



The ENGINEERING CAREER COACH PODCAST SESSION #32

A Challenge To Work Four Hours A Day In Your Engineering Career

Show notes at: engineeringcareercoach.com/4hourday

Anthony's Upfront Intro: In this episode of The Engineering Career Coach Podcast I'm going to challenge you to work just four hours per day. Lets 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.

Welcome to episode 32 of the podcast. I'm really excited for the topic today, which is I say work four hours a day and I am going to challenge you to do that and kind of give you a guideline to do that but it's going to boil down to focus.

And before I get started I made a couple of adjustments on the website. If you visit engineeringcareercoach.com, right on the front page you have the ability to subscribe to my mailing list, my newsletter, which I send to thousands of engineers and in return I will send you a list of the top three resources I utilized to become a partner at a young age at an engineering firm. And also, something new I'm doing, I'm going to be giving away one coaching session with me every month to someone on my newsletter list, could be an existing subscriber, older subscriber, could be a new subscriber.

I'm really passionate about the one on one coaching aspect of what I do so I want to give more engineers access to that. So I'll be announcing the winner of that at the end of each month so again, if you want to get onto my mailing list if you're not, it's engineeringcareercoach.com and I'll send you those items in return that I mentioned.

A couple other quick announcements before I jump into the main segment here. I'm going to be putting on a very intimate career goal-setting workshop for engineers in Chicago on November 7th. It's going to be on a Friday afternoon for about three, three and a half hours. It's going to be about ten seats, ten to twelve seats, several of which are already taken. So if you're an engineer in the Chicago area or anywhere and you just want to make a big change in your career, you want to set really clear goals that are going to help you to focus and help you to take big moves in your career, then check it out at engineeringcareercoach.com/chicagomm, which stands for mastermind, chicagomm or feel free to email me at afasano@engineeringcareercoach.com. But again, and it's for

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engineers that really want to set clear goals and be able to focus on them. I have a lot of really great strategies and exercises that we're going to go through and be kind of a community effort with all the other engineers there. It's going to be a real powerful afternoon followed up by a dinner. So check that out if you're interested.

And last announcement here is if you want to get the show notes for today's show afterwards, if you want to review them and check out the links that I mentioned on the show just go to engineeringcareercoach.com/4hourday, that's 4 hour day. That'll give you the links to today's show in which I'm going to talk about focus and I'm going to challenge you to work just four hours a day for a week. I want you to try that.

So we're going to get into the main segment now and what I want to do to bring us in there is I want to give you two quotes. And these two quotes are coming from a gentleman named Gary Keller. He wrote a book called *The One Thing*, a surprisingly simple truth behind extraordinary results and reading the book right now was certainly a big inspiration for this specific episode and I'll talk a little more about his book when we get into the main segment. Let's get into it now.

Here are the two quotes from Gary. ***"Success is actually a short race, a sprint fueled by discipline just long enough for habit to kick in and take over."*** The second quote is, ***"It is not that we have too little time to do all the things we need to do, it is that we feel the need to do too many things in the time that we have."***

Coaching Segment:

Anthony: Alright, let's jump right in to the main segment of the show here and let's get into this whole idea of you working four hours a day for a week. And this is what I want you to do, after today's episode I want you to schedule a week on your calendar where you're only going to work four hours a day. I'm going to give you a blueprint for doing it in the next fifteen, twenty minutes. But why am I challenging you to do this?

Again, I'm reading this book right now called *The One Thing* and it's been a phenomenal book because what the author talks about, Gary Keller, is focusing on that one thing that matters. And it's not just one thing. When I started reading the book I'm like, "Listen there's no way that I can just focus on one thing in my career, in my life. I have way too many things going on," and I'm sure you feel the same way. But then when I started reading the book, his theory is that everything that you're doing, look at that individually and say, "What is the one thing that I can do in this project or this situation to make it extraordinary, to get the biggest results I can get?"

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So for example, let's say you're working on a certain project. You could just step back, think about the project for a minute and say, "What is the one thing that I can do on this project to make it super successful?" And maybe it's focusing more on the design work, maybe it's focusing more on the client relationship, maybe it's focusing more on a relationship with an agency that you're submitting to or a presentation that's going to be in front of a town board, whatever the case may be. The idea is to identify those major things and make sure that those are the things that you do and you work on and you put a lot of your time and effort onto. And that is extremely difficult to do and hence this exercise and working four hours a day.

So I didn't just make up this exercise, I tried it myself. Over the summer I tried it for a week. I worked four hours every morning and the results that I got were extraordinary. And the reasons were because it forced me, forced me to focus on the most important things that I needed to accomplish and anything else I needed to do I found other ways to get it done or other people to help me do it.

So enough about me, let's talk about you and let's talk about how you can accomplish this in your day-to-day lives. What I'm going to do is take you through a series of steps that you'll need to go through if you want to attempt this challenge and for those of you that do attempt this challenge I want you to either email me and tell me about it at afasano@engineeringcareercoach.com or I want you to go to the show notes at engineeringcareercoach.com/4hourday and if you do that I will send you an *Engineering Your Own Success* t-shirt, just to hear about your story and if you were able to do it and why or why not and what were the results.

Alright, so the first thing is you will have to do a little bit of work the night or the evening before and you'll have to prep yourself for what you're going to accomplish the next day. So you've heard me talk before probably about MITs or most important tasks. You're going to need to take a good look at your list of things to do for the next day and identify this 'one thing'. You're going to have to understand what those big things are.

So what I typically do is I'll have a cup of tea at night and I'll sit on my couch, I'll take a look over my list of projects that I'm working on and I'll identify what are some of the key things that I want to accomplish the next day and typically I start my day working on those. So that's a big first step that you're going to have to do to be able to just work four hours a day.

Now the next thing I just want to, kind of piece of advice I'll give you on doing this is you want to spend the four hours in the morning doing this. You don't want to mess around with the afternoon. The afternoon is the most unproductive time that you can imagine. So if you're going to do this you want to plan to do this right when you get into work until about your lunch break.

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So the first thing you want to do when you come into your office is to read something positive, have a positive quote available or listen to something positive. Get into a positive frame of mind. You're going to need that and I do that everyday but it's going to be important for this one week because you're going to try to cram everything into four hours. And I stopped working a little early yesterday and what happens is you feel bad, like you feel like, "I'm not doing something," or there's empty space so you're going to want to stay positive and just trust this process.

The next thing you'll do is you'll take a look at your list. Look at your to do list. Look at your project list that you're working on. Think about the MITs that you designated the night before because that's what you're going to focus on these four hours. And the first thing that you want to do is identify the things that are either not as important, or even if they are important, things that you can delegate out to other people.

Now some of you may not have anyone to delegate to so you won't have this option but if you do have this option you want to really take advantage of that. And you literally want to assign these tasks out so send them to the person with a list of email instructions or go into their office, deliver it to them, go over it with them. I would spend about a half an hour on reviewing your list and delegating those that can be delegated.

Then what I would do is I would take a fifteen-minute break and I would take a look at your email. And I know this is dangerous and I know that this could be the black hole that sucks you in and you lose the rest of your four hours but take a glance at the email, answer anything that's super burning and if there is anything that's super burning do a little bit of emailing, a little bit of deleting, maybe cleaning up the inbox. But at the fifteen-minute mark cap that.

Then you're going to come back and start working on your most important task of the day, that MIT number one. You might have three MITs, you might just have one if it's a big engineering project, whatever the case may be. Start working in that one. So that will put you about forty-five minutes into the day and then work on that MIT intensely for forty-five minutes.

Don't answer the phone. Don't look at your email. Close your door if you want to or if someone comes in ask them if I can kind of check back with you in about a half hour, forty-five minutes. Focus on that one task for forty-five minutes straight. Make that the one thing that you're going to focus on for forty-five minutes.

After that forty-five minutes is up take a five-minute break. Get out, walk around, use the bathroom, get some water, pop in on someone if they asked you a question before. Five, ten minutes, break it up a little bit. Then come back to your desk and get into either MIT number two or continue that MIT, the first one if it's a large one. Keep working on it.

You can see the idea here is to find these things that are the clinchers and accomplish them early on. So you're going to spend another good forty-five minutes without distractions focusing on this task. then when you're done you're going to take another five-minute break again. Get up, get around, you've got to drink a lot of water - all the time you should drink a lot of water. Come back, repeat the same process for MIT number three or the same MIT and then that's going to leave you with about fifty minutes left. And that's when you can get into emails and phone calls. So you can spend the last fifty minutes going through your emails, answering emails, answering phone calls and then at that point in time that's your four hours.

Then you take lunch and then obviously most of you are in a corporate setting, you're not just going to go home after four hours but my recommendation would be to do other things in the afternoon like maybe organizing your office, trying to do things that will make you more productive. I think some light meetings or something like that or phone calls is okay with this challenge. The point is is that you want to do all this heavy lifting in four hours to help you increase your focus.

Because what this is going to do for, and I'll tell you what it did for me, is it made me recognize how much I could get done in a short period of time if I had my priorities straight. And it's so true that if we have ten hours to do a task we'll do it in ten hours, if we have one hour to do a task we'll do it in one hour. That's usually what happens and I know it's not always the case in engineering because a lot of times our calculations and projects takes time.

But I just want you to cultivate that mentality of focus in your career and your life because this exercise will also spill over into your personal life as well and I'll give some examples of that in the take action today segment coming up in a few minutes. Alright, let me take a minute now to summarize these steps and this challenge so that those of you out there - and I want some of you to do it. I'm not just throwing this out there for the heck of it. I really want you to do it and get some feedback.

- So the most important thing is the night before you want to review those tasks, come up with your MITs, understand what you're going to do when you get into the office.
- When you get into the office in the morning spend the first half hour reviewing that list and then delegating whatever tasks you can out to other people. If you don't have delegation capabilities then you're not going to be able to do that. But spend a half an hour or so on your list prioritizing, getting prepped.
- Then jump into your email inbox for fifteen minutes. Put out any burning fires. Do a little bit of clean up.

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- Then jump into your first MIT, your most important task for forty-five minutes with a five-minute break.
- Then repeat that process, second MIT, forty-five minutes, five minute break.
- Third MIT, forty-five minutes.
- Then you have fifty minutes remaining roughly to check your email and make some phone calls.

And like I said, it's not like you're not going to do anything in the afternoon. You can do some other things, some organizing, some things you've been meaning catch up on, maybe some light reading of some technical guidelines that you've been wanting to brush up on. But I want you to get that majority of the work done in the morning.

And if you do it and if you go to engineeringcareercoach.com/4hourday and you leave your experience and how it helped you or how it didn't help or if you could accomplish it or if you couldn't, I will send you an *Engineering Your Own Success* t-shirt. These t-shirts are pretty awesome. I'll put a link to the photo in the show notes as well of the shirt and I'll get it right out to you, anywhere in the world I'll send it out. So with that I'm going to jump into the take action today segment of the show now and give you something actionable you can do around focus.

Take Action Today Segment:

Anthony: Alright, so today the one action that you can take based on what we've been talking about here with focus is take a big whiteboard or a big piece of paper and write down all of the different, I guess categories, or areas of your career or your life or both, however you want to do it.

So for example if you're looking at your career maybe you're going to put down like the top three or four projects you're working on. Then look at each project and say, "What is the one thing that I can do to make this project extraordinary?" Then look at all those projects and then pick one and say, "What can I do on this project, what's the one thing I can do on this project to make it extraordinary?" And write down what that one thing is. And then do that for every project.

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Do that for different aspects of your life. It could even be like your relationship, "What's the one thing I can do in my marriage to make it this much better?" Or, "What's the one thing I can do with my kids to make my relationship with them extraordinary?" and write that one thing down. And then focus your energy on these things. But just starting with the brainstorming process is phenomenal.

And the way that Gary Keller talks about it in the book is, basically what he says is if you think about what's the one thing I can do on this project, maybe it's a longer term thing, like it's a year out, the result of the project but you're going to say, "Okay, so for me to do that one thing what do I need to do this month or what do I need to do this week and what do I need to do today?" So you can take those one things and you can break them down but you have to understand that they're all connected to that one big thing. It's kind of like a domino effect, is the way that he explains it.

And so I promise you that if you do this it's going to give you so much more vision and focus in your career. I am looking at a whiteboard right now in my office, where I did this earlier in the week. And with every aspect of my career and my life I wrote it down. To give you a personal example, my wife and I have taken up ballroom dancing. So the one question is what is the one thing that we can do to improve our ballroom dancing, the most important thing? And I think it's some kind of consistent practice. So we happen to have social dances in our town every so often so the idea is we need to make sure we're going to them every couple weeks, no matter what because that's going to give us the practice we need to become better. That's the one thing that if we do nothing else that's the one thing.

And I'll give you one more example on the personal side. Again that the author mentioned was this author wanted to learn the guitar and he said, "I don't have the time to learn the guitar," but he liked a lot of classic rock and blues. So he found this one guitar riff, which I guess is like a series of chords, and he focused on that and he learned that one riff. And pretty much with that riff he was able to do a lot of jamming and rock and different blues songs. So he focused all of his energy. That was like the one thing that would help him kind of learn the guitar and be able to play some music that he liked.

Anthony's Closing Remarks:

I thank you for listening and again, those of you that are in the Chicago area please consider joining me for a very intense but intimate career goal setting workshop session. To check it out just visit engineeringcareercoach.com/chicagomm.

With that I hope that you continue to engineer your own success and I'll catch you on the next episode of the TECC Podcast.



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