

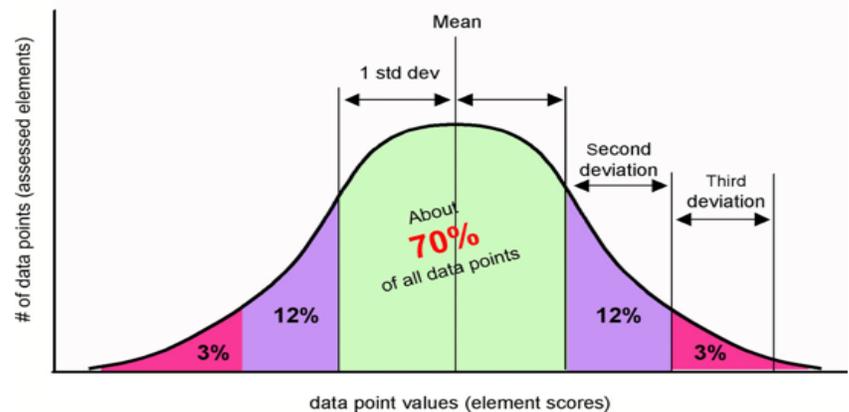


The Characteristics of an A&P – Airframe & Powerplant, **AMT** – Aircraft Maintenance Technician, **AME** -Aircraft Maintenance Engineer, **LAME** – Licensed Aircraft Maintenance Engineer, all of whom maintain aircraft.

Before anyone says that I am stereotyping or worse yet, profiling, let me introduce you to the Bell curve.

The Bell curve is a grading tool that is often used to help ensure that an entire class does not fail or pass. What the curve tells us is that about 50% of us will have about 70% of the characteristics.

A few will have none of the characteristics and about the same number will have all of them.



Let's see where you fit in and look at both the good, the not so good and the downright ugly. Giselle Richardson compiled this list in 1992 and I feel that some characteristics have improved since then. Tick off the ones that may apply to you.

- 1. Have a high degree of dependability.** I believe that we are a very dependable lot and trust that the newcomers will learn from the old-timers that when an aircraft is down for inspection or repair, a lot of people are depending on them to be there and to do it right.
- 2. Have a willingness to put in effort and hours.** The majority of maintainers I know have to demonstrate this trait all too often. When an aircraft has to get out by a certain time, they are there. Some of them may be grumbling, but they are there.
- 3. Have a high level of integrity.** I believe that a very high percentage would fit into this category. Even when an error is made, it is usually with the best of intentions.
- 4. Have a high level of modesty.** Some of us have too high a level, but we are improving. If you recall a couple of articles back, Giselle said we had too much

“humbleshit.” Back in those days, there were no magazines such as this one devoted to you and you never saw a maintainer on the cover page. Yes; we are improving.

5. Have a distrust of words. Now that is an interesting trait that was explained to me as we tend to want to find out for ourselves when we read a snag written in a logbook. That’s not all bad, as I can recall a pilot writing up that the left magneto on the right engine was misfiring. I would run the aircraft up before trouble shooting only at times to find out that the problem was on the left engine’s right mag. And the problem was a fouled sparkplug, not the magneto.

6. Tendency to be a loner. Now she didn’t say that we were loners but we tend to have some of the characteristics such as:

- a) prefer to work alone;
- b) tend to be perfectionists;
- c) are often not the best of team players; but,
- d) we tend to be very analytical and principled.

Some are strengths and some we should work on improving.

7. Don’t like to ask for help. I can recall an AME up on a scissor lift struggling to secure the bottom cowl on the #1 JT8D engine on a Boeing 727. Under the lift were two of his crew discussing last night’s hockey game. (This was Canada) I’m sure that if he had asked, they would have climbed up and assisted. As he struggled, his feet would come within inches of the unprotected edge of the lift. After watching for a while, I walked on, as who was I to interfere with a job he obviously wanted to do himself?

8. Tends to be self-sufficient. This sort of refers back to the previous two and is not entirely a bad thing. However, like so many things, if taken too far it can endanger lives; often the life of the person doing the act. Had the self-sufficient person stepped back a few inches more he would have been in a world of hurt after a 10 foot fall to the concrete from the lift. As we didn’t wear hard hats in those days, he could have been killed and we would have been short one in the crew for a while. Health and Safety has improved immensely over the years, but we still tend to have the same self-sufficient attitude.

9. Like to think things out on his/her own. Urban legend says that men don’t like to ask for directions (except from that nagging woman’s voice in my GPS) so Giselle is probably right. This trait can be dangerous when one is not sure just how a fitting goes in, but it looks like it should go THIS way. Murphy’s Law dictates you will be wrong. I replaced a leaking vacuum flap control valve in a Grumman Goose on a

midnight shift and couldn't get the aircraft outside to test run it. So I signed it out subject to a satisfactory test run. The pilots the next morning ignored that and loaded some high priced passengers on board. Thank goodness there was nothing under the flaps as they went full down on engine start-up. A rush call got me out of bed to reverse the valve and paint an arrow on it as well as do a ground check before signing it off. I guess I get a tick mark for that one.

10. Doesn't share his/her thoughts too frequently. I was conducting a class in the middle of the country (Winnipeg) when an out of town participant asked if his wife could sit in the back and do her knitting so she would not go out shopping. Well, I could relate well to that so I did one better and put her in one of the teams, far removed from her husband. She was certainly not lacking in assertiveness and soon was leading her team, even if she had never turned a wrench in her life. When this characteristic came up she said in a very loud voice; "Yes that's right! He never tells me anything!" He tried to quiet Mabel down but she went on. "He comes home and I ask him how his day went and all I ever get is OK. What is that supposed to mean?" He weakly responded; "But you wouldn't understand." To which she replied; "Try me." As the class was quickly turning into a marriage counseling session, we took a quick break. He certainly gets a tick mark for that trait.

I'd like to add a few more that I have observed over my 54 years in aviation.

11. We are mechanically or electronically inclined, but very seldom both

12. We have a strong "can-do" attitude. That is an excellent attitude, but it can get you into trouble if you have trouble saying no or admitting that you might need help (see #7).

13. We are pore spellers. This mug that Giselle gave me says it all. This was after I introduced her in a symposium program as: "*a much sought after pubic speaker.*" Spell check failed me and she said that it was the best lead in she had ever had. For those who didn't spot the error, I meant to say "*public speaker.*" With that example the next article will take us back to Lack of Communication but the written word.

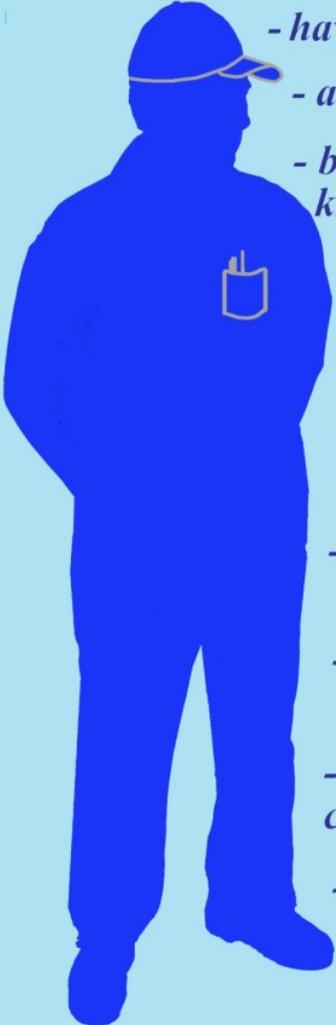


We'll look at an accident in which 24 people could still be alive if a logbook entry had only been written correctly. Ok; there were a lot of extra links in the chain of events but that one could have made the difference and broke the chain.

We are professionals and have to do more to show it. Below is a poster that we have in stock that lists 10 reasons why I think you are a professional. Sadly number seven is where we are the weakest and if you go back over this list you will understand why. We can do better, and must, if we are going to lower maintenance errors to **ALARP** (**A**s **L**ow **A**s **R**easonably **P**ractical) I don't believe that Zero Error is possible as we humans are genius at finding ways to get around Safety nets devised to prevent human error. That said, we can still strive for the impossible dream.

I am a Professional

because I:



- have acquired specialized knowledge*
- achieved my status by accomplishment*
- base my decisions on my specialized knowledge, conformity to a standard and not on self interest*
- am dedicated to quality workmanship*
- do not allow circumstances to sway my judgment from the correct course of action*
- always do the correct thing even when no one is watching*
- belong to a voluntary association of fellow professionals*
- never accept the status quo but continuously strive to improve myself*
- have a strong pride in my profession*
- and reflect this pride in all that I do*



Good, Better, Best. Never shall ye rest, until your Good is Better and your Better is Best