

“Grounded on the Runway to Success”

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Albert Einstein once said, “If A is success in life, then A equals x plus y plus z. Work is x; y is play; and z is keeping your mouth shut.”

To aspiring commercial pilot, Dylan Carter, success will be measured by the achievement of his license. He felt that he possessed the essential qualities of hard work: knowledge, dedication, professionalism, and the desire to provide satisfaction to customers and employees alike. Living in Santa Barbara, considered the French Riviera of the United States, Dylan knew about play. However, he might find out the hard way the importance of the variable z.

An Australian accent betrays twenty-six year old Dylan’s native roots. He towers like a tree that would give a koala bear a nice home. Wispy cirrus clouds, backlit by the setting sun, form the hair atop his head. Dylan’s father introduced him to the thrill of flight, paragliding and soaring in ultra lights, while in his youth. These experiences blossomed into the desire to become a commercial pilot. Dylan arrived in America nine months ago, following a short stint living in Switzerland with his mother, to take the private lessons and gain the flight hours necessary to earn a commercial license. In the United States earning a commercial license requires fewer flight hours, and costs less, than it does in Europe and Australia.

However, Dylan discovered obstacles, beyond cost and the accumulation of flight hours, stood between him and his dream of becoming a career pilot. Inclement weather and maintenance problems often closed the private airport, located between the Santa Barbara Channel and the hills of Ojai, California, that he flew out of. This delayed Dylan's plan to gain his license. Living in Santa Barbara, where Dylan's rent for a one bedroom apartment on State Street, the city's main artery, tops \$1,600 a month and drinks at local clubs can run him eight dollars a piece, this delay created a serious financial burden. To alleviate this burden he took on the available deli job across the street from his apartment at Cantwell's Market. His desired quality of life made his job at Cantwell's critical. He worked hard at Cantwell's and had a sense of achievement in his knowledge of their products, his proficiency at customer service and his employee relations. However, Dylan discovered that how others saw him betrayed this personal opinion. While America appeared an inexpensive place to acquire his commercial license, the price of successful communication between him and his co-workers could crash his chance of a flight career.

Dylan took his job seriously, as he believed in Cantwell's all-organic concept. He respected Cantwell's choice to carry organic produce and the Boar's Head brand—low sodium, low fat meat that is imported from the East Coast.

“What I also like about Cantwell's Market is that they carry chips that don't contain hydrogenised oils, which clog up your arteries really bad.” Dylan felt that the owners did not promote these qualities enough.

“I give the owners my opinion sometimes, I’m probably the only one that does. Sometimes, I give them ideas about how they should be advertising more.”

He saw his work as a form of advertising, “You know, if I put a little more cheese, or lettuce, or just something more than normal, they’re more likely to return to our deli than go to another place—and, I don’t tell the owners I do this.”

Dylan proclaimed about his work at Cantwell’s Market, “No one’s ever complained about a sandwich I’ve made.”

Furthermore, Dylan considered himself a professional, “I don’t try to hook up my friends more than anyone else—well, every once in a while I’ll do this.”

Dylan felt that a manager could rely on him for any task, even up to the threat of danger. “One day, my job consisted of looking for people to beat up.” Dylan secured this task after someone vandalized one employee’s car with profanity. Management sent him out to locate the perpetrator.

“So I was walking around the streets by the deli looking for these guys to beat up—it was pretty funny—though we never found them.”

Dylan worked a number of jobs throughout his young life: in restaurants, security, and the aircraft maintenance industry. He believed that the people at Cantwell’s, including the owners, treated him the nicest of all.

“They are very easy going. They don’t get mad if I come in five minutes late, you know—which I rarely do.”

Despite the easy going nature of his work, Dylan grew disgruntled at the clashing soundscape created by the music management played in the store for the customers, and the choice of music by his coworkers behind the deli.

“I don’t like it so much that they play music out in the store, and behind the deli the Mexicans have their music too. So the whole time, I’m listening to two different types of music.”

Dylan emphasized that he doesn’t dislike Mexican music, only that “it can get a little whiny at times... [Especially] that song that goes, ‘Whatever, Whatever, duh, duh, da-da, da.’ It’s a Mexican, dance, pop song that I have to listen to maybe ten times a day.”

Dylan dealt with this conflict on his own terms, without pulling management from their important duties.

“Oh, I’ll give [my coworkers] a little bit of shit, but they usually tell me to shut up, so it’s not worth quarreling about.” In fact, Dylan developed a certain amount of respect for his Latino co-workers.

“When I first got here, I thought the Mexicans were kind of bad—they didn’t socialize with white people, they usually have the lower end jobs—and working with these young guys and girls, I’ve realized that they are really easy going.”

Sometimes, in fact, Dylan found his co-workers a little too easygoing.

“Say there’s two or three sandwiches to be made—I can easily do it myself—but the girls would be sitting in the back reading a magazine, when that might be one or two minutes less the customer has to wait. I think that’s kind of important.” Dylan’s willingness to do a task that his fellow employees asked him to do, in order to better

serve the customers, rarely got reciprocated. Dylan acknowledged that sometimes his co-workers didn't hold to his same value of teamwork and communication seldom flowed easily. For Dylan, these communication difficulties extended beyond work related issues and into the realm of the appreciation of humor.

“One of the girls, she is quite vulgar. She'll get a gherkin, and start sucking on the gherkin—you know a zucchini—and say ‘What does this remind you of?’ I might just go, ‘Oh that's gross.’”

After the girl exhibited similar behavior with a broom handle and a rubber glove as props, Dylan thought that he would play along with her and said, “Do you want to have sex with my brother over lunch break?” Apparently the girl did not appreciate the humor in Dylan's remark.

“I came to work the next day and everybody was giving me such suspicious looks, as if I was a weirdo or something.” Shortly after Dylan arrived at work, one manager requested a private conference with him and explained that the girl was really offended by his remark. Dylan confessed to only joking but didn't win the support of his manager.

“He kind of looked at me suspiciously, not really knowing if I was telling the truth.” This suspicion hung over Dylan's head for several days, as he continued to work behind the deli.

“I don't know if I stepped over the line. I don't know. I suppose I did. I wouldn't say something like that in front of customers.” Unfortunately, Dylan's ability to serve the customers at Cantwell's Market came to an end. Several days after this interview, while

Dylan suited up in his white deli apron at the beginning of his scheduled shift one of the managers approached him and told him, “without reason,” that his services were no longer needed.

Dylan saw himself as the perfect employee: respecting his employers, co-workers and customers alike. But at Cantwell’s, just as in his pursuit of flight hours, Dylan has been grounded by inclement weather. His difficulty communicating with his co-workers created a thunderstorm that severely threatens his career of flight.

When being interviewed, Dylan admitted, “Working the deli hasn’t opened any doors for me.” Now, it seems, losing his job at Cantwell’s might even have closed the door on his ability to sustain that quality of life that will enable him to achieve his dream to one day soar through the skies as a professional pilot.