computers, couches, and comfy chairs, this will be where I wait out the remaining time until my show time in a few hours.
T minus 90 minutes before departure

Just before 6:00 p.m., I head upstairs to the terminal and enter the flight planning area, which is a room filled with long, high tables where pilots can stand and layout their various flight planning resources. I greet my two other colleagues flying to Paris tonight—one of whom lives in base (Newark). So, unlike myself that spent the day getting from Florida to New York, he had the day free and simply got in his car about 30 minutes from the airport to drive in around 5:30 p.m.

Because this is an overseas flight, we are required to draw a map of the transoceanic route, and mark various points as a paper backup. We also review a paper flight plan, which is backed up on our electronic flight bag. A detailed look at the en route weather, airport weather, forecasts, fuel plan, maintenance items, and various other areas commences. Once comfortable with the flight plan, the three of us head out into the concourse and toward our gate. We are departing at 7:30 p.m. We get stopped along the way by a passenger looking for a particular gate—something that happens quite often. The uniform can be a sign to many that we are airport experts. Perhaps we are!

T minus 60 minutes before departure

Upon reaching our gate, we greet the gate agent, meet with our 10 flight attendants, and walk down the jetbridge to the airplane. Thankfully, it has been on the ground most of the day, and it is fully catered, cabin cleaned, and ready for boarding. As a crew, the pilots and flight attendants, we brief in the cabin. This gets everyone on the same page for the next eight hours and increases communication—something vital in the aviation world.

The flight attendants then proceed with their safety checks, and the pilots start their cockpit checks. This is a long checklist where the pilots perform various tests, put switches in the correct position, check any maintenance items, and program the flight management computer.

As I begin loading our flight plan, the other first officer goes down onto the tarmac to begin the classic preflight walk around—something a keen traveler may see from the terminal. The pilot walks around the whole airplane checking for any damage or small items that we’d want to further check before taking flight. This includes the nose, engines, wheels, gear assembly, wheel wells, tail, and more.

Once he gets back on the flight deck and tells us the airplane is good, we begin boarding.

T minus 45 minutes before departure

Over 200 people now start flowing down the jetbridge and filling the first class cabin behind the flight deck, followed by coach. Many passengers have a look of excitement on their faces, as we are headed to Paris. Perhaps it’s a vacation, a honeymoon, a family reunion, a business trip, or they are simply connecting to another flight.

I’m busy coordinating with operations as we have a few meals that need to be catered and to ensure we are being fueled.

T minus 30 minutes before departure

Now, it’s crunch time—everyone is excited to go, and we receive our clearance from air traffic control (ATC). About 15 minutes later, the gate agent appears in the flight deck doorway to let us know we’re all set. We finished boarding early and are ready to push! I complete a before pushback checklist and call ramp control for a pushback clearance.

T minus 5 minutes before departure

We push back early! This is great because not only is it an on-time departure, but our customers are happy and will arrive early, and the crew will get just a few extra minutes of time on our layover.
After making our way through Newark Airport’s evening rush hour traffic, it’s our turn for takeoff. Most European departures take off within just a few hours of each other, so we are one of many large airplanes taking to the North Atlantic tonight. I push the throttles forward, set the thrust, and away we go to the city of light!

+2:00

After flying over Hartford, Boston, and Nova Scotia, we coast out over the North Atlantic. Tonight we are flying on North Atlantic Track V, or Track Victor. Because there’s limited radar and radio coverage in this region, we fly published tracks that change daily and use longitude and latitude for navigation. We communicate with ATC via text message from our onboard computer and use high frequency radio as a backup.

At this point, it’s time for my break. There are three pilots, so we fly in shifts, and the first pilot went on break shortly after takeoff. This way, there are always two pilots on the flight deck. I retreat to rest in our designated area, and a few hours later I go back up to relieve the next pilot.

Throughout the night over the Atlantic, while the passengers sleep soundly or watch movies behind us, we carefully cross check our position, fuel, and flight plan to ensure we are exactly where we need to be. It’s a clear night above the clouds over the cold, rough waters below us. The stars are bright tonight since there’s only a crescent moon, and I see the flash of a few other strobe lights far away from other airplanes making this same journey to somewhere in Europe. It’s a peaceful calm—a sight I relished traveling as a kid overseas to see family, an annual journey that made me fall in love with flying. I take a moment to think about how I dreamt of this for years. Yet now, it’s a reality as I sit back and monitor the flight instruments and chat casually with the other pilot about our schedule for next month.

+6:00

Dawn has broken over the coast of Ireland, as we coast in over the city of Cork. The sun is beginning to get very bright! Soon, we are all three in the flight deck again to begin the descent into Paris.

+7:00

While it was very quiet over the Atlantic, the radio chatter is now almost constant as we begin to fly over the English Chanel approaching Paris. It’s rush hour here—just past 8 a.m. local time. If there’s any doubt we aren’t home anymore, the French accent on the radio reminds us we are certainly thousands of miles away. ATC begin to step us down in altitude as we approach the airport. We brief the arrival and configure the aircraft for landing.

+8:00

As I call for “gear down,” I can see the Eiffel Tower off the right side of the airplane in the distance. We are cleared to land on Runway 08L, where I touchdown and bring the aircraft to taxi speed.

As the captain brings the airplane to a halt at the gate, I turn off the engines and turn off the seatbelt sign, which begins a mad rush in the cabin of passengers collecting their overhead items and processing off the airplane. That’s when the 200 “bye-byes” begin, something that I still enjoy doing.

Once everyone is off, we board our crew bus and head into Paris. It’s rush hour in the morning not only in the air, but on the ground too. It takes us just over an hour to get into the city.

We check into our hotel and a quick glance of the Eiffel Tower nearby confirms I’m not dreaming—I’m actually working in Paris! After flying all night, we are all overdue for some sleep and agree to meet for dinner at 6 p.m.

I take a nap and venture outside around 1 p.m. to explore one of my favorite layover cities. Some great food, views, and culture are all around. I make a point to see some of the famous monuments and even snap some photos.
At 6 p.m., I meet up with the crew back at the hotel, and we head out for a great group dinner.

Alas, the layover is over, and we head to bed to get well-needed rest for our return flight the next morning. The process is almost identical in preparation, and we push back from Paris on time at about 1 p.m. local time in Newark.

The trip is done all during the day this time and the crossing goes just as smoothly. We coast in and descend into Newark, where the captain (his turn to fly this time) makes a nice landing and we taxi to the gate.

For some of us, the day still isn’t over. Pilots who live nearby get in their cars and drive home. Others, like myself, now do the reverse commute. So, I wait for the next flight to Florida, get on the jumpseat, and when all is said and done, arrive in my driveway around 6 p.m., just in time for dinner.

As I park in my driveway, I reflect that I just started my day in Paris, and now am parking at my home where I’ll watch the Patriots’ game that night and have the next few days off before I begin another trip to Europe.

As I grab my suitcases out of my trunk and head inside, I find myself thinking, “I hope I never have to get a real job.”

A Day in the Life of a Regional Pilot

(Dahan, 2017)

Capt. Justin Dahan, CRJ-200/700/900

My name is Justin Dahan, and I am a captain for a regional airline in the United States. I’m based in Charlotte, N.C. (KCLT), and I fly the Bombardier CRJ-200, CRJ-700, and CRJ-900. The following is a day in the life at my regional airline.

I was flying a three-day trip, which means I leave home on the first day and return home on the third day. I am currently on day two of the trip, flying four legs on the CRJ-700, starting in Charlottesville, Va. (CHO), and ending in Greensboro, N.C. (GSO).

At the end of day one, my crew and I arrived at the hotel in Charlottesville and determined our van time for the next day. The hotel had our van scheduled for 1:30 p.m., and my show time at the airport was 1:49 p.m. At my airline, “show time” is 45 minutes before scheduled departure time.

The following morning, I wake up, shower, and go about my morning routine, leaving plenty of time until I have to meet the van. I take this opportunity to get a bite to eat at a restaurant across the street with a fellow crewmember. After lunch, I repack my bags, put on my uniform, and head downstairs to meet the crew for the van. We board the van and make our way to the airport.

Once we arrive at the airport, we go through security, head to the gate, and are told the airplane is not yet there, as we are actually a few minutes early. I take this opportunity to review my paperwork and the weather, and it seems like a beautiful day for flying!

Once the airplane arrives and the passengers get off, we swap with the other crew. The crew that brought the aircraft in will now head to the hotel for the overnight. One of the crewmembers onboard introduces himself. He is a check airman, and I am told that I am getting a line check today. Every year, captains have to receive a line check—an observation of us out flying a regular flight—to ensure we are operating safely and correctly. This means that he will sit in the jumpseat (the extra seat in the cockpit) to observe the flight to Charlotte. My crew and I get the airplane ready, and as we are boarding, the ground crew informs of us that something appears broken in the cargo compartment. We give maintenance a call to get it squared away and depart CHO on time. Upon landing in Charlotte, we see that we are changing airplanes for the rest of our three legs that day. This is called a plane swap. The check airman informs me that I passed my line check!
My crew and I gather our belongings, shut down the airplane, and change to a different airplane. We repeat the preflight inspections on this new plane and board up for a round trip to Ft. Walton Beach, Fla. (VPS). We fly down to VPS, enjoying the beautiful afternoon for flying, and are treated to spectacular military activity down in VPS, as it is a military base. We deplane, board back up, and head back to Charlotte.

Once landing in Charlotte we have over 90 minutes until our next flight to our overnight in Greensboro, N.C. (GSO). My crew and I take this opportunity to eat dinner, as we won’t arrive to our destination until just prior to midnight. Once we are 30 minutes away from departure time, the gate agent begins boarding the flight. After boarding, we depart the gate, taxi to the runway, and fly the quick 72-mile flight to GSO. Upon arrival at the gate, we deplane, and the first officer does an external check of the airplane to make sure nothing is broken that needs to be fixed for the next morning, while I shut down the plane. As we gather our bags, I call the hotel to ask for the van to come pick us up.

Once we get outside, we load up the hotel van and drive about 15 minutes to our overnight hotel. At the hotel, we sign in, get our rooms, and set the van time for the next morning for our departure to the airport. As it’s now 11:55 p.m., once I get back to my room, I wind down, get ready for bed, and plan to do it all again the next day! That will be the last day of our trip, which means I will be home that day.

On this second day of my three-day trip, I was on duty (the amount of time I was at work that day) for 9 hours and 46 minutes (from 1:49 p.m. until 11:35 p.m.), and I logged 5 hours and 32 minutes of flight time over four flights. At my airline, we fly anywhere from one to six flights in a day, but two to five flights is the average. This was an enjoyable day of flying with good weather, good crewmembers, and a good amount of time in the air.
On-demand/Charter

_These answers are provided by a former Captain and Training Director for Superior Aviation, a regional on-demand cargo company:_

1. **What is your current job?**
   - Not currently employed there, but worked for Murray Aviation and eventually Superior Aviation as a pilot and eventually director of training.

2. **How long have you been employed in this particular position?**
   - I had been employed with Murray Aviation for two years before I moved to Superior Aviation, where I stayed for four years.

3. **What is your weekly schedule? An average weekly schedule for the company?**
   - Both had different schedules. Murray was 100% on-call. We wore a pager and had to be to the airport within 15 minutes of the initial call Monday-Friday, 8-5. We were required to be off the ground within 30 minutes. There was no way to plan when the call would come. Superior was more of a scheduled job. There were the typically weekly runs, plus some pop-up trips. We would fly those typical trips almost every day, and had vacation days when we needed time off.

4. **How does scheduling work with your company?**
   - At Murray we had a list of pilots that would be cycled through when a trip popped up. Once we finished a trip, our names would go to the bottom of the list to be called. There was a lot of flying happening then, so we cycled through that list quite quickly. At Superior, we were scheduled for our normal runs typically based on seniority. We all knew each other in the company, so we normally would take one for the team/take the less desirable trip once in a while to help someone else out.

5. **What is the average trip length?**
   - Our flying with Murray varied. We did a lot of flying to the East Coast, but I can’t remember every having an overnight with that company. It was almost always flying out and back. Superior had shorter legs, a lot of them staying within Michigan (from our Lansing base) and Colorado (from our Denver base). Depending on what route we were flying, we may spend a night or two on the road per week.

6. **What are the limits on duty day (time flying per day)?**
   - Both companies followed the 10/14 rule. We could fly up to 10 hours in the airplane and have a 14-hour duty day. Many times, we would get close to the 10 hours of flying in a day at Murray Aviation. This was not normally an issue at Superior.
7. What type of accommodations does your company provide while on the road? (If overnights are required)
   • Superior would provide us with hotel rooms on the road. If we were flying with a copilot, it was generally expected that we would share a room to save the company money. These hotels ranged from middle of the road places to mom and pop hotels. All dependent on the location.

8. What type of equipment does the company fly?
   • Murray: Mitsubishi MU-2 and Casa 212
   • Superior: Metro 2, Merlin 4, Cessna Caravan, C404, C402, C310R (passenger configuration)

9. What is the primary mission of the flights?
   • Both of these companies were on-demand cargo operators. Murray was primarily for the auto industry and Superior was contracts for UPS and DHL.

10. What are the normal destinations of trips?
    • Murray: East coast primarily, but wherever the company shipping parts needed us to go
    • Superior: Lansing base flew mostly around Michigan. Denver base flew mostly around Colorado

11. Do you have time on the road? If so, what are you able to do with that time (as allowed by your company)?
    • Superior left us with a fair amount of time on the road. This was great because I was able to explore the towns I flew to. I was able hike, ski, hunt, and see the sights while I was on the road because I knew exactly when I was scheduled to leave. There was no chance of an earlier departure to stick around for.

12. Where is the company based/what bases are available for pilots?
    • These companies have been purchased by other companies, but Murray Aviation was based at the Willow Run airport in Ypsilanti, Michigan. Superior Aviation was based at the Lansing Capitol Airport in Lansing, Michigan. Murray has since become National Airlines and Superior has become Martinaire.

13. Does promotion happen in your job, and if so how long does it normally take?
    • Yes, it happened. I was hired as a First Officer at Murray Aviation and quickly upgraded (in four months I believe) to Captain. I was hired in as a Captain at Superior, and eventually because the Director of Training for them after three years.

14. What are the different choices when it comes to promotion?
    • First Officer to Captain, to training department, to Director of Training, to Chief Pilot.
15. What are the requirements to be hired at your company?
   - They are fairly basic now. One needs to have experience to meet Part 135 minimums, but not much more than that is needed. These companies are hiring as many pilots as they can currently.

16. Are there any travel benefits that your company offers to employees?
   - We had jumpseat privileges with UPS airlines when I was at Superior. I was able to use this to travel on my time off. I believe they still have this agreement.

17. Is your company hiring or planning to hire in the near future?
   - Yes. Martinaire is currently hiring pilots, and it looks like that hiring will continue. Most on-demand cargo operators are experiencing a pilot shortage at this time.

*These answers are provided by a First Officer for a passenger charter company in Grand Rapids, MI:*

1. What is your current job?
   - First Officer at Northern Jet Management

2. How long have you been employed in this particular position?
   - Four months

3. What is your weekly schedule? An average weekly schedule for the company?
   - We run a “10 on, 5 off” schedule. I am on call for 10 days, but I’m typically called in 6-8 or those days. The trips can be anywhere from a day to a week, and there’s no way to predict this. The five days I have off are guaranteed off, and I can plan years ahead for these days off.

4. How does scheduling work with your company?
   - We have a scheduling department. Customers contact the schedulers to set up a trip, who assign an airplane and flight crew. We normally can look ahead about a week and have a good idea of when and where we’ll be flying, but it’s always subject to change. The trip is pretty much set in stone by the day before it is scheduled to leave.

5. What is the average trip length?
   - We fly all over the country and to Canada, Mexico, and the Bahamas. Every trip is different, which makes the job exciting. Our aircraft can fly up to 1700nm without stopping to refuel, so our longest flights are about three hours.

6. What are the limits on duty day (time flying per day)?
   - We can fly up to 10 hours a day, with a 14 hour duty day.
7. What type of accommodations does your company provide while on the road? (If overnights are required)
   - We are almost always in some brand of Hilton hotel and we have one rental car for the two pilots. We are given a per diem for food - $50 per day on the road.

8. What type of equipment does the company fly?
   - We operate Bombardier Lear 40/45/70/75’s, a Citation Bravo and Sovereign, and a Challenger 300.

9. What is the primary mission of the flights?
   - Depends what the customer wants. We generally are split between business and pleasure trips.

10. What are the normal destinations of trips?
    - Florida and anywhere in the Midwest, with the occasional international trip.

11. Do you have time on the road? If so, what are you able to do with that time (as allowed by your company)?
    - We spend a good amount of time on the road. We are able to do what we want with that time, like sightsee and golf, but we are still on call should a trip popup. They do not require us to stay at the airport, which is great.

12. Where is the company based/what bases are available for pilots?
    - We are based in Grand Rapids, MI and that is the only base.

13. Does promotion happen in your job, and if so how long does it normally take?
    - Yes. Captain upgrades take about 2.5 years, with more responsibility after that. Captains can eventually become Chief Pilot, Director of Operations, and IOE Captain, Safety Manager, or similar positions.

14. What are the different choices when it comes to promotion?
    - Captains can eventually become Chief Pilot, Director of Operations, and IOE Captain, Safety Manager, or similar positions.

15. What are the requirements to be hired at your company?
    - 900 hours total time and a Commercial Multi-engine pilot certificate with instrument rating

16. Are there any travel benefits that your company offers to employees?
    - We are able to accrue hotel and rental car points when on the road and use them on personal trips. No flight benefits of any kind.

17. Is your company hiring or planning to hire in the near future?
    - We are planning to hire qualified First Officers in the near future.
Corporate

Answers provided by a Senior Captain for Steelcase, Inc:

1. What is your current job?
   - Corporate pilot for Steelcase Aviation

2. How long have you been employed in this particular position?
   - 22 years

3. What is your weekly schedule? An average weekly schedule for the company?
   - Varies. Over the course of a year, we probably average 3-4 work days a week. We do fly over the weekends, too.

4. How does scheduling work with your company?
   - Trip requests are submitted by area sales reps to our corporate senior management to determine the value and necessity of any trip. From there, the trips are assigned to an airplane, and a crew assigned to each trip. Pilots figure out their schedule for the week the Friday before.

5. What is the average trip length?
   - Flights are on average 1.6 hours long. We’re typically on the road for one night per trip, flying two to three trips per week.

6. What are the limits on duty day (time flying per day)?
   - A two-crew duty day is limited to 14 hours. It can be extended to 16 hours with a 6 hour break period offering a protected 4 hours rest/sleep opportunity.

7. What type of accommodations does your company provide while on the road? (If overnights are required)
   - Accommodations are generous. Nice hotels, rental cars, great meals.

8. What type of equipment does the company fly?
   - Dassault Falcon aircraft: DA-2EASy (2000LX) and DA-EASy (900EX)

9. What is the primary mission of the flights?
   - 85% customer-based flying to company facilities and 15% to facilitate executive management needs

10. What are the normal destinations of trips?
    - The only normal destination is Grand Rapids. Beyond that, we fly everywhere the customer needs require.
11. Do you have time on the road? If so, what are you able to do with that time (as allowed by your company)?
   • Hotel, meals, and rental cars are accommodated for by the company on any layover on the road. Any extracurricular activity is each crew member’s personal responsibility. We tend to play a lot of golf while on the road.

12. Where is the company based/what bases are available for pilots?
   • We are based in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Pilots are required to live within an hour driving distance to the airport.

13. Does promotion happen in your job, and if so how long does it normally take?
   • Promotion comes through hard work and time spent with the company.

14. What are the different choices when it comes to promotion?
   • One starts as a First Officer, to be promoted to a Captain. Once one is a Captain, they can fill a role such as Standards Captain, Training Captain, or International Captain, and will be responsible for that area of the department.

15. What are the requirements to be hired at your company?
   • Typically, we like to see 2,500 total hours plus some time in a jet. Also, we look for someone that will work well within the existing group of pilots. This is more important than total number of hours when it comes down to it.

16. Are there any travel benefits that your company offers to employees?
   • No

17. Is your company hiring or planning to hire in the near future?
   • Not currently. We tend to hire only when a senior pilot retires and we have an opening.
Flight Instruction

Answers provided by an Assistant Chief Flight Instructor and Associate Director of Flight Operations at Western Michigan University’s College of Aviation:

1. What is your current job?
   • I am the Associate Director of Flight Operations/Assistant Chief Flight Instructor for the College of Aviation.

2. How long have you been employed in this particular position?
   • I have been employed by Western Michigan University for 23 years, and have been acting as an Assistant Chief for 16 years.

3. What is your weekly schedule? An average weekly schedule for the company?
   • My weekly schedule is typically Monday through Friday, from 0800-1700. This is the normal schedule throughout most positions within the College of Aviation. I do work an occasional Saturday as needed.
   • The instructors that report to me are typically hard scheduled for 3 days of the week, and can request additional flights as well.

4. How does scheduling work with your company?
   • For the salaried positions, Western Michigan University dictates the staff/faculty schedules. The flight instructors that report to me are given flight schedules based on the following: seniority, student schedules, class schedules and productivity.

5. What is the average trip length?
   • N/A

6. What are the limits on duty day (time flying per day)?
   • Per the regulations, I am only allowed to give 8 hours of flight instruction within a 24 hour period.

7. What type of accommodations does your company provide while on the road? (If overnights are required)
   • I am able to pick my own accommodations when travel is required for business, within reason. We are also compensated with daily per diem which varies from location to location.

8. What type of equipment does the company fly?
   • SR-20, SR-22, PA-18 Super Cub on Floats, PA-28, PA-44, 8KCAB

9. What is the primary mission of the flights?
   • Flight instruction
10. What are the normal destinations of trips?
   • Training flights range from local activities to cross country flights of 300nm range.

11. Do you have time on the road? If so, what are you able to do with that time (as allowed by your company)?
   • Yes, and when I am not working whilst on the road, I am able to do as I please.

12. Where is the company based/what bases are available for pilots?
   • Home base is Battle Creek, MI at the KBTL Airport.
   • Satellite base is in Punta Gorda, FL at the KPGD Airport.

13. Does promotion happen in your job, and if so how long does it normally take?
   • Promotion does take place, but it is typically due to attrition. There is no definitive timeline once you’ve been hired.

14. What are the different choices when it comes to promotion?
   • N/A

15. What are the requirements to be hired at your company?
   • To be hired in my position, the following minimum criteria applies:
     o Bachelor’s degree in aviation related field
     o Hold a Commercial Pilot or Airline Transport Pilot Certificate
     o Have a CFI and CFII Certificates
     o Hold a valid 2nd Class FAA Medical
     o Have attained at least 1000 PIC flight hours
     o Have significant instructional experience in a FAA Part 141 curriculum
   • To be hired as a flight instructor
     o Hold a Commercial Pilot or Airline Transport Pilot Certificate
     o Have a CFI Certificate
     o Hold a valid 2nd Class FAA Medical

16. Are there any travel benefits that your company offers to employees?
   • No

17. Is your company hiring or planning to hire in the near future?
   • We are consistently hiring qualified flight instructors.
References

2016 Airmen Knowledge Test by Region (pp. 1-2, Federal report).


Charter Pilot Salary Study

