

# Common Errors in Aircraft Valuation Testimony

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Whitepaper by David Fisher

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## When Testimony Fails, Cases Suffer

In aviation-related litigation—whether involving transactions, insurance claims, damages, or ownership disputes—aircraft valuation often becomes a focal point of expert testimony. Unfortunately, many witnesses offer opinions that crumble under scrutiny because they rely on outdated data, incomplete methods, or misunderstand critical aviation variables.

Attorneys need valuation testimony that is **credible, defensible, and aligned with USPAP standards**. Below are the most common errors that weaken aircraft valuation testimony in court.

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### 1. Reliance on “Book Values” Instead of Market Evidence

One of the biggest mistakes experts make is depending solely on price guides or generic value books.

These tools do **not** capture:

- Actual recent transactions
- Off-market sales
- Condition-specific adjustments
- Rapid market shifts

**Why it fails:** Courts expect verifiable market data—not generalized estimates.

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### 2. Ignoring Documentation Issues

Aircraft value is inseparable from its documentation.

Flawed testimony often overlooks:

- Missing or incomplete logbooks
- Gaps in maintenance history
- Unverified engine times
- Undisclosed repairs found in records

**Why it fails:** Documentation discrepancies impact both value and airworthiness—often the heart of misrepresentation or negligence claims.

### 3. Misunderstanding Engine Value

Engines frequently represent **half or more** of the total aircraft value.

Common testimony errors include:

- Using incorrect engine times
- Ignoring upcoming overhauls or HSIs
- Overlooking engine program enrollment
- Misvaluing engines after an incident

**Why it fails:** Small miscalculations can shift valuation by six or seven figures.

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### 4. Overlooking Damage History or Repair Quality

Not all damage is equal.

Weak expert testimony often:

- Treats all repairs the same
- Fails to differentiate between cosmetic and structural events
- Ignores OEM repair standards
- Overstates or understates the long-term impact

**Why it fails:** Damage must be analyzed in context—repair quality, structural integrity, and market stigma all matter.

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### 5. Using Non-USPAP-Compliant Methods

Some experts testify based on informal estimates or consultant opinions without proper appraisal standards.

Typical non-compliance includes:

- Lack of transparent methodology
- Missing reconciliation of approaches
- Unsubstantiated adjustments
- No clear definition of value (FMV, replacement cost, etc.)

**Why it fails:** Opposing counsel quickly exposes deviations from established valuation standards.

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### 6. Misapplying Historical or Future Market Data

In litigation, valuation is often needed **as of a specific date**.

Experts frequently err by:

- Using today's values
- Ignoring historical comps
- Misapplying market trend data

**Why it fails:** Legal valuation hinges on the value at the moment of loss, breach, or transfer—not present-day estimates.

## 7. Oversimplifying Aircraft Usage & Operating Environment

Aircraft performance and value depend heavily on how the aircraft was operated.

Flawed testimony often ignores:

- Part 91 vs Part 135 operations
- High-cycle vs low-cycle use
- Environmental exposure (salt air, heat, humidity)
- Quality of storage and maintenance facilities

**Why it fails:** Utilization patterns directly influence depreciation, component life, and overall market desirability.

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## How Attorneys Benefit From a Qualified Aircraft Appraisal Expert

- **USPAP-compliant valuation reports** suitable for litigation
  - **Clear, supportable testimony** that withstands cross-examination
  - **Objective rebuttal analysis** of opposing experts
  - **Guidance during discovery** to identify critical valuation gaps
  - **Complex aviation details translated into courtroom-ready clarity**
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## Conclusion

Aircraft valuation testimony must be precise, defensible, and grounded in accepted methodology. The most common errors arise when experts rely on assumptions rather than supporting data.

With the right appraiser, your case gains expert clarity—backed by rigorous methodology and courtroom credibility.



### David Fisher

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*All appraisal reports are USPAP compliant.*

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