

Who's the Boss?

While you're at work earning a living to support your hobbies, are you a manager or supervisor? Do people report to you and follow your direction? Do you provide leadership? Are you responsible for their actions? If so, then you're the boss - you're in charge.

But even if you're not the boss during the workweek, you're in command on the weekend. That's PIC - Pilot in Command. While sitting at your desk - the pilot's seat - you're the boss. You're in charge of everything that's going on around you. You're responsible for the actions of your employees. The tow pilot, wing runner and crew all work for you. How well they do their job effects your future.

Would you hire an employee without interviewing them? Do you know your employees at the airport? Are they predictable? Do the tow pilot and wing runner know their jobs? Can you count on them to do everything correctly in an emergency? If you're not sure, don't come to work until you find out. Your future, your life, is in their hands.

This is my "You're the Boss" lesson. It happens somewhere between flights 5 – 10 when the student is ready to start doing the take off and tow. He/she is sitting in the cockpit, I'm standing outside and it goes something like this.

"Here we are, sitting at your desk in your office. You're the boss. Everyone here works for you. Everyone has a job to do and you have to make sure everything goes perfectly. The wing runner's job is to hook you up and get you off the ground. The tow pilot's job is to get you up into the air. My job is to teach you how to do it. While we're doing the pre-takeoff checklist there will be several things going on around you. The tow plane is coming to us and the runner is getting the rope. Do you see any knots in it? He should wait until you're ready to connect it. Tell him only when you're ready. If he connects it without you telling him, stop him. Release it. You're the boss. When it's connected, let's test it. You want to make sure the release works. Next the runner will go out to the wing tip and the tow plane will start taking up the slack. You're looking again for knots and tangles. Also, look down the runway. People, deer, cars, other planes, llamas, Tony Gilbert's dog. Is it all clear? Anything to stop you at this point?

"Now the wing is still down and the runner is waiting for a thumbs up signal from you to lift it. If he lifts the wing with out your signal, release the rope. You're the boss. You tell him when your ready. He didn't see that wasp on the canopy or know your seat belt came undone. His job is to wait for your signal and only then lift the wing."

"Okay, we're ready to go. Rope, knots, people, cars, traffic, all clear, wag the rudder and we're off."

This ground lesson takes about ten minutes. I also make sure the tow pilots and wing runners know what I'm telling the students. If the runner doesn't get a thumb's up, he's not to lift the wing. The tow plane will not move with the wing on the ground.

Okay Ron, what's the point you're asking? Why am I telling you this? You're not a student at lesson 10. Well the point is, have you ever started rolling a few seconds before you were ready. Had a knot in the rope? Saw people on the far end of the field? Sure you have - I have.

The last 2 minutes, just before you start to roll, is probably the most critical part of your entire flight. It's the time when you check and re-check things. It's the time when you're making the final commitment to the launch. It's the time to embark on what you have been looking forward to all week. Your loved ones will be awaiting your return. You're sure everything is ready for a successful flight. You're in charge of what's about to happen. You're the boss.

Ron Caruso