



The ENGINEERING CAREER COACH PODCAST SESSION #24

10 More Answers For 10 More Questions From 10 More Engineers

Show notes at: engineeringcareercoach.com/10moreanswers

Anthony's Upfront Intro: You are listening to *The Engineering Career Coach Podcast* with Anthony Fasano session #24. In the last session I answered ten questions from our listeners related to engineering career development. It went so well and I received so many more questions that in this show I'm going to do it again.

Answers on today's show will cover topics ranging from what credentials to get as an engineer to different salary concerns and I will also give the five books that I believe are most helpful for engineering managers. Let's do it!

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

Hello everyone. This is Anthony Fasano, your engineering career coach. And as a gift for all of you listeners out there you can visit engineeringcareercoach.com/freegift, enter in your name and email and I will send you a list of the three top resources that I utilized to become a partner in an engineering firm at the age of twenty-seven.

I hope all of you out there are doing well today. Please know that you're joined right now by hundreds of engineers that are listening to this show, trying to improve both personally and professionally. And I know that for a fact because I've gotten so many messages from all of you out there and for that I am really grateful. I have another exciting show for you today where I'm answering ten more questions from our listeners.

Before I dive right into it I do want to first mention the event that I'm putting on for engineers that's going to be in Southern California in late September. This event is open to anyone who wants to come. It's not just a local event. We expect engineers to be flying in from around the country. The goal of this event is to help you to communicate more effectively, learn how to network, build strong relationships and even be able to bring business into your company and also to develop your leadership abilities.

If you visit the event website at iecdfallmeetup.com, you can click on the speakers tab and you will be

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amazed at the caliber of speakers of engineering executives, business development professionals in the engineering world and leadership development professionals that are going to be speaking at this meet-up. And I like to call it a meet-up instead of a conference because it's real intimate. We're going to have dinner networking parties each night. We've got a couple of tours planned and then of course a couple of intensive, intensive sessions.

So please, if you want to transform your, not only your engineering career but your life, come to the IECD fall meet-up in San Diego in late September and I look forward to personally meeting you there if you decide to join us. Questions, feel free to email me at afasano@powerfulpurpose.com.

Alright, with that we're going to get right into the show. This is a very exciting show for me. I love doing these shows where I'm answering engineers' questions. The last time was the first show, last episode I tried this out. I asked for questions. You gave me about a hundred questions. So I answered ten last show and I'm answering ten more this show and I think you're really going to enjoy these questions because a lot of these questions in today's show apply for a lot of engineers out there and multiple different questions can affect you from this show so please listen carefully. And I also have a great career changing tip for you at the end of today's show. So with that let's get right into the main part of our session today.

Coaching Segment:

Anthony: Alright, now it's time for the main segment of our show and in this segment I'm going to answer ten questions from all of you out there, our listeners. And before I jump into those questions, I did this last session, episode #23 and if you want to look at that show, listen to it or look at the show notes that have all of the answers typed into it, you can go to engineeringcareercoach.com/10answers, that's one zero answers.

The show notes for this show, episode 24, will be engineeringcareercoach.com/10moreanswers, that's one zero more answers and I will list all of the answers to these questions and details. I'm also going to give you resources for a lot of these questions as additional information, old posts or books that can be helpful for you and again, all of that will be on the website, easy for you to digest.

So let's jump into it. First question comes from Calvin. ***What is the worth of an advanced degree compared to obtaining certificates or developing/improving on skills?***

Great question Calvin. My answer is not that straightforward and the reason is because the answer to this question depends on what your goals are. If your goals require you to get an advanced degree in order to achieve them then getting an advanced degree is going to be important to you. But if they

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don't necessarily and getting maybe like a PE license or another certification is more important to achieve your goal, whatever your goal is, then that's the path that you have to take.

And if you don't have any goals yet, I would definitely consider licensure or a top certification in your field as a goal and a master's degree is something that can be very helpful. But there's a lot of different kinds of master's degrees out there today so you have to look into the different options. You can get a master's in engineering. You can get a master's in engineering management, which is a new, I shouldn't say it's a new program. They've been around for a while but they're becoming more popular. Kind of like an MBA, the idea of a MBA of management more in the engineering world. Now I don't want to totally stereotype them like that because a lot of engineering management programs are different but that's kind of a rough idea of it. You can just Google engineering management programs and do a little research on it. And then of course there's an MBA.

So there's a lot of different options out there Calvin but the key is to understand your goals first, where you want to go and maybe even talk to other engineers that have achieved their goals and see if a master's degree was more helpful for them or developing certain skills or getting a certain certification was more helpful. I wrote a post on my blog a while ago about this that might be helpful for you Calvin. You can find that post engineeringcareercoach.com/credentialsarekey. That's are a-r-e, credentials are key.

Alright, question number two comes from Greg in North Carolina. ***If you have a desire to be your own boss, when is it time to go out on your own?***

This is an excellent question. One that's obviously very, very important for someone in this situation and I was in this situation myself. So I'm going to give you kind of my thoughts on this. And there are a lot of different ways to go with this question but the one word that really comes to mind when you answer this question and when I think about this question is risk. How much risk is associated with leaving at what time? How much risk are you willing to take?

So what I mean by that is if you're leaving a stable salary and potentially health benefits to go out on your own, what is your risk level? Are you single and living inexpensively and can afford to take a bigger risk? Or are you married with a family and your tolerance for risk is lower? This is something that I had to deal with when I decided to go out and start my own company, my own business. And I was very calculated and I knew that I had to have a certain amount of money in the wings with contracts or waiting for me if I had to leave my job and I couldn't leave until I got that and that's the approach that I took.

So my answer essentially is it's time to leave when you have the ability to do that, whether it's financially, whatever that means to you, that's when it's time to leave. Again, how bad do you want it?

How much can you sacrifice? If you have a family you could probably potentially sell your house and move into an apartment that can house your family for a few years that's a lot cheaper. How much do you want to risk? How much do you want to sacrifice? So that's my answer to that question. I know it's not very straightforward but just think risk and minimizing your risk, your family's risk.

Question number three is from Ridwick in India. He's a third year engineering student. ***My question to you is that I am kind of an introvert by nature so how can I overcome this so that I can do a lot more interaction with people confidently?***

The way to be more comfortable with interacting with people Ridwick is to interact with people. And I know it sounds, probably not the best answer that you want to hear but that's just the way you overcome fear around something is to do it.

So I'll give you one resource that can be helpful for you and I've said this on the last show and I'll probably say it again today and that is to join an organization called *Toastmasters International* or an organization like it, which basically helps you to improve your confidence, boost your confidence level by putting you up in front of the room, having you speak in front of people you don't know in a very supportive atmosphere. And by doing that not only will you improve your communication skills but you're going to boost that confidence every time you get up in front of the room and that's going to help you to be more comfortable interacting with people.

The other thing that I would recommend that you do is find any kind of networking or social events in your industry and go to them. Just go, go, go, go, go. Keep going to these events until you get more comfortable talking with people, asking questions about their careers. What do they like about engineering? What projects are they working on?

Just get out there Ridwick and interact with people. As uncomfortable as it may feel, gradually ease into this. Maybe you ask one question at the first session that you go to. Maybe you just ask one question at the first event. Take your time but the more you do it the more comfortable you will be. I commend you for asking the question because that means it's on your mind and you want to improve on it.

This next one, question four, came in through one of my blog posts and it goes like this - ***I'm a seasoned PE myself. I'll be an EE with a solid thirteen years of experience since I've left college. I'm also in the reserves as an officer so I have leadership experience. I've had my own business since 2006, though it has been more of a hobby than an actual business. While I do make just over \$100 000 and work a 40 hour workweek for my employer, I find that every year they want more of my freedom with less compensation. When I brought this up to my supervisor he said, "That's just the way it is," and has stalled on any promotion or raise above***

2%. Since I'm in a dead end job I need my engineering business to get off the ground. What do you see as the most valuable method and resource for really launching an engineering business?

Alright, excellent question. So you've been working for a while but you feel like you're maxed out and you want to start your own business, where you feel like there really isn't a ceiling and I agree with you. So how do you grow that business?

The number one answer I can give you is to provide value to people. If you give people value in what you do, they're going to come back for more and they're going to be raving fans. You have to give them great value though.

The other thing that you want to do obviously is meet people and understand how to build strong relationships and bring in business and grow your company. It's not an easy thing to do and I don't know where you're located but if you're anywhere near San Diego or can come to San Diego in the fall, please do. We're going to have a host of business development experts there in the engineering field and you would benefit greatly from that. And again, our website for the event is iecdfallmeetup.com.

But get out there at events, network, build relationships and that's going to help you when you launch that business or try to kick it up a notch, to reach out to all those networks. And not just business cards that you can reach out to of people that are going to not get back to you, you want strong relationships so people are going to remember you and they're going to call you back and then you can give them that value that I talked about before. And if you continue to deliver that value, they're going to continue to come back to you and that's how your business is going to take off.

There's a couple of posts that I'm going to refer you to that might be helpful for you and also a book on this topic. Actually the first session of the *Engineering Career Coach Podcast*, which you can find at engineeringcareercoach.com/session1, I work with an engineer on how to build relationships and speak more with people and interact, which might be helpful for you with your business.

Secondly, I have a post at engineeringcareercoach.com/bdskills and that's all about business development and recommendations on how you can become better at building your business development skills.

And lastly, I'll recommend the book that I recommend I feel like almost regularly on this podcast, which is *How To Win Friends And Influence People* by Dale Carnegie. Dale Carnegie a long time ago started helping engineers in New York City with their personal interpersonal skills and this book is phenomenal and it will help you to build very strong relationships.

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Question number five comes from Doug in Oklahoma. *I'm an electrical engineer and I currently work for the Department of Defense and I'm currently located in Oklahoma. Lately however, I've been inspired by the growing need for the utilization of renewing energy in our country as well as the world. I'm very passionate about this issue and I'd like to apply my talents to this field in California. I already have a master's degree in electrical and computer engineering and I'm not necessarily in a position to be able to go back and get another one. I have a doubly difficult road ahead since I'd like to relocate and change my career path. I thoroughly enjoy problem solving and I'm willing to learn absolutely anything to accomplish my goal.*

Alright Doug. The first recommendation I have for you is to don't take an approach that you have 'a doubly difficult road ahead' because that's going to, right off the bat put you in a kind of negative mindset. Take the approach that this is an awesome challenge and an opportunity for you to shift your career and do some extraordinary things in a different field, in a different location.

Now, you do have two challenges in one time here, as you've indicated. You have to relocate and get into a new industry. So what I would do if I were you is one of two things. Decide on either location or industry. So what I mean by that is if you're dead set on living in California and you feel that it's maybe it's the best spot for this field, then get to California first. Do whatever you have to do to get there. Find a place to stay. Maybe you get a cheaper place to begin with and get a job just to get some income. If you can break into the energy field immediately that's a homerun. If you can't though, just get a job doing whatever you can do in California and then when you get there you can put all of your efforts and energy into getting the energy job.

In the meantime what I would do is I would spend a lot of time on LinkedIn. I would be connecting with people in the energy industry in California. There's probably groups you can get into. I would get into discussions. I would read about the industry. I would learn everything that I could so when the right opportunity comes in California you can grab it. But in the meantime I would get to the location in California that you want to live and then you can start to attend local professional associations, society meetings, networking events, dinners. You can go to schools and talk to professors, anybody in the industry you can talk to once you're in the location.

Trying to do both remotely will be very difficult to do. So that's kind of my recommendation to you I'd to take it one step at a time. Get in to California. Get a job. I did a podcast recently with an engineer who was doing the same thing as you, trying to totally switch over - different disciplines - and you might find it helpful to listen to that session. You can find it at engineeringcareercoach.com/changeover. That's just all one word, lower case, changeover.

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Question six comes from Hamza in Pakistan. ***My biggest problem is that I've graduated from a mechanical engineering school in 2012 but until now I haven't gotten a job although I've managed to do four internships and the last one was in April 2014 but I am still unemployed now. What options do I have? Will companies still consider my CV after such long periods of unemployment?***

It's a great question. Hamza also asks if he should look for other jobs other than engineering since he's having such problems and he also mentioned possibly freelancing. So my answer to you first of all Hamza, and I know this is difficult to do but stay mentally strong. You have an engineering degree. That's a valuable thing and you can leverage it and I believe you will find something but you have to try to be creative.

First thing is to make sure that you're using LinkedIn and whatever network is the preferred network in our country, in your region, something that's professional networking in a sense. Create a strong profile and have a presence there.

As far as if companies will consider your CV because of the long periods of unemployment - you have four internships, which is very positive and you can explain that to them and you can use that information to kind of help explain why there's been gaps. And then you have to kind of let some of the value talk for itself on your resume on the skills that you picked up in those internships.

And if you can do some freelance engineering work in the meantime, I think that's a good thing because it will allow you to kind of fill that resume out and show people that you're resourceful and that even though you didn't have a fulltime job you were able to freelance. And also by freelancing, what you can do is whatever projects you work on you can assemble a portfolio to bring into the interviews, which also hopefully will help you to get that long term, permanent job.

So those are hopefully some tips that will help you and I know it's very difficult but you have to leverage whatever you can leverage. So four internships, how can you use them to show your value? That's what you have to try to do. I also want to point you to another resource that I have. I did a podcast recently with a young engineer who is doing a lot of freelancing. He's an EIT in California and he actually started his own little consulting company doing freelancing and you can find it at engineeringcareercoach.com/matteit, that's matteit.

Question seven comes from Tyler in Virginia. ***I am twenty-six and climbing the ranks at a small, shop-style civil firm, sixteen employees on the design side. I will be sitting for the PE exam in October but over the last two years I've evolved into an engineering manager for roughly five designers, one PE, two EITs and one senior designer. In addition to designing projects myself I now have these management responsibilities. Over the last twelve months of consistently***

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putting in 65+ hours per week and still barely squeaking by on execution and deadlines, I have been reading and pursuing any management strategies that can help me delegate work to my designers and more effectively stick to project deadlines. My question is are you familiar with any developmental resources, books, classes, seminars, etc. that can help me as an emerging engineering manager become more efficient at running a civil design firm?

Alright, so I've got a bunch of different books I'll throw at you here Tyler. First of all, congratulations. You're obviously making great progress and Tyler just joined our community of motivated engineers, *The Institute For Engineering Career Development* so I look forward to getting to know him even more through that. Let me throw some books out at you Tyler.

First book is *The Four Hour Workweek* and I know I talk about this book a lot. It's by Tim Ferris. And it's not specifically geared at managing in corporate America but what it does give you is a lot of productivity tips, that have been extremely helpful for me. So it's definitely worth a listen. And I say a listen because it's kind of, the book gets into some different details that reading it can be dry at times and for you, the angle that you're coming at, getting the audio book and listening to it on this one will be helpful for you.

The One Minute Manager is another great book by Ken Blanchard. It's about a manager who supposedly is so organized. He delegates so great that he's always kind of has flexibility and yet he's always open in his schedule. A reporter is basically trying to get an interview with him and everyone says, "Oh, it's so easy to do, he's never busy," which is probably an exaggeration. But the point is that there's a couple of good tips and points in there on better delegation that might be helpful for you.

Getting Things Done is another one that's huge, hugely successful book. It's renowned. I mean the author is just, David Allen, he is a guru on productivity systems, etc. *Getting Things Done* will kind of give you a system for dealing with different things like task management, that might be helpful for you in the workplace.

Another book that might be very helpful for you, along the same lines as *Getting Things Done*, is called *The Power Of Less: The Fine Art Of Limiting Yourself To The Essential In Business And Life* by Leo Babauta. This book Tyler of all of them might be the best for you because it's really just going to help you on being straight more productive. Like literally how to get up in the morning, how to pick out what the most important tasks are, how to attack them, how to do some delegation. So this is an excellent, excellent book and it might be very helpful for you.

And the last book that I'm going to recommend is a book on the 80/20 principle, Pareto's Principle. For those of you out there that aren't familiar with it, it's a principle that says that essentially 80% of your results come from 20% of your efforts, meaning that we spend 20% of our time on what's

important. And if you can understand this and conquer this, you'll be extremely more productive. So the name of the exact book that I'll give you is *The 80/20 Principle: The Secret To Achieving More With Less* by Richard Koch. Richard Koch has written a couple of books on this 80/20 principle, both for professional use and personal use.

So I know that that's a bunch of resources there, thrown out at you Tyler but listen, you're doing a great job if you got to where you are at the age that you're at. Keep pushing it. Keep doing your best and hopefully some of the resources in these books will help you to kind of get to that level, where you feel more comfortable as a manager and more productive and on top of things.

Question eight comes from D'Angelo in DC, Metro area, another IECDer. ***How do I maintain my engineering identity while working under a different title e.g. Project Manager?***

I think that this is an awesome question D'Angelo. I never even thought of this myself. I've never really heard engineers asking about this before. But there are a lot of times where we get different titles in the engineering world that don't have the word engineer in them and how do you really maintain that identity? First of all D'Angelo, wherever you can, I would use the word engineer next to your name; LinkedIn, if you can get it on a business card, if you have a personal blog or your email signature. If you can incorporate that somehow, definitely do that.

The other thing that I would do if I were you is I would talk to your managers about your title. Is there any reason that you can't be called an Engineering Project Manager instead of just Project Manager? It certainly doesn't hurt to ask and I think that if you express to them that you feel strongly about your engineering skills and your background and you love being an engineer. Take that pride. And I think that that's a great thing to do. Have a discussion with them and try to maintain that title, Engineer in your work title. I mean listen titles aren't everything but I see what you're saying and that the word engineer is everything right. We're engineers. That's what we do. That's what our life kind of revolves around. So awesome question Diangelo. Thank you for asking it.

Next question comes from Jason in the Philippines and Jason is asking me - ***which non-technical skills are the most important skills to develop?***

And I think that that's an excellent question but again, it's one of those questions Jason where it depends a lot on what your goals are and what you want to accomplish in your career. Obviously if you want to go out there and develop a lot of business you're going to want to network and be able to give presentations. If you want to be a leader maybe you have to focus more on delegation and leadership.

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Here's what I recommend to you - whatever you do decide to work on, measure your results. So if you decide that you want to improve your speaking skills, challenge yourself to get up there and give a talk somewhere in a month or two and measure the results. And then do it again in another two or three months and get feedback from people. When you really look at your goals things will jump out at you as far as what you should improve but I just urge you to measure your improvements because that's how you really see if you're growing Jason. And hopefully that will be helpful for you.

There is one resource I can point you to on my website. It actually has a direct URL at engineercareerguide.com or you can go to engineeringcareercoach.com, click on guides and you'll see there when you click on the guides that there's a guide entitled **How To Create An Extraordinary Engineering Career: Anthony Fasano's Complete Engineering Career Guide** and there's seven videos on all different non-technical skill sets in this guide that will be helpful for you Jason, I'm sure, in developing some of these skills or at least starting to.

That's nine questions down and our last question comes from another IECDer, Carlos in New Jersey. And Carlos asks - ***I consider myself to be a top performer at my firm. I am currently working on a major project fro our New York City office. I am actually based in Newark, New Jersey and I'm the only person here working on this project. At times I feel like I'm at a different performance level compared to the rest of my peers. I'm not as clued in on social gatherings and conversations that go around the office. Sometimes I can go an entire day without talking to someone and vice versa. How would you handle this?***

Great question Carlos and I know how you feel. Sometimes as a young engineer you can feel left out, feel like managements kind of talking and you're not clued in on it. The first thing that I would challenge you to do is to figure out what you think you're missing out on. In other words, by not being clued in to these conversations how are you losing out? Is it that you feel that you're not able to speak to the clients properly? Are you not able to feel like you're on the same page as everyone on a communications wavelength? Whatever that challenge you have around this is, figure it out and then figure out a problem to solve it.

So for example if you think that you don't have enough information about the project when talking to clients because you're not clued in, then ask the people in your office if you can catch up on a few things on a project or ask them if you can go out to lunch with them once in a while.

I think the one thing that we get tied up in sometimes is sometimes engineers in certain firms, and with good reason, think that they need to talk to people to get promoted and get to know people and get friendly with them. And unfortunately, sometimes that's the case and that stinks.

But I feel like Carlos your question is more along the lines of it's going to negatively impact your performance on the project because if you don't kind of know everything. So in that case I would just have open conversations with people and say, "Listen, is there anything I should know about this?" or, "Can we get together for lunch Friday? I just want to talk a little bit about this project kind of out the office." Whatever you have to do Carlos but don't be ashamed to just ask people and talk to people more and just go right into their office and say, "Hey, you know what's going on?" Maybe you want to talk casually with them.

Don't let this become an issue because if you do, it will. Try to brush it off and try to get more comfortable with people. I know I'm making it sound easy and it's not but I've known that to work. Just be casual with people, just talk to people and remember understand why you need to talk to them. That'll help you.

So with that I've answered these ten more questions and you can get all the answers in written form with all the resources at engineeringcareercoach.com/10moreanswers. Alright, so with that I'm going to take a break for a moment and come back with our career changing tip to close out the show.

Anthony's Career Changing Tip:

Alright, now it's time for our career changing tip. This is the segment of the show where I try to give you one tip or one strategy that you can implement in your career and life immediately and see changes. And today, kind of following up on that last question, number ten and a couple of the other questions, the tip I have for you today is in any situation or challenge that you're in think about the end result and what you want to accomplish, what you want to get out of something before you dive into things.

So for example, again Carlos asked about, "I don't feel like I'm talking to enough people in the office." What are you going to get out of talking to people in the office? Someone else asked, "What credentials should I get?" Well think about this credential. What are you going to get out of this credential? If you want to achieve a certain goal, what credential do you need to get there? Don't just rush into things. So many people take on too many endeavors today in their career and their life. Understand the ones that are going to have the biggest impact. Understand why they're going to help you and then go after it. That's why I'm staying up late on a Sunday night recording this podcast. Because I know that it's important and it has to get done so I can get it done on time, I can get it done, I can get it out to all those engineers out there that count on me for this information. But if I let it wait till Monday and everything else gets thrown at me, it's not going to get done.



You have to think a few steps beyond where you're at because if you don't do that you're going to get sucked in to the craziness that Tyler talked about in his question, where he's doing 65+ hours a week and he can't keep up with his deadlines.

So understand what's important to you, why you're doing it and what you should focus on on a regular basis so that you don't get overwhelmed like so many other engineers out there that have contacted me that are overwhelmed in their career.

Anthony's Closing Remarks:

So with that I hope you really enjoyed the show, the last two shows, all these twenty questions and I hope that you will continue to take advantage of all the resources on the website [engineeringcareercoach.com](http://www.engineeringcareercoach.com). I'll catch you on the next session.

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

For tons of free engineering career resources visit <http://www.engineeringcareercoach.com>