



The ENGINEERING CAREER COACH PODCAST SESSION # 12 Five Steps for Becoming The Best Engineer in Your Field

Show notes at: engineeringcareercoach.com/session12

Anthony's Upfront Intro: You are listening to the *Engineering Career Coach Podcast* with Anthony Fasano Session # 12. In this session, I'm going to give you five steps for becoming the best engineer in your field. Let's do it!

Episode Intro: Welcome to the *Engineering Career Coach Podcast*, where it's all about helping real engineers to overcome real changes 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.

Hello engineers, welcome to the *Engineering Career Coach Podcast*, this is your host Anthony Fasano and as a thank you for listening to my show, I'd like to offer you a free gift. Simply go to my website at engineeringcareercoach.com/freegift enter in your name and email address and I will send you an email with the top three resources that I used to become a partner in an engineering firm at the young age of twenty-seven. Again that's engineeringcareercoach.com/freegift. I am very excited for the topic of today's show, which is five steps to becoming the best engineer in your field. And the reason I've chosen this topic is because I've gotten this question several times in the last few weeks from engineers on my mailing list. Questions like, how do I become the best in my field? How do I become an expert in my field? How do I become the go-to engineer in a certain field? How do I become a partner in my firm quickly? And so I decided that for today's show, during the coaching segment, I'm going to go through five steps to help you achieve these goals. And these are steps that I've learned through my own experience becoming a partner in a firm at the age of twenty-seven, but also from coaching hundreds of engineers over the last five years.

So before we start off the show with a quote, let me just tell you very briefly about an exciting event that I'm going to be putting on in Austin, Texas that's going to help you to reach your goals to become a partner, will rapidly advance your career, one day a business owner as an engineer. I know that it's a tough journey to get to that partnership level or to max out your engineering career, climb that ladder as quickly as you can because I did it so I know it's tough. So to make it easier for you, I've put together an event where I'm bringing together some of the most successful engineers in the country. They're going to come together and there's going to be about a hundred motivated engineers there that are going to be able to ask them questions, talk to them, ask them anything that you want about their career path. We have an engineer that will be there that oversees a hundred and forty plants

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around the world. We have an engineer who's a CEO in his mid- thirties. And in addition to these panels where you'll be able to ask questions, we're going to have a keynote speaker. We are going to take a tour of the Austin City Capital with it's LEED Gold building with the green roof.

We're going to go to some of the best restaurants in Austin and have great social networking events, where you can network with other motivated engineers and some of these executives that may attend these dinners with us. So please engineeringevent.com. Check it out. Please join us. If you register for the event in February not only will you receive very low early bird pricing, however, you will receive a bonus from me that I will hand to you at the event. And to see what that is go to engineeringevent.com and scroll down towards the bottom, you'll see what that bonuses is. Alright, so with that let's get into the show because I'm excited about this topic. I want to start it off as I always do with a quote in our motivational moment.

Anthony's Motivational Moment: For today's motivational moment I wanted to choose a quote that went along with the theme of today's show, which is becoming the best engineer in your field. And in order to do so you must become an expert in your field, therefore I have chosen the following quote: **"An expert is one who knows more and more about less and less."** That's by Nicholas M. Butler, an American philosopher. And I love that quote because it's so true. If you want to become an expert in a specific niche or field you have to know everything about that niche, but not a lot of things outside of that niche. And I think a lot of engineers make the same mistake that a lot of professionals make; they get into a certain industry and they just want to learn everything. But the key is not to learn everything, the key is to know everything you can about your small niche, whatever that niche is that you select. To give you a couple of examples: If you're a structural engineer there's a million different things you could focus on; different kinds of structures, different kinds of codes. However, if you want to focus in concrete then you need to really become an expert in concrete, not just general structural engineering. And that's something that's very important to understand. Another example is, when I became a career coach everyone told me you went to the best coaching school in the world, you can coach any professional why are you going to focus on engineers? But I knew that engineering was the niche that I wanted. I am an engineer. I became a successful engineer. I know how to help engineers to become successful. And I knew that that was the niche that I really wanted to develop and that's how the **Engineering Career Coach** and my book came about. And if I just focused on coaching everyone then I'm sure that wouldn't have had the success that I've had today. So these are just two examples that I wanted to give you, along with this quote to get you thinking in the right direction, so that now we can jump into the coaching segment of the show and I will walk you through these five steps to becoming the best engineer in your field.



Coaching Segment:

Now it's time for our coaching segment of the show and in this segment I am going to walk you through the five steps for becoming the best engineer in your field, whatever field that might be whatever discipline you choose.

Step number one: You must be technically sound. This is very, very, very important. A lot of engineers who have big dreams and want to succeed and become managers and become partners and become owners of companies, try to get the management so quickly that they don't become technically sound and that hurts you for a lot of reasons. First of all, you must become technically sound in your field because that's where you get that expertise from. That's when people say, 'Oh you know we'll call up Anthony. He knows the ins and outs of concrete,' or whatever the case may be, whatever your specific field may be in. So that's very, very important from the expertise level. What it also does; it gives you credibility, people understand you're the go-to person. It makes you very credible. And last but not least, it makes you a great manager and great leader because you understand what your staff is going through once you've gotten to that point, because you went through all the technical realms and you know it already. Right. So you know what they're dealing with when they get into a specific challenge, maybe around a storm water design or you know that they have to go out in the field and field verify things in order to confirm that they're doing it in the proper technical manner or you know that when you assign something to them, you know that whether it's going to take them about a day or two about a week or two. And knowing that is an important part of being a successful leader and being the best engineer in your field. So it's very important to be technically sound.

And along the same lines, in the same step, once you've accomplished that and at some point you will go into management - some of you may be there already - then it's imperative that you come up with a process or a system or way to stay up-to-date on the latest technical guidelines. If a new code gets issued, if new guidelines are coming out you need to stay on top of that, not just your staff or your team. Yes, it's their job. But if you're the go-to person, if you're the expert, the client's going to call you and say, 'Anthony, I heard there's new storm water guidelines coming out, how's that going to affect me?' And you need to be able to tell them right there. You may not be able to spell out everything for them but you need to at least be able to talk about it and show that you have knowledge around these new guidelines. So figure out how to do that, whether it's reading up certain technical journals, whether it's attending certain conferences every year. Whatever the case may be, it's your responsibility to do. And that all falls under step number one, which is be technically sound in your discipline.

Step number two: Find the best engineer in that field right now and learn from him or her. This sounds somewhat obvious, but if you want to be the best engineer in the discipline then find the best engineer and talk to them, learn from them. I'm a big fan of Tony Robbins and Tony Robbins always

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say, "If there's something you want to accomplish, find someone who's accomplished it and do what they did." You could put your own creative spin on things but you don't want to reinvent the wheel. And how do you find the best person your field? It's a lot easier today with social media. Get on LinkedIn. I'm sure you could find a handful of people that are excellent at what you want to do - on LinkedIn in matter of ten minutes, using the advanced search capabilities. Go to a conference. Go to a major conference in your field and the best engineers will be there guaranteed because that's what they do.

Now, it's unlikely that you'll be able to establish a regular mentoring relationship with a person of this stature, just because they're busy, they may be hard to get a hold of on a regular basis. Now, I don't want to discourage you from trying. And if you want to try to obtain them as a regular mentor then you should definitely listen to session five of the **Engineering Career Coach Podcast**, where we walked through that process. You can access that session at engineeringcareercoach.com/session5. However, assuming that you're not to get them as a mentor, what you should do is have a list of questions ready to ask them - whether you see them at a conference or you're able to connect with them on LinkedIn. Have some questions like, 'What were some key things you did to become successful in your field? Did you have a mentor? If so, how did it help you? What credentials should I obtain if I want to get to your position?' So have those questions developed and ready to go, and when you get to speak to them, take as many notes as you can, wherever it is. That's valuable, valuable information that you'll be able to take with you and utilize throughout the rest of your career. So the second step again, is find the best engineer in your field at this time and learn from him or her. Now let's move on to step number three.

Step number three: to obtain the right credentials for your field. So if you're a storm water engineer maybe you need to become a certified professional in storm water quality CPSWQ. If you're in the field of green sustainable energy, maybe you want become a LEED accredited professional. If you're in aerospace engineering and you're working on a certain kind of aircraft and there's a specific certification for that then maybe you want to obtain that. For many of you, I hope you'll obtain your professional engineering license, or if you're outside of the United States, whatever the equivalent is in your country - if there is one. These credentials give you credibility. They show people that you have expertise. Those letters after your name scream the word expert. So you have to find out what the right credential is. You need to find out how to get it and you need to get it done.

I hear a lot of excuses from engineers; 'I don't have time to study. I don't want to give up six to nine months of my life.' Listen, if giving up six months of your life to study to set you up with credential that'll bring you to a level of being the best engineer in your field, I think it's well worth it. I know how difficult it is to pass some of these exams. I've taken many of them myself. When I took the PE exam I woke up every morning at about five a.m. and studied before I went to work because there was no other time for me to do, and it was really bad. I mean it was awful. I can't say I enjoyed it but I was

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motivated to do it because I knew what my goal was and I knew how achieving that goal was going to impact the rest of my career and my life, and it certainly has. Having a PE license behind my name even gives me credibility in what I do today, in working with engineers and speaking for engineers. So please no excuses on this one. Find out what credentials are going to get you to be recognized as an expert in your field and go out there and obtain them.

And remember, you can ask the person from step number two, the best person in your field. You can ask them what credentials to get. And if you find an engineer in your field that's the best in your field and you can't get in contact with that person sending me an email, afasano@powerfulpurpose.com. I can try to help you get in touch with them or maybe I can even have them on the show, have him or her on the show and talk to them about how they became an expert. Alright so, so far we've got step one: Be technically sound, step two: find the best engineer in your field and learn from him or her and then step three: obtain the right credentials.

Step number four: join professional societies in your industry, become active in those societies and speak as many events as you can. Now that's kind of a longer step but let's dive into it because it's probably one of the most important. I mean these are all important, but this one's a big one. Joining the right society is important for you. Now I'll preference this by saying you can join multiple professional societies, and I do and I belong to several. However, sometimes when you're in a specific discipline you avoid getting involved in that specific discipline. I'll use structural engineering again as an example because it fits, it works well because a lot of times it gets lumped under the civil engineering industry. If you're a structural engineer and you belong to the American Society of Civil Engineers - like many structural engineers do - that's great, great organization. Highly recommend that you be a member there, but there's also an organization like the Structural Engineering Association that's very specific to your discipline. So you should definitely be a number of that association if you want to be noted as an expert in that field. And a lot of Engineers make that mistake; they look too big with the societies and they don't get involved in their real specific niche society. So do that. What that's going to allow you to do is build the right network of people. You're going to build relationships with other experts in your field, which you'll learn from. You'll make sure your technical expertise is at its peak because you'll be seeing technical presentations on that very specific content that you need to be an expert in. And you'll also potentially see clients there, of people in your specific industries and again you're just building the right network of people to be able to become the best engineer your field.

The second part of this step was to become active in the societies. It's one thing to join and get a newsletter every couple of weeks or a month, occasionally go to a meeting. But becoming active volunteering, getting on the board, helping plan events; that's how you become even happier in your career because you're making really strong relationships. You're building those relationships in your

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field that are going to be enjoyable and it's going to open a lot of opportunities and open a lot of doors for you. So don't just join, become active.

And the last part of this step is to speak at as many events for the society as you can. I don't care how old you are. I don't care how much you know about your field yet, even if you're just learning. Volunteer to speak in front of people at the society as much as you can, whether it's moderating a panel doing an introduction in introducing a speaker, simple two minutes or it's putting on a full sixty or ninety minute talk on a topic. And there's multiple reasons for doing this. First of all, whenever you're up in front of the room, people see you as an expert because you're speaking on a topic and obviously if you want to become the best engineer in your field you need to be recognized as an expert. Secondly, doing this boosts your confidence tremendously. Every time you get up in front of a room and speak, and I'm talking now from experience, you become more confident in your abilities to do so and just your overall abilities. You just feel better about yourself and what you're capable of. And a lot of engineers struggle with confidence and they fear getting up in front of people and this will help you to eliminate the fear. The third thing it will do for you is, it will help you tremendously in developing your communication skills and your speaking skills. Any of you that have spent any time in the engineering industry understand that communication skills are critical. We work on teams. We work with other consultants. We work with clients. If you can't communicate effectively as an engineer, you will definitely not be the best engineer in your field. You won't even be a successful engineer because you have to be able to communicate to people, you have to be able to make presentations to people. And sometimes you have to make presentations to people that aren't technical, which is even more challenging.

So just a recap of step number four -- Join societies that are very specific to your discipline. Become active in those societies; join the societies, volunteer, help plan events. And lastly speak as many of these events as you possibly can to boost confidence, establish yourself as an expert and continually develop your communication skills. Alright, now let's move on to step number five. This is my personal favorite.

Step number five: Constantly work on yourself. Constantly better yourself. A lot of engineers get comfortable. They get to a certain level in their career, and they think that they don't have to work any harder. They don't have to go to conferences anymore. They don't have to get better, and that's wrong. You always can improve until the day you retire as an engineer. And I want all of you to remember that. A couple things you can do to work on yourself -- one is to set very clear goals and go after them. In January we did a webinar through my **Institute for Engineering Career Development**, and we actually opened it up to all engineers and I'll make it available here in the show notes. It was a webinar on goal setting for engineers. And I had a friend of mine on who's an engineer. And he decided last year that he wanted to start running marathons. He set a goal of running a thousand miles last year for himself. Now any engineer that is busy and is working in an engineering career

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knows that to be able to do anything like that outside of your career - run a thousand miles an year - is difficult. So in this webinar here details how we did it. And again, I'll post it in the show notes here. You can get the show notes by going to engineeringcareercoach.com/session12.

But what my friend mentioned in the webinar was that one key thing for him to be able to run a thousand miles in a year was a support group. So if you want to consistently better yourself, get a support group around you, and that's why I created the **Institute for Engineering Career Development**. It is a support group of motivated engineers helping each other and you need to find a group like that. Whether it's IECD or you know of another group or something that you can belong to that will help you, whether it's a church group, a professional group, a group within your company; some group where you can lean on people and tell them about your challenges, about your goals, a coach, a mentor, whatever it may be. You need this to push you through your career, to keep pushing you to get to the next level. And I'm doing this in my business this year. I've been doing this for a while now, but I want to get better and so I've hired some people to help me that have specific expertise that I don't have. These are things that would try to do for years, but now I've realized that I'm not that good as them. So I need to hire people they may be expensive, they may be costly but if I want to get results and get my message out to a million engineers instead of a hundred thousand then I've got to get help, got to get a team in place. So I hope this show inspires you to do the same.

So those are your **Five Steps for Becoming the Best Engineer in Your Field**. Let's recap them:

Step One: you must be technically sound, that will really show your level of expertise.

Step Two: find the best engineer in your field right now and learn from him or her. Ask those questions.

Step Three: Obtain the right credentials.

Step Four: Join societies there are specific to your discipline. Become active in those societies and speak as many events as you can.

Step Five: (which we just finished with) is constantly working on yourself, both personally and professionally.

I hope those you find those five steps helpful to you. Now it's time for our career-changing tip, which I hope will help you to implement these steps immediately.

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Anthony's Career Changing Tip: Now it's time for our career-changing tip. Every show, at the end of the show, I like to give you a tip that will change your career if you implement it right away. And today I'm going to give you a tip that relates back to the five steps we just talked about because I want you to be able to implement these steps to start moving towards this idea of becoming the best in your field right away.

So what I want you to do is, I want you to write down one of those five steps. Whether it's becoming technically sound, finding a mentor in the field, obtaining the right credentials, joining specific society or working on yourself - I want you to write down one of those steps. And then what I want you to do, right beneath it, is write down the next step moving towards that. So if the step you wrote down was to find the best engineer the field right now and learn from him or her, then underneath it the next step would be to make a list of three engineers. And that's an action step - make a list of three engineers to reach out to. And then what I want you to do is achieve that step. Take action on that step in the next week. So using that same example - that gives you one week to be able to go online, go on LinkedIn or even register for a conference of some sort where you're able to get in touch with someone in your field and talk to them.

And I used this career-changing tip because in one of our ***Institute for Engineering Career Development*** group coaching calls recently, one of our members, said something that I thought was amazing. She used a quote; "Every journey begins with the first step, only if you take it." So it's kind of a traditional quote and she added on that ending; 'only if you take it.' And that's so true. Yes, every journey does begin with the first step but you have to take action and take that first step and get it going. And that's what I want you to do today. So now you have the five steps for becoming the best engineer in your field and have been prompted to take action on them by creating one small step that you're going to take in the next week. I hope that this was extremely helpful for you to get to that level that you want to get to in your career. Now before I go, real quickly, I want to mention again the event that I'm putting on in Austin, Texas. A hundred engineers will get together and I hope you're one of them. And I'm going to bring in about a dozen or so of the most successful engineering executives in the country and attendees will get to pick their brains, ask them questions in a panel type session. Get to ask them questions in a social atmosphere where a little more relaxed. And we're going to have a keynote speaker, Brett Harward, who is an author of ***The Five Laws That Determine All Of Life's Outcomes***. We're going to take a tour of the Austin city capital, the LEED Gold building with the green roof. And we're going to have some social events of some of the coolest restaurants in Austin, Texas. So please engineeringevent.com. If you want to be a partner in engineering firm or get to a high level in your field, please visit engineeringevent.com and check out the event. If you register in the month of February, not only will you receive very low early bird pricing for what you get with the ticket, but you will also receive a bonus that I will hand to you personally at the event. So check it out. If you want to see what that bonus is go to engineeringevent.com and scroll down and please be a part of something special.



Anthony's Closing Remarks: With that, thanks so much for tuning in. I hope you enjoyed today's show and I will see you on the next session of the ***Engineering Career Coach Podcast***.

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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