

What Really Drives Aircraft Value

Key Factors Every Aircraft Owner, Buyer, and Seller Should Understand

Whitepaper by David Fisher

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Executive Summary

Aircraft value is influenced by much more than make, model, and year. A meaningful valuation requires a disciplined review of technical condition, maintenance status, engine and program details, avionics, records, damage history, market demand, comparable transactions, and current buyer behavior.

Two aircraft that appear similar in a listing can have materially different values once the details are reviewed. Upcoming inspections, engine exposure, incomplete records, dated avionics, cosmetic condition, or unclear damage history can all affect how the market responds. At the same time, strong documentation, desirable equipment, recent maintenance, and favorable demand can improve marketability and support value.

This guide explains the major factors that drive aircraft value and why a credible valuation should be supported by both aircraft-specific analysis and real market context.

Aircraft Value Is More Than a Number

Two aircraft of the same make, model, and year may have very different values based on maintenance status, engine programs, avionics, records, condition, or buyer demand.

Maintenance Status

Maintenance is one of the most important value drivers. Aircraft approaching major inspections, engine events, landing gear overhauls, or costly compliance work may trade differently than aircraft with recent major maintenance completed.

Engine Programs

Engine program status can significantly influence buyer confidence and valuation. Buyers evaluate program coverage, payment status, transferability, exclusions, and future obligations.

Avionics and Equipment

Modern avionics can improve marketability, while outdated equipment can reduce buyer interest. Buyers consider both current capability and future upgrade exposure.

- ADS-B compliance
- WAAS/LPV capability
- FMS and autopilot upgrades
- Cabin connectivity
- Navigation and safety systems

Paint, Interior, and Presentation

Cosmetic conditions affect buyer perception. A well-presented aircraft can create confidence, while a dated or worn aircraft may invite larger discounts.

Records and Damage History

Complete records tell the aircraft's story. Damage history does not automatically make an aircraft unsellable, but it must be clearly documented and properly understood.

Market Supply, Demand, and Transaction Patterns

Aircraft value changes as inventory, buyer demand, financing conditions, operating costs, and category popularity change. David can also reference historical upgrade and downgrade patterns to help interpret demand movement.

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NEXT STEP:

If you are considering buying, selling, upgrading, downgrading, or evaluating an aircraft, contact David Fisher and Western Aviation for a confidential aircraft strategy consultation.



David Fisher

Owner | Western Aviation

Sr. Accredited Appraiser with the American Society of Appraisers (ASA).

All appraisal reports are USPAP compliant.

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