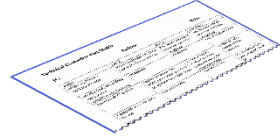


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Hed: The Technical Counselor Visit: Workshop Essentials

Byline: Lisa Turner

Excerpt: “It doesn’t matter whether you have a large hangar to build in, or a one car garage to build in: setting it up at the beginning for your aircraft build will make a difference in how fast you get it done.”

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In the last article we talked about dealing with paperwork and how to make it easier to get right. Your builder should start this process even before they get the kit, and the TC can reinforce this on the first call or first visit.

Another area where you can make a difference is explaining how the workshop can be set up to maximize safety and productivity while making things easier to find. If you are coming in at the very beginning of a project, this is a great opportunity to streamline the build.

You can build an airplane almost anywhere. One morning before going to work I had the garage door up, cleaning off the car windows. Several neighbors who were on walks stopped in the street, looking into my garage with puzzlement.

“What is that?”

“It’s an airplane,” I said.

“You’re kidding.”

“No, really, I’m building an airplane in my garage.”

The neighbors shook their heads and moved closer.

“On this side,” I pointed to the area next to my car, “is the fuselage on slings, and the worktable, and then over here on the other side of the car are the wing structures on sawhorses.”

The two men sported big smiles, and resolved to return on the weekend to look more closely.

“When you see my car outside and the door up, you know I’m working on it. Come on by and I’ll show you everything.”

It doesn't matter whether you have a large hangar to build in, or a one car garage to build in: setting it up at the beginning for your aircraft build will make a difference in how fast you get it done.

Most builders are so excited to receive the kit or the plans materials that they can't help unpacking immediately. This is totally understandable, but will extend build time. Discipline and patience, especially at the beginning, will pay off later. If you can get your builder to understand this, your job and theirs will be much more productive.

Even if the kit has arrived, workshop setup comes first. Help the builder by looking around the space, asking the following questions:

- Does the floor need to be protected?
- Are work tables or benches in the right places?
- Is there wall space to hang pegboard or bin racks?
- Is there shelving for parts organization?
- How will you protect the work bench surfaces?
- Is there climate control in the space? Ventilation? Do these need to be added?
- What tools and equipment does the builder have now and how is it arranged?
- What tools and equipment are needed for this particular project?
- Can special tools be rented or borrowed if they are one-time events (like an engine block for fitment)?
- Is there plenty of light?
- Are electrical outlets in the right places?
- Is there a corner or place where the plans or kit instructions and documents can be kept and where the builder can make notes?

Take the time to go through this list with your builder one by one. You'll think of things to add, and creative ways to solve problems. When it comes to protecting surfaces, think about the technology going into the build – is it metal, wood, or composite? For example, if it's composite, 5- or 6-mil plastic on the floor is helpful, and it can be changed out mid-project. Carpet remnants on a section of workbench with plastic over it makes a great place to assemble, drill, and fiberglass.

For one of my projects I placed a large carpet remnant on the floor of the garage and then covered it in 6-mil plastic. About half-way through the build it was so ratty I changed it out in sections, making it neat again. At the end of the project I took up the coverings and the floor was pristine.

Taking the time to sort hardware and small kit parts into bins and drawers can create an enormous time advantage for the builder. If the bins and drawers can go on the wall or stacked on the workbench, the first time the builder reaches for something they will be glad they spent the time doing this setup.

The key to spending this time up front on organizing the materials and space is knowing that the builder will end up saving time and aggravation on the build. It will be faster finding parts during

the build, easier to identify things that are missing, allow restocking when hardware gets low, and allow the builder to keep a neat and clean shop for amazed visitors.