

The Art of Clear Thinking

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Years of military flight testing and high-performance aerobatic competition shaped how I think, decide, and lead under pressure. In aviation, ambiguity is not academic. When something goes wrong at low altitude (less than 2,000 ft), you often have **tenths of a second** to assess, decide, and act – because in five seconds you may impact the ground at over 200 mph.

I have been in situations in aerobatic flying where a mechanical failure occurred while inverted under negative G, losing the majority of onboard fuel in seconds. Blinded by fuel covering the canopy, I had to instantly regain aircraft orientation, choose a heading, and assess whether the remaining fuel flow rate made recovery feasible – or whether ejection was the only survivable option. That entire assessment occurred in **under one second**, because delay itself was a decision.

That training translates directly to executive leadership. While boardrooms are not life-threatening environments, they routinely present moments where “**I’ll get back to you**” is **not an option** – a surprise question from a board member, a public policy inquiry, a hostile technical challenge, or an unexpected inflection during negotiations. In those moments, leaders must rapidly balance correctness, clarity, risk, and consequence.

My aviation background trained a disciplined mental model for these situations:

- rapid situation framing under uncertainty
- prioritization of first-order and second-order effects
- calm execution without cognitive overload
- precise communication under pressure

This is the **art of clear thinking under duress**, and it is a transferable executive capability. It informs how I make technical tradeoffs, how I respond publicly, how I defend decisions under scrutiny, and how I lead teams through high-stakes inflection points. It is one of the less visible – but most decisive – advantages I bring to senior leadership roles.