



Helicopter Pilot vs Day-Trader

What does a helicopter pilot have in common with a day-trader? ... Great question!

Believe it or not, I have been asked that question many times. As a pilot, I never thought about trading or even how flying would have anything to do with trading. A helicopter pilot, fixed wing pilot and commercial pilot all follow critical rules. They have common strengths and established routines that help save lives every day. These strengths can be applied to trading stocks, bonds, options, futures, mutual funds, retirement accounts and more.

When I look back, I can say that flying had a lot to do with being a successful trader today. As an Army Officer, I was in charge of a Med-Evac helicopter unit in the United States and in combat in Desert Storm. We were responsible for saving lives and transporting accident patients to medical units and hospitals.

I mention this to emphasize the different stress levels that each career can have. Trading is no different. Have you ever placed a trade and then instantly started to feel nausea, sweaty palms and forehead? What about under your arms and an increased heart rate with stomach upset? Great, now you have a small glimpse of what it feels like when flying a helicopter in emergency situations and combat.

So, what does that have to do with trading? One of the first things you have to do when trading is to realize what stress is and what causes it. Then you have to be able to deal with it and learn how to overcome it.

Developing confidence in trading will help reduce stress. Easier said than done, right? As a pilot, we build confidence by learning how to fly a big piece of equipment in the air that really isn't meant to fly. We called it "beating the air into submission."

Think about that for a moment. Isn't that what we do with trading? We learn rules, we apply them and then expect them to perform the way they have in the past. We want those trades to perform according to our indicators. Someone taught us that those indicators work and that is where our confidence begins to build.

Confidence comes by proving to ourselves that our trading plan works. This comes from following a set of rules, reviewing our trades and journaling our thoughts daily. This is just like

doing a pre-flight and post-flight checklist on an aircraft. This is a MUST DO item on your list or one day you might make a fatal mistake and it will cost you a lot of money.

What makes flying relative to trading? We use circuit breakers, indicators, gauges and controls. While flying, I continued to remind myself one thing that saved my life. **“Rely on your indicators, not what you feel!”** When you fly into the clouds, you no longer have visual reference. You must rely on your indicators to get you safely to your destination. If you feel like you are flying level and your indicators are telling you that you are in a turn, then you MUST correct your position, based on your indicators or the results could be disastrous.

When trading, we sometimes let our emotions make our decisions for us. What we say in the Shark Den is **“Trade what you see, not what you believe.”** This means to trade what you see on your indicators, not what your thoughts or emotions are telling you. Overcome this challenge of trading by emotions and your confidence should gradually improve along with your trading results.

What are the two most important factors in flying and trading? Discipline and patience! With discipline, you rely on a sound set of guidelines and rules. When you follow your rules, you are successful. When you don't, you are not. Exercise patience while waiting for a proper trade plan setup to occur. This discipline is what will help you implement your trade plan effectively with confidence and positive results.

To Successful Trading,

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