

## FLEXIBILITY: KEY TO HIGH BUT NOT PERFECT SCHEDULE RELIABILITY

I use general aviation aircraft almost exclusively for transportation. In past years, I often have made four or five multi-stop, multi-day trips each year as part my business activities. Each of these trips often involve as many as 20 business destinations and keep me away from home for as long as four weeks at a time.

To meet a schedule and mitigate risks, I occasionally find myself changing departure times—and even dates. I frequently change routes to avoid weather hazards or just to make the flying more comfortable. Despite these caveats, I manage to meet my schedule a very high

percentage of the time. All of this is accomplished while flying a single-engine, non-ice-protected, piston-powered airplane. The data for trips I took in 2011 and 2012 are typical of the results I have seen after more than 35 years of using general aviation aircraft for almost all of my domestic travel.

In 2011, I flew 66 separate trip segments. I had zero diversions or cancellations for weather issues, though there were numerous route deviations or changes, and a couple of early departures, including a full day earlier. I suffered a mechanical delay of one day for a landing gear issue. Score: 65 out of 66 planned segments completed as planned or with minimal change to the schedule.

In 2012, I flew 71 separate trip segments. I had one weather diversion (due to unanticipated icing) that delayed my departure from Boise, Idaho, by a day. I also had a one-day mechanical delay, thanks to a bad attitude indicator. Score: 69 out of 71 planned segments completed as planned or with minimal change to my schedule.

For two years, I completed 134 out of 137 flights more or less on schedule, for a 97.8 percent dispatch reliability. I believe that exceeds the airlines' record these days, although the airlines are careful to camouflage their decreasing reliability by padding the schedules. Perhaps surprisingly, I achieved this record by rigorously following strategic and tactical risk management procedures. In many cases, this required me to be quite flexible and to be prepared to do my own schedule padding to give me that flexibility.

