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AOPA Recommends Flight Training Fixes



CFIs just “building time” for an airline job was one of the primary obstacles to student pilot retention indicated in a recent study.

A few months ago, AOPA announced that they would be performing an in depth study regarding pilot training. The results of the study were reported at the recent AOPA Summit in Long Beach. The study was performed by experts at APCO Insight and highlighted some changes that could improve flight training. The study indicated that the industry is struggling to retain students, as reported by a survey expert and new private pilot, because it isn't exploiting the fact that being a pilot has a “cool factor.”

In a conference at AOPA Summit, APCO Insight CEO, Mark Benson reported that flight training industry is overlooking one of its most important promotional tools – the sense of community and feeling of belonging that pilots feel among other pilots. According to Jennifer Storm, AOPA's head of their Flight Training Student Retention Initiative, the survey revealed a lot of information about the desires of student pilots when it comes to flight schools. In short, efforts to sell flight training have eroded the “specialness” of getting a pilot certificate. Additionally, student pilots are seeking value for their money. It is important that they feel their instructors and flight schools are actively saving them money. Flight training is already pricey, the last thing a student pilot wants is an instructor or flight school that needlessly runs up the cost.

Perhaps one of the defining issues of student pilot retention is instructor retention. According to Benson, the industry needs to attract more CFIs that are committed and involved in their students' training. It is essential that they keep the student pilots engaged and check in regularly. The extensive research APCO Insight performed for AOPA on student pilot retention indicated that above all, instructors who are just there to “build time” for an airline job were one of the biggest turn-offs for student pilots.

AOPA and APCO Insight shared the results of the study with CFIs and flight schools at an event just before AOPA Summit. Among the issues discussed were: CFI boredom, CFI pay, and training material availability. According to the study, despite the fact that a majority of student pilots characterize flight training as a good thing, the many unprofessional, disorganized, and unmotivated CFIs across the country were at least partly to blame for poor student retention.

For more information on flight training and choosing the right school, check out our [Flight Training Resource Center](#) or find [flight training schools](#) near you.

Sources: [Training Needs A Tuneup](#)

This article was written by Matthew Everett, a private pilot, aviation writer, and frequent contributor to AviationSchoolsOnline.com. You can follow him on twitter @leaving_tf or find his blog at <http://leavingterrafirma.com>.

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Author Bio

Kyle Garrett is the founder of AviationSchoolsOnline.com, has 20 years in the marketing and vocational school industry, and is a 1700 hour instrument-rated private pilot

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