



## The ENGINEERING CAREER COACH PODCAST SESSION #1 Building Relationships in Your Engineering Career

Show notes at: [engineeringcareercoach.com/session1](http://engineeringcareercoach.com/session1)

**Anthony's Upfront Intro:** This is *The Engineering Career Coach Podcast with Anthony Fasano Session # 1*. Today I'm going to give you some strategies for effectively networking and building relationships in your engineering career. I'm also going to help a younger engineer overcome her fear of networking. Let's do this thing!

**Episode Intro:** Welcome to *The Engineering Career Coach Podcast*, where it's all about helping real engineers overcome real challenges and get real results. And now for your host, who is on a mission to inspire as many engineers as possible; professional engineer and certified career coach, Anthony Fasano.

**Anthony:** Hello everyone. Welcome to *The Engineering Career Coach Podcast Session # 1*. This is Anthony Fasano and it's an absolute pleasure to have the opportunity to do this podcast and hopefully inspire engineers all over the world by helping them to overcome their challenges, achieve lofty goals, but also in the process of coaching engineers on this show, affect engineers globally and that's what my goal is with this podcast.

For those of you out there that don't know me, let me briefly introduce myself; by background I am a civil engineer, however I noticed in my civil engineering career that one of the keys to being successful as an engineer is having sound, non-technical skills in addition to your technical skills -- like communication, networking, leadership abilities, being organized, being productive. Those types of skills are critical to being able to set clear goals and achieve them and this show is going to help you to develop those skills by reaching out to actual engineers, bringing them on the show and coaching them on these different skills. We're going to create a library of these podcasts which you can subscribe to on *iTunes: The Engineering Career Coach Podcast* or you can come to our website: [engineeringcareercoach.com](http://engineeringcareercoach.com), click on the podcast tab and get all of the information that you need on all of the shows.

So with that I'm going to get right into the show because this show is about helping you, not about talking about me so I want to get going. I want to give you value, I want to give you ideas and motivate you, inspire you to be the best engineer you can possibly be. So now what I'm going to do is, I'm going to start the show with a segment that I call *The Motivational Moment*, then we'll go into the *Coaching Segment* and then I'll end the show by giving you a career changing tip that if you

# The **ENGINEERING CAREER COACH**

WITH  
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implement it today, you'll start to see results in your engineering career immediately. So with that it's time for our quote...

## **Anthony's Motivational Moment:**

For today's quote for Session #1, I selected a quote from Tony Robbins, who is one of the people that really inspired me to leave my engineering career behind and go out there and inspire engineers. He motivated me to write my book ***Engineering Your Own Success*** and just get in the car and start travelling around. And that's what I've been doing for three, four years now and I've met so many engineers out there. I want to start the show today with his quote that goes like this, ***"The quality of your life is the quality of your relationships"***, again that's by Tony Robbins. And the reason that I start the show with that quote is because today we're going to focus on networking.

In a few minutes I'm going to help a younger engineer to overcome her fear of networking, and also give her, and of course you out there some strategies for effectively networking and building relationships. Networking is not just about collecting business cards. Networking is about building strong, long lasting relationships that will not only yield a lot of career opportunities for you, but most importantly, they will help you to have a very enjoyable career and life. I mean the quality of our life is the quality of our relationships.

So it's one thing to go to work and go to the office, it's another thing to go to work and have friendships with a lot of the people in the office right? Or with your clients, to get to know them on a deeper level. Having an engineering career is not just about trying to become a partner or make a lot of money, it's also about having fun in the process and you can't have fun unless you build strong relationships. I wanted you all to understand the importance of networking in your career and your life before we jumped into the coaching segment of the podcast and that's why I chose this quote.

So all of you out there listening--I need you to commit, to try to take all of the strategies discussed on this call and implement them into your career and start to build those relationships. All the strategies that you hear on the show today, we're going to summarize them for you on the show notes because I know many of you are probably on your commute to work. You can find the show notes for this show at [engineeringcareercoach.com/session1](http://engineeringcareercoach.com/session1) and I'll repeat that a few times throughout the show.

So with that, let's get right into the coaching segment of the call. Let's start helping this younger engineer overcome her fear of networking and help you as well in the process.

# The ENGINEERING CAREER COACH

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## Coaching Segment:

**Anthony:** Now for our coaching portion of the show. Today's guest is Elaina from Kansas. She has a degree in architectural engineering with a mechanical focus. She's a recent graduate. She's been working now for a MEP firm for three months.

Today we're going to be helping Elaina with her interpersonal skills, which is what she wants to focus on -- which is probably one of the most important things that you can develop as an engineer, to be successful and be well rounded. So with that I want to welcome Elaina, how you doing today Elaina?

**Elaina:** I'm doing well, how about you?

**Anthony:** I'm doing very well. Thank you for being with us today. I think that this is a wonderful challenge to kind of talk about a little bit, and I know that it will help a lot of engineers who are going to listen to this show because a lot of engineers struggle with the whole idea of interpersonal skills. So why don't you just take a minute here in the beginning, just explain to us a little bit more about your challenge specifically so we can dive right into it.

**Elaina:** Alright. Part of my challenge is that I've always been a quiet, reserved person so sometimes I find it difficult to step out of my comfort zone and go and meet new people. And the other part is that with work we always have billable hours, and I want to be able to meet those billable hours but if I go chat with a co-worker about non-work stuff I feel like I'm being dishonest and not meeting the billable hours like the company would prefer.

**Anthony:** Okay, so it's kind of a two-fold challenge in that one, you are worried about taking - because of the pressure to be billable which all engineers have - you're worried about taking time away from being billable to chatting and getting to know your co-workers. But on the other end of it, it's important obviously to do that, get to know them and it's important for the office culture and the way things work. But on the other end of it you're also - as a reserved person - you're looking for ways that you can develop those networking skills and be comfortable when you do take the time to talk to people and try to get to know them. Is that accurate?

**Elaina:** Yes, that's exactly right.

**Anthony:** Okay. Alright, perfect, so let's jump in here. First of all let's focus a little bit on the billable time aspect. So tell me a little bit more about that. So how does your company communicate this to you? They give you billable hours expected or how does that work?

**Elaina:** Well we basically have the eighty hours that we have to get in every two weeks, and although I haven't been told specifically how many billable hours I get, I've kind of gotten the impression by the

# The **ENGINEERING CAREER COACH**

WITH  
**ANTHONY  
FASANO** 

questions I've asked and the answers I've been given that pretty much all of my hours at this point need to be billable.

**Anthony:** Okay, so you need to be like ninety-five to a hundred percent billable essentially.

**Elaina:** Yes.

**Anthony:** Alright listen; I understand how you feel as far as pressure goes. I mean there's a lot of pressure there to understand that you need to be working all the time. It's almost like you can't get a breath, so I get that. However one of the things I think, to think about in this situation is when you network with other people in the office there's definitely some value there for, not just for you but also for the company because you know if people know each other they're working well together, projects are going to go better, things are going to run more smooth. And then there's going to be more of a positive, fun type of culture in the company rather than just everybody just sitting at their desk, worried about talking to each other. And obviously that's nothing that the company's going to tell you but I'm telling you this because if you take that mind-frame or that mindset approach in your day to day that might make it a little bit easier for you from time to time to talk to someone and relieving a bit of that pressure, understanding that it's a good thing for everybody.

**Elaina:** Okay.

**Anthony:** Alright, the other thing is trying to do it in a way where maybe you ask a couple co-workers if you want to go out to lunch one day or go out to lunch on Fridays - you know that's something that people do. Or every so often, maybe after work, getting together with a couple of people. That's also another way that you can do it. And you can feel more comfortable because you're not in the office, you don't feel the pressure on you right there and you can feel more comfortable around a lunch table or go out after work one night. Have you tried that at all?

**Elaina:** We had a company happy hour or a team happy hour a couple weeks ago and I did go to that and spent some time talking with the other co-workers besides just work stuff. So that was nice.

**Anthony:** And have you found that you've made some friends there, you've gotten to know some of the co-workers better than others yet or you're still just getting to know everybody?

**Elaina:** There are people I feel like I know a little better but it's still a lot of just getting to know them still.

**Anthony:** Alright yes, so one of the things I would recommend there, especially those people that you feel a little bit more closer to, at least at this point in time. You could always ask them if you want to

go out and get a bite to eat for lunch; that might be helpful. That might put you in a position that's a little bit less pressure from the billable standpoint because you're not in the office. Have you had a conversation on this topic at all with your supervisor?

**Elaina:** I have not. That's something that is a little difficult with the company I'm working for because I was originally going to be on another team and they switched me to the team I'm on now. And so I'm not completely sure about how everything is quite supposed to work with this new team.

**Anthony:** Okay. Alright, that makes sense but one of the things you might want to consider doing sometime in the next, when you start to feel more comfortable maybe with this team, is just sit down with your supervisor and talk to him or her about this. Because one of the things I always found; that engineers have had success in their careers when they're very open with their team, with their supervisor and nobody's hiding anything.

So for example, I would go to my supervisor if I were you and say something like, "Obviously I'm new here, I'm kind of fresh, pretty much fresh out of school for the most part and it's important for me to get to know the other people here and get to know the other people on the team. And I know we want to be billable as much as possible but I'm just wondering what your advice would be for getting to know the team better." Because what that's going to do is if your supervisor says to you, "Well Elaina that's a great idea, maybe what you should do is just try to talk to people everyday or go around the office a little bit or go out to lunch with them or we'll all go out to lunch together." But regardless of what they say, whatever advice they give you, if the supervisor is telling you to go network with people during the day then at least you can feel more comfortable doing that and not feel like, "Well geez if anyone sees me doing this I'm going to get in trouble or they're going to look at me in a bad way because I'm not billable" -- because that's actually their recommendation. You see what I'm saying?

**Elaina:** Yes, I am. And I do know that my other co-workers aren't all constantly focused on work and ignoring each other. They're often chatting with each other.

**Anthony:** Okay. So, maybe part of it is just because you're new and because you're -understandably so - you want to be successful and you want to be billable and you want to do what the company wants you to do. So maybe there's just a little bit more fear there for you because you're not as comfortable as them yet.

**Elaina:** Yes, that's probably true.

**Anthony:** Alright, so as far as the billable side of it goes, some of the things we went over were:

# The ENGINEERING CAREER COACH

WITH  
ANTHONY  
FASANO 

Just getting a better mindset about it; understanding that you walking around the office talking to people is helpful for both you and the company. That's one thing to consider.

The other thing we talked about was, trying to get to talk to your co-workers in a non-office setting like lunch or happy hour or something like that, that you put together, that you initiate.

And then the other thing we talked about was approaching your supervisor, when you're comfortable enough to do so, and just being honest about the situation and asking for his or her advice; thinking that if you followed their advice then it would be hard for someone to kind of get upset with you for doing something that they recommended that you do and it would also probably make you feel more comfortable if you know that the company is telling you to do that.

**Elaina:** Yes, that makes a lot of sense.

**Anthony:** Alright, so those points all sound helpful?

**Elaina:** Yes.

**Anthony:** Okay. Alright now let's jump into the other side of this, which is just your own personal, interpersonal skills, networking, building relationships with people. Tell me about your experience with this. I'm assuming you haven't, there isn't anything in school on this but you said you're a reserved person right?

**Elaina:** Yes, I am.

**Anthony:** Okay. Alright, so when you go to start a conversation with someone or something, does the other person usually initiate things or would you say something?

**Elaina:** I would say that it's usually the other person. I haven't gotten myself to be as much of an initiator of the conversations.

**Anthony:** Okay, Alright, well that again, that's understandable. A lot of engineers are more reserved, just by our own nature so that's something that is totally normal. I see that in a lot of engineers.

So let's talk about that a little bit. One of the things that I'm going to recommend for you - and I'm probably going to end up recommending this to most of the people that come on the show here is - have you ever heard of an organization called ***Toastmasters International?***

# The **ENGINEERING CAREER COACH**

WITH  
**ANTHONY  
FASANO** 

**Elaina:** I have. And I actually looked on their website and I think there's two groups not too far from my work that I could potentially join.

**Anthony:** Ok, great. So for those of you listening to the show that aren't familiar with **Toastmasters International**; it's a worldwide organization that helps people with their public speaking skills. There's chapters all over the world. There's a very minimal fee to join, I think for the year, and it's more than just public speaking now. What it does for you, and this is why it's so critical for engineers, is it helps you to build your confidence and your communication skills overall. So for example, when you join **Toastmasters**, they literally give you a book of ten speeches and you go through them over time at your own pace and you deliver those speeches. They give you topics and then you create your own speech. So for example, the first speech would be a four to six minute icebreaker about yourself. And when you get to ten speeches then you reach a certain level and you move on and on. But the point of it is that by getting up in front of the room not only will you develop your presentation skills and your public speaking skills - which are absolutely critical in engineering for so many things, for project presentation, your reviews, for everything else - but you will build a tremendous amount of confidence in yourself. And it will also help you to articulate your words better and help you to communicate better and you'll have that confidence to approach people and talk to them, and that's why this is such an important thing.

And that's why for you Elaina, I would definitely recommend that you do look into joining one of those groups as soon as you can and just start going with it because I think the earlier on you can do this in your career, it's going to be better, it's going to help you with this challenge.

Alright, that's one thing, the other thing that we can talk about a little bit is the actual conversation with people. When you talk in a conversation would you say that you're talkative - so in other words if someone is speaking do you find yourself talking, trying to talk over them or talking a lot, or is the other people doing more of the talking in a conversation with you?

**Elaina:** I would say that it sometimes depends on if I'm attempting to join into a conversation that has already started versus somebody specifically started a conversation with me. Usually if the conversation is specific to me then it's pretty even talking, whereas if I'm trying to join a conversation sometimes I think I make it awkward. I sometimes jump in and I guess draw the attention to myself, which I don't think is necessarily the best but that's kind of my natural reaction to trying to join.

**Anthony:** Okay. Alright, so because you jump in you feel like you need to do something because you jumped in. So, let's talk about this a little more. So, a couple things you could consider doing is:

When you're trying to build relationships with people, especially people you don't know, is try to have some questions or ideas of things to talk about with them before you just go and start to talk to them.

# The **ENGINEERING CAREER COACH**

WITH  
**ANTHONY  
FASANO** 

Like for example you might want to have a question like, "What made you interested in the MEP industry?" And then what'll happen is by doing that you're going to get them to start to talk about themselves and no-one likes talking about anything other than themselves, I mean talking about yourself is the easiest thing to talk about.

So if you can get them to tell you their story, what their interests are then:

1. They're going to feel really comfortable speaking with you and
2. You're going to learn a lot about them.

They're going to be sharing personal information with you and it's going to give a bigger connection so that's one of the things that you can do.

I know - along the same lines - in my *Institute for Engineering Career Development* we have a lot of forums and one of the discussions was about this specifically and one of the engineers recommended the question, "What made you want to be an engineer?" and that's something that he said that when he went to networking events with other engineers or spoke with other engineers he would always ask that question and it would really get the conversation going in the right direction. So maybe in your case it's again going back to the MEP industry or "How did you find this company" or "How did you end up in this location". Things like that, that can get people talking right away, because they're comfortable in talking about that because it's themselves, that can get a conversation really going.

**Elaina:** Alright.

**Anthony:** How do you feel about that?

**Elaina:** No, I have heard that a lot but now that you've given me some specific questions to kind of focus on it will be helpful.

**Anthony:** Okay, good. So that's of course one thing, and the other approach too, is to open up about yourself a little bit and say something like, "I've always had a passion for doing this because of -- when I was a kid or something happened."

And again, it depends on the type of situation that you're getting into but sometimes opening up to someone about your past or something that you've done or a goal that you have will again let them connect with you more because they feel like, 'wow you know Elaina just shared that with me, that's pretty cool,' and then maybe that'll get them to open up a little bit more. And it lets the person feel that, ok this person kind of trusts me and I feel like we could have a good relationship here.

# The ENGINEERING CAREER COACH

WITH  
ANTHONY  
FASANO 

So again you do want to try and make the conversation about the other person so it's comfortable for them. But as you get better at this you may see that there's a time where you can kind of interject a little bit of yourself into the conversation to make it feel more personal. You understand what I'm saying about that?

**Elaina:** I think so. So basically as I'm starting to reach out more to my co-workers, you're saying to at first focus on them and getting to know them and then as I get more comfortable with that I'll be able to share about myself more easily.

**Anthony:** And by sharing about yourself, you'll also be kind of opening up to them and it will hopefully strengthen that connection.

**Elaina:** Alright.

**Anthony:** Alright, because what you're doing here - and this is a great challenge and I'm glad that we're covering this today - is you're building relationships, which is in my book, *Engineering Your Own Success*, I highlight that as one of the critical components to having a really extraordinary career as an engineer because you're going to deal with a lot of people.

I mean you're going to work on teams all the time whether they're in your office or other consultants and to be able to have a relationship beyond just, 'oh you know this is the person that sits at the computer next to me and they do this kind of MEP work,' you want to be able to say, 'This is Jim, he's passionate about this, this is what his hobby is,' and you know people, it makes everything more fun.

And the same goes for *Toastmasters*; by joining a group like that in your community and building some relationships in the community, it's going to make your life in the community more rewarding as well. And that's why interpersonal skills and building relationships is so important and of course, the other reason it's so important is just for opportunities in your career. Building strong relationships like this can build a lot of opportunities in your career.

For example, the person sitting next to you - you might employ some of these strategies and really become very friendly with them - they may end up going to another company down the road. And who knows, lets say anything happens and unfortunately you were to get laid off or something like that happens, all of a sudden your real good friend that you've built a relationship with is at another location and can probably help you get another opportunity.

So there's so many positives to really working on these networking and interpersonal skills. Elaina, do you have any questions for me at this time on any of the stuff we talked about today?

# The ENGINEERING CAREER COACH

WITH  
ANTHONY  
FASANO 

**Elaina:** Not really, I think you gave me some good information that is more specific to my situation and will help me to move forward in my steps for networking.

**Anthony:** Great. Alright, so just to recap for everybody here and of course for Elaina, we talked about:

In the beginning we talked about overcoming the idea of 'I have to be billable all the time' by understanding that doing other things is going to be helpful for you and the company. But it is important of course to clear that with your company, potentially talk to your supervisor about it and then maybe try to do some things outside of the office with your co-workers like lunch and social hours and things of that nature.

Then we focused more on the actual idea of networking and interpersonal skills and how to get better at that. We highlighted that joining a Toastmasters would be something that would be extremely helpful for you, and Elaina has already looked into that and will hopefully join one in her community soon.

And beyond that the idea of when you approach someone, to ask them a question, or have some questions in your mind that you can ask like, "How did you find this company" or "What brought you here", "What interested you in the MEP firm", "What is your background as far as your degree", "What school did you go to?" Questions like that can help you to get to know someone on a personal level but also, most importantly, make them comfortable in conversing with you and in starting to build that relationship.

And then lastly as you start to build your relationship and you get more comfortable in conversations, you'll be able to interject a little bit of yourself into the conversation like, "My goal was to do this" or "When I was a kid this happened to me which really got me interested in engineering." And again, that's going to again further strengthen the connection between you and the people that you're trying to build relationships with.

So for those of you out there I hope that those points were helpful for you, and of course I hope that Elaina, you can take them and use them in your career and put them into motion.

So with that we're going to end our coaching session here. Elaina, anything else you want to say before we end off here?

**Elaina:** Well I'd like to thank you for giving these complimentary coaching sessions and I'm glad that I was one of those picked.



**Anthony:** Okay great, thank you so much Elaina.

**Elaina:** Thank you.

**Anthony's Career Changing Tip:**

Alright, now it's time for our career-changing tip. And the point of this session, or this show, is very simple -- you're taking the time out of your day to listen to my podcast, I want you to walk away with something that will change your career and potentially change your life!

And today's career changing tip is that I want all of you out there - if you haven't already - to purchase and read or listen to the book by Dale Carnegie called ***How to Win Friends and Influence People***. This book absolutely changed my career and my life. Dale Carnegie gives you strategies in this book to dramatically improve your interpersonal skills, your relationship building skills, your ability to speak to people and get what you want out of the conversation in a positive way.

So many people that I know, they're reactive in their conversations or emails. They see or read something that they don't like and they want to jump back at the other person. And Dale Carnegie tells you how to slow yourself down, think about your response and put together a response that you know is going to get you results and going to build great relationships and he's done that.

So I know many of you are like, 'well I don't have time to read another book,'-- buy the audio book. I listen to it in my car all the time and I promise you if you do that it will change your career and change your life.

**Anthony's Closing Remarks:**

So with that, I want to thank you all for listening to the first session of the Career Coach Podcast. You can visit our website at [engineeringcareercoach.com/session1](http://engineeringcareercoach.com/session1) to get all of the show notes that will include any links to resources that we've mentioned, like the Dale Carnegie book. There's also a free gift on the website at [engineeringcareercoach.com/freegift](http://engineeringcareercoach.com/freegift)

You can download a list of the three resources that were most helpful for me in becoming a partner at a very reputable engineering firm at the age of twenty-seven. So with that, I'll see you all on our next session.

Thank you for listening to the ***Engineering Career Coach Podcast with Anthony Fasano - transforming engineering career development one engineer at a time.***

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