

Appraisal Expert Witnesses & Airline Pilots

So what could hiring an appraiser as an expert witness have to do with the pilot of the plane that will take you from Chicago to LA?

As most attorneys know when they hire an appraisal expert, the appraisal will almost never end up in court, and even if it does, chances are that the dispute will be settled without testimony from the appraiser.

Now - about pilots. In the past few years, it has become possible to get on a plane, have the pilot turn a few knobs, and set the autopilot so that the plane will virtually fly from takeoff to landing with very little intervention. Of course, flying takes skill, but we could save so much money by having jets flown remotely like drones, and who the heck needs TWO pilots anyway?! (This is a rhetorical device, so



please read-on before copying this post to the Pilots Association.) Well, let's create a world where each passenger pays the pilot when they get on the plane; yes, you reach into your wallet and get out your credit card, and that part of the flight is taken care of. You can pay whatever you feel is fair, or even bid on which pilot you want.

Some folks might feel that the pilot is only there to turn knobs, so why pay too much? Others might pay more if there was an impending thunderstorm approaching, and some might just pay nothing (because there are those type of folks everywhere). In my view, however, the pilot is not hired just for the simple everyday tasks, he or she is really necessary because of the one-in-a-thousand chance that an engine dies on takeoff, or some critical system such as a fuel pump breaks in mid-flight. The pilot's rating of quality is based on critical thinking skills under pressure, knowledge of the entire plane system and how to make it perform when damaged, as

well as the basics of flying. But it is that 0.0001% of the time that you are really glad that the pilot of your plane has the skills to get out of a tough situation.



As with engaging any expert witness, what the client is really paying for is that very small chance that testimony is involved, or that the case goes sour and turns out to be much more complex than first thought. Can your expert engage the judge or jury? Can they think on their feet to handle tough cross-examination? Are they able to, not only do the analysis, but present it and explain it in an understandable way that tells the story of the case?

Not to try to elevate my profession to that of pilots, who work on a whole different level of stress and difficulty (one thing I always liked about the appraisal business was that if - on the small chance I do make a mistake - no one dies). However, there is a reason to hire the best expert you can possibly find for the particular case and/or property type. If costs are an issue, discuss working with a two-tier approach and work with your expert to utilize the report-type and scope-of-work provisions when engaging them to save time and money.

Here is a link to an excellent paper by [Deborah D. Kuchler](#) on engaging the expert witness in the courtroom [An In-Depth Look at Direct Examination of Expert Witnesses](#)

For more about hiring an appraiser as expert witness, or more information about me, please go to dabrahamblog.com