



Flight Plan

Like a lot of kids, I suppose, jet airplanes fascinated me, especially as the space age dawned and I came to realize that all the early astronauts, my heroes, were “fighter jocks.” However, the thought of ever actually flying a fighter was not something that I ever considered seriously.

As graduation from college neared and the military draft was in effect, I started to think about how I would serve my country and the early thoughts about jetfighters resurfaced, so I decided to give it a shot. I joined the Marine Corps, got my wings and was very fortunate, and lucky, to have flown almost 4,000 hours in some of the world’s greatest fighters, including the F-4, A-4, A-7, and F-16.

As I look back and think about why flying was so meaningful, many things come to mind; the competition and camaraderie of a team of professional men and women dedicated to a noble cause, landing on aircraft carriers, night air refueling in bad weather, dog fighting against multiple opponents past the speed of sound.

Many times someone said for all of us, “Can you believe they pay us to do this!” And of course, most important are the friendships that will last a lifetime.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the extremely high price associated with such a rewarding career, and that is the pilots who gave their lives in pursuit of what they truly loved and believed in.

One of the biggest challenges was completing a mission when things didn’t go as planned. On a trip home from a deployment to Norway, we took off on the 8 ½ hour nonstop, 5 air refuelings trip in the single engine F-16. Over a stormy north Atlantic with white caps easily visible from 35,000 feet my wingman declared an emergency with electrical problems so we had to divert and land in Iceland. Another important point is knowing in advance what to do when outside events force you to change course, always having a back-up plan.

One of the most meaningful aspects about flying was that there was always a clear cut goal of where we were going and what we were going to accomplish. In the case of the trip across the Atlantic it was very succinctly, “The mission for today is take 8

F-16’s from our base in Norway and land safely at our home base in South Carolina.”

In my 4,000 hours of flying there was never any doubt on takeoff roll where I was going or what I was trying to accomplish. One of the great challenges I’ve had in my life, and in working with others, is to take the concept of goals and apply it in the personal and business arena.

Look at your “flight plan.” Where are you heading? If success is progress toward your goals, and you don’t have a clear picture of where you are going in the important areas of your life, then it might be time to think about it.

--Charlie Farrell

Some questions to consider and I encourage your response:

1. What % of people in your organization know what the goals are?
2. Whose responsibility is it that people understand the goals?
3. Do your people have a clear understanding of the differences in mission, vision, and goals?
4. What are the characteristics of a "good" goal?
5. Do our personal goals need to be written?
6. Do written goals have a better chance of being attained?

I encourage your response to these thoughts. farlgroup@aol.com

Have a great day!

Please forward this on or send us the e-mail addresses of co-workers, friends or family members who might enjoy a monthly leadership thought.