The ENGINEERING CAREER COACH PODCAST
SESSION #23
10 Answers For 10 Questions From 10 Engineers

Show notes at: engineeringcareercoach.com/tenanswers

Anthony's Upfront Intro: You are listening to *The Engineering Career Coach Podcast* with Anthony Fasano session #23. In this session I am going to give you ten answers to ten questions from ten different engineers on very interesting engineering career development topics. So 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.

Hello everyone. This is Anthony Fasano, your engineering career coach. As a gift from me to my listeners you can visit engineeringcareercoach.com/freegift, enter in your name and email address 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.

Alright, welcome everyone to session 23 of *The Engineering Career Coach Podcast*. I can't believe we're already on session 23 and the feedback has been really amazing and I thank all of you for your notes, emails and social media messages about the show. And what I wanted to do for this show is to really make it listener focused. I mean that's always been the intent of the show that's why I've spent many of the shows coaching engineers on career challenges or goals that they have. But in this show I thought what we'd do is, I sent an email out to my subscribers and also mentioned on one of the previous shows that I wanted your questions because I do get so many questions now and I can't respond to all of them by email or individually.

So I figured I could do a show where I take the top ten questions that I've received and answer them right here on the show and give the person's name and location so you can get an idea of where our listeners are coming from. And so I did it and I got about a hundred questions. So I've chosen about twenty and we'll do ten today and then I'll save ten for another show. So essentially what I'll do is I'll go through these ten questions for you today, I'll give you answers and also resources that you can use for more information on each of these questions because obviously I can't give an extremely thorough answer in one show for ten different questions.

Alright, so before I jump into these ten questions I just want to take one minute to mention the event that I'll be putting on in San Diego in late September, *The Institute For Engineering Career*

Development meet-up. The idea behind these meet-ups is very simple - bring very successful, established engineers together and then bring kind of younger, up and coming motivated engineers together and then let the two interact. Let the younger engineers ask these experienced engineers questions, just have lunch with them, talk to them, talk about challenges, goals. And then also the attendees build up a lot of camaraderie. We do networking dinners at night. We do tours. We're going to do a boat tour of San Diego Bay and a tour of one of the fisheries there.

So it's going to be an awesome event. Seats are filling up so I urge you to please register. I really want to help you in your career. I think that's obvious and this event is a way to do that. So what I'm going to do is, I've already had some people take me up on this offer for podcast listeners only, if you register - and I'm going to extend it from end of June to end of July - if you register for the event by visiting iecdfallmeetup.com before the end of July and shoot me an email, I will give you a coaching session with your registration that you can use either before the event to prep for it or after the event so that you can digest all the information.

Right, so I hope to see you out there in San Diego and with that let's jump right in to kind of the main coaching segment of the show so I can run through these ten different questions I've gotten from ten podcast listeners.

Coaching Segment:

Anthony: Alright, now it's time to get to the good stuff here. I'm going to get into these ten questions submitted by listeners and give you not only answers but resources. And all of the resources that I discuss here on the show; old blog posts, books, etc. can be found on the show notes for this show, which will be listed on engineeringcareercoach.com/tenanswers, that's one, zero answers. Alright, so let's jump right in.

The first question comes from Janine in Texas. ***Engineers are solving problems and designing. Ten engineers will come up with at least ten slightly different approaches on the design of anything, assuming all codes and client desires and adding value to the design are taken care of. How do you answer a boss who wants you to change the design just because that is the way they would have solved the design problem, especially because the contracted amount typically assumes one time design?***

Alright, so it's a great question by Janine. You do this design; start working on this design for your boss. You spend a lot of the budget on it. You bring it to his/her attention and they say, "That design works but want to do it this way so change your design." It's not wrong but it was your opinion, your design. So how do you respond to that?

Well here's one thing you can do - you try to avoid it happening at all by communicating before the design with both your boss and the client that you are working for. So for example, let's say you're doing the design on a project - your boss asked you to lay out a parking lot with some drainage structures and some kind of storm water storage, maybe a detention basin and again my background's civil so I'm using that example.

If you speak to your boss and sit down together with a set of plans and say, "What are you thinking for the design?" and he/she says, "Well I'm thinking we should put the detention over here. I'm thinking we should have catch basins at these parts of the parking lot in general, obviously when you get to the details you'll have to work it out but that's what I'm thinking overall" and you go back and forth. Then when the time comes and he/she reviews the plans, they're going to see their own design and your design, kind of what you agreed on, together. So the odds of them actually asking you to change it would be much less likely because they'd kind of be changing their own design essentially.

But what makes it even better is that you can talk to the client ahead of time and have a meeting with the client and the client says, "I want to have the detention basin in this corner and I want stuff to flow this way," or, "I want to use a sub-surface chamber." Then if you go ahead and do the design and you bring it back to the client and your boss and they don't like it, then you can say to them, "Well that's what you had initially asked us to do so if you want us to do another design we'll prepare an extra, a proposal for an extra on the project for you." And of course make sure you document that initial meeting where the client told you to put something in a certain spot by email or by plans, where you take notes on it or whatever the case may be, or meeting minutes that you email to the client and copy your supervisor.

Now if you didn't get the clients opinion I think what you should do if you're already in the situation that Janine described where you've already done the design, maybe you weren't that clear in communicating and now your boss is asking you to change your design based on their preference then I think you need to make it clear to your boss of the budget impacts that are going to occur if you make those changes. You can say very honestly, "I think that this design works. We've done all the calculations. We've done the backup. For us to go ahead and change it now it's going to impact the budget. Are you sure that that's something you want me to proceed with? Maybe another option is should we reach out to the client and see if they like it first before we change it?"

Don't be afraid to talk to your boss or supervisor about something like that, about the budget. Let them know that you're thinking about that. That's going to be more of an impact for you, more of a plus for you when it comes review time and you've saved the projects budget. So thank you to Janine from Texas. I hope that that was helpful.

Alright, next we have a question from Bradley down in Louisiana. *I have worked for the same small civil structural consulting firm since graduating college five years ago. I have been contemplating whether or not to try and interview with other companies in a similar field to get more growth and experience. My question is how long should I stick with my current company and have I been here too long already? I do enjoy parts of my job and my company but I know the pay and benefits would be better with a larger company.*

So there's some very interesting components of Bradley's question here. First of all, the thing that really jumps out at me is the last sentence - "but I know the pay and benefits would be better with a larger company." First of all, that's an assumption. You don't know for a fact that that's going to be true so I would caution you about making assumptions like that.

Secondly, it leads me to believe that the most important thing for you is pay and benefits because you say, "I do enjoy my job now but I know the pay and benefits will be better elsewhere." Alright, so that's the second thing that I'll caution you about is only thinking about the pay and benefits and making a move for strictly that.

This is the question that you should be asking yourself Bradley, in my opinion, in response to your question, "Will my current job help me to reach my goals in an acceptable amount of time for me?" If you have goals in your career Bradley, which I hope you do, then you need to think about what vehicle is going to get you to those goals faster; the job you're in or a job at a larger company? Because if the answer is the job you're in then one scenario may be to ask them for more money and stay there if money is another issue for you. I think that that's something you really need to think about and you really need to consider.

And the other question is, the follow up question is how can you measure that? If the company you're in now is going to help you achieve your goals in an acceptable amount of timeframe for you, how can you measure that? So in a year from now or six months from now is there a measurement that you can look at, whether it's your pay, whether it's a bonus, whether it's responsibilities, whether it's the number of client meetings you're allowed to go on. If you can come up with something that will help you to make this decision even better because in six months from now if you don't see progress then the alternative of another company looks better, but you're not weighing it just off of the idea that another company might be better, you have some serious statistics or measurements that you can go off of.

The other thing that I would also say is will the new company allow you to reach your goals in a certain amount of time? How do you figure that out? If you're just going to say that a larger company's going to be better, you have to do some investigation. What are those companies? Do you know anyone there? Can you talk to someone there? Is that going to help you get to your goals?

Alright Bradley. So I hope that's helpful for you. Thank you for submitting your question. Oh and one other thing I'll add to Bradley - there's a blog post on the website right now that might be very helpful for you about not just going for a higher salary. You can find the blog post at engineeringcareercoach.com/highersalary, all lower case letters, highersalary.

Next question, from Vicky in Canada. *I work in the power distribution industry and all the various locally owned distribution companies are very closely connected, where everyone knows everyone. My challenge is how to quit my current job and move to another one in the same industry without burning my bridges/relations with current managers/colleagues as I will still be coming across my colleagues in one way or another when I transition into my new company. In addition, as soon as I throw an application to another company there will be talks amongst the managers of my future company and my current company and thus friction between us.*

So my first question to you, which I'm not going to be able to get the answer to unfortunately, is what is you reason for leaving? And what I would say is to be extremely transparent about that and open about that with your existing company and prospective employers. So explain to your prospective employers that, "I'm leaving this company because they're not giving me the responsibilities that they said they would and I'm capable of much, much more so I'm becoming stagnant there and I'm not growing." That's a great reason to leave or, "I have very high goals for myself and what I want to accomplish and I don't believe that I can achieve these goals in this company."

So I think that these are questions that you have to ask yourself before you get prepped for this whole interview process. What can I tell them? What makes sense? What's my real reason for leaving? And if you're open and transparent about it I think that's going to be very helpful.

The other thing I would do if I was you is I would ask the prospective employers for confidentiality. Say, "Listen, I know this is a tight industry, I'd appreciate it if you did not go to my existing employer unless you want specific references, which I can give you, but I have a very good reason for leaving, which is....and I'd like to keep this whole process between us at this point." I don't see anything wrong with asking that question as long as you can provide them with references because they might say, "Well what are you trying to cover up?" "I'm not trying to cover up anything. I'll give you three or four references of people that work there but I just don't want the word to get out there."

I think at the end of the day, Vicky, if you show an employer that you're valuable, you can fill a need for them and you have value, they're going to hire you. They're really not going to care at the end of the day about where you're coming from or whatever the case may be. I don't know that industry specifically but what HR managers and recruiters have always told me is that if you have the value and you show people that you have value they're going to hire you or they're going to want you if it fits

their needs and it sounds like you have some potential value to offer to them. So thank you so much Vicky for submitting your question.

Okay, the next two questions, four and five, come from Calvin. So let me take question four. **When you were starting out as a young engineer, what was it that led you to your career now - job skills, mentors, luck, other opportunities, training in an area/skill, etc?**

Well first of all, I don't believe really in luck when it comes to development of your career or personal development. I think that everything that you become is because of what you put into it, your efforts and training yourself, reading, taking training videos, networking, contacts. So that definitely wasn't a part of it.

For me it was really I found my passion. I found that I really loved training and helping engineers so I wanted to follow it. So I spent a long time, ten years or so, figuring that out, getting training, understanding my goals and when I saw other people grow from what I was able to help them with, I knew right there that that's what I had to do and I took that path.

And what you can do, Calvin, if you want to learn a little bit more about me and some of the things I learned on that journey, you can go to a blog post that I wrote on my birthday a few years ago at engineeringcareercoach.com/birthday, and that's all lowercase, /birthday.

Question five, also from Calvin. **How would an engineer stay competitive in the future job market?**

Great question. So you always want to be competitive right. You never know what's going to happen in your career. You always want to be able to provide the most value to your employer, to your clients, whether you're a sole proprietor or you work for a company. So there's two sides of it. There's the technical side and the non-technical side.

In the technical side you want to make sure that you are up to date on the latest technical trends, software, calculations, all those types of things in your industry, you want to be up to date on it. So you do that by reading trade magazines, going to conferences, talking to other people in the industry. You want to be doing that at all times. I mean if you're a younger engineer and you're working in a company and they only have a very old version of autoCAD, take a course on the newest version like the newest 3D version or take a course on something that's going to increase your value even though they don't have it there.

So again that's what I was saying before - I don't believe in luck. You can't say, "Well I don't know civil 3D because my company doesn't use it because I work for a small two person company." A large company is not going to want to hear that. A large company is going to want to hear, "Well I

work for this smaller company. They didn't have civil 3D but I went out on my own and I learned it. I took a course. I read a book on it." That's what's going to keep you competitive in the market.

And then of course as I always preach about is your non-technical skills. Do whatever you can. And those of you out there that are *Institute for Engineering Career Development* members, you work on this stuff all the time through our network, through our webinars, through our calls but you have to keep those soft skills up there. You have to be able to speak to people. You have to be able to network and get contacts, build relationships. You have to be able to understand how valuable your time is and be productive and be organized.

If you put this together with your technical skills and being up to date in the technical side of the industry, you will always be competitive in the market. I don't care what age you are, I don't care what location you're in you will always be wanted. One of our IECD members just told me in a coaching session recently that - we helped him set up his LinkedIn profile - he got contacted by a very up and coming company in his area just because they found his profile and they loved it and they loved how it was written up and his talent that was shown on there. He had lunch with them and he's possibly going to be able to go through the process with them and land a job with them. So you've got to stay competitive. Great question Calvin.

Question number six comes from Stephen in Ontario, Canada. *Hey Anthony, I'm from Windsor, Ontario and I have about a million questions regarding where I can go with my future career, be it in engineering related or otherwise. Some background - I'm twenty-two and I've just recently completed my second year of mechanical engineering school. This Summer I've been interning at one of the big three automotive companies in the area and already I can tell that the corporate environment isn't the place for me. What I'd like to do is hopefully start my own firm at my goal age of twenty-eight years old. The only problem is that I am clueless as to how to go about prospecting the market to determine if the services I plan on offering are even in demand.*

So very interesting question. Thank you for that Stephen and a couple things about the question there. First of all, you are making a little bit of an assumption saying that the corporate world's not for you based on just a small sample of an internship. So I would just be careful with that. It doesn't mean that it's not going to come true.

Secondly, you talked about starting your own firm at your goal age of twenty-eight years old and I love that because you have a very specific goal and you have a very specific timeline. That's going to allow you to really focus on that goal and put together the steps of what you need to do to achieve it and hopefully I'm going to be able to give you some of those steps right now.

The first thing that I want to tell you right off the bat is I did a podcast recently and you can listen to it by going to engineeringcareercoach.com/matteit, matteit. He's an EIT, a young engineer in Southern California who has started his own consulting company and he gives kind of all the ins and outs on that show. So hopefully Stephen that will be helpful for you.

And then the other thing that I would tell you is that you have to do your market research when it comes to understanding if it's in demand. You have to go online. You have to find other companies that are selling it, the same services. Are they successful? And if they are, how can you do it better?

Because if there's a lot of companies out there that's going to tell you, number one that it's in demand, which is a good thing but then it could be to the point where is the market saturated? So if you want to come into the market where there's a lot of people that offer it then you need to have some kind of value proposition. You need to be able to say, "I do this better. I do it quicker. I have a new technology that I know that's going to give me a distinct advantage."

And one of our speakers at the IECD meet-up - coming up in San Diego, iecdfallmeetup.com - he uses a very specific technology - if you go to the speakers page, his name is AJ Whittaker, you can scroll down and read about him. But he uses a specific technology that I want to talk to him about at the event because he started a small company and I believe that that technology helps to differentiate him. So maybe you'll find a really small niche like that.

That's the thing when you start a business - you can either start a business when there's not a lot of competition and you can become that niche, go-to person, which is a little risky because there's probably not a lot of business out there so you've got to really do well with it or you go to a saturated market and you stand out from the rest.

But it's all going to come down to your market research Stephen and listen to that podcast with Matt. I think you'll get a lot out of that.

The next question, number seven, is also from Stephen in Ontario. *Furthermore I'd like to know the best way to go about getting clients. Is simply networking enough? I've been talking to as many people as I can at my current job but it doesn't seem like that is opening up many doors in terms of client prospects. Any information that you have that could help me to put myself in the best position possible six years from now, prior to starting out on my own venture would be welcome.*

Alright Stephen. So again another great question. I'll give you some tips here. First of all, there's a great organization called *Toastmasters International*. While it's geared towards public speaking it will really help you to get to speak to people better and you're going to need to start to build a lot of

relationships for your business. So Toastmasters I believe is toastmasters.org. You should check that out.

Also you should be using LinkedIn. You should be building up your profile on LinkedIn. In the show notes for this show I will include the link to a post I wrote for engineering.com about how to create a LinkedIn profile. That might be helpful for you.

There's some books that you can read on networking. One that comes to mind or two that come to mind is **Never Eat Alone** by **Keith Ferrazzi** and **How To Win Friends And Influence People** by **Dale Carnegie**.

The bottom line is it all comes down to people when you're trying to build a business Stephen. And the more you can relate to them - you have a polished LinkedIn profile, you're doing some online networking, you read some of these books now you have the skills to go out there and speak to people one on one. You have to position yourself as valuable and you have to be able to talk to people and that's how you're going to prospect new business. It all comes down to people.

You have to be good at what you do of course because no-one wants to hire you if you're not. But then if people are comfortable with you, they know you, you can respond to them quickly, that's going to be business development. That's how you're going to get business. Thank you for those questions Stephen.

Alright, next question, number eight is from Roshan in India. **What are the real things we must learn in order to get placed in a core electronics company?**

Now this is a very generic, it's not generic it's actually a very specific question that can be kind of generically applied. That's why I want to answer this question. What do you need to know in order to get a company in any industry? You have to know the industry inside and out and what that company brings to the table, maybe how they're different, maybe how they're successful.

Use LinkedIn. Again, I keep saying LinkedIn. Go to LinkedIn. Go to the companies tab. Type in the company's name. Read everything about them. Look at some of the profiles of the people that are on LinkedIn, which that company tab gives you. These are things you have to do if you want to have any chance of getting a job with a company. You have to know them inside and out. You have to know the industry. You have to know why they're positioned where they are and why they're better than everybody else or why they could be. And then you can start to think about how you can help them get there.

The other thing that you have to understand Roshan is if you want to work for a core electronics company you better know what their need is. Do they have a need for an engineer that needs to be

able to use a certain software program? Because if they do you better learn that and then go to them and tell them that you have those skills. Alright, so it's kind of twofold. You have to know the company Roshan and then you have to know what they need and hopefully you can provide that to them.

Question number nine - this comes from David in Australia. ***To work as an engineer I have no issue with developing technical skills but when I flip to my social skills I am challenged. In other words the more I explore IQ the less I gain EQ (which I believe is emotional quotient) in present time. How am I to balance the use of IQ and EQ at the same time?***

So the way you do this is - it sounds like you're technically sound - so a couple of recommendations I can give you is be social. Join associations and here's the trick though - don't just join them, don't just go to events because if you're not social you're not going to talk, join associations and take a leadership position in that association. That is going to force you to speak. That's going to force you to connecting with people. That's going to force you to do things that you're uncomfortable with emotionally and that's going to help you to kind of get that balance you're looking for there.

There is also a lot of books out there on emotional intelligence that you can read, that will help you on this topic. It's becoming a very interesting topic that's talked about a lot more and I think it's something that we're all going to have to get more involved with as we get further on into our careers. Daniel Goldman is really a well-known author on emotional intelligence. So if you go to Amazon, put him in there, you'll find a couple of different books he has on EQ that will really help you.

And the other resource that I have for you Roshan is we actually had a guest blogger, Pat Sweet who's an IECD member and he has a great blog. He did a guest post on my site and it's at engineeringcareercoach.com/ei and it's all about emotional brilliance as an engineer, what it means, how it can impact you. It's called ***The Emotionally Brilliant Engineer***. So we'll link to that in the show notes here and I also wanted to give you that URL so you can check it out.

Our last question for this show - question number ten. This comes from Prabash in India. ***My question is despite that I'm going to be an engineer next year I don't know how to speak in front of many people and because of this I don't know how to be a good presenter. Can you help me out?***

Sure, I'm going to repeat what I said before about toastmasters.org. Join Toastmasters. I mean I'm not even recommending it, I'm telling you to join it. It will help you tremendously to become a better speaker and presenter and it's very inexpensive.

Practice as much as possible. You have to practice. You can't just expect to go to one meeting or get up in front of the room once and become a better presenter. You have to continue to do it over

and over and that's going to help you get better. Start at home in front of your family, in front of your friends.

The other thing I would say is the same answer I gave to question number nine - join associations and take on leadership roles because you're going to have to get up in front of a room. You've got to force yourself to present if you want to become a better presenter. Anything that you want to get better at, the best way to do it is to do it. I hope that that's helpful for you.

Also what I can tell you Prabash is that on my website at engineeringcareercoach.com if you go and click on guides, there's a very long guide there - and I'll link to it in the show notes - called *Wow The Crowd - Anthony Fasano's Guide To Public Speaking For Engineers*. So check that out. I go through a very comprehensive list of things that you can do and you can get there also by going to engineeringcareercoach.com/engineersspeak. So definitely check those resources out and I hope that that helps you and I'm confident that you'll be able to do it. You just have to do it. Anyone can learn how to speak.

So with that, I've answered the ten questions. I hope that they were helpful for all of our listeners out there. There were some very interesting questions. And what I'm going to do now is I'm going to go to our career changing tip for the day and kind of, we talked about a lot of different things but I'm going to try to sum it up in one real actionable item that you can take and implement in your career and then the next session we'll tackle ten more questions.

Anthony's Career Changing Tip:

Today's career changing tip is a real simple one. If you have something that you're struggling with in your career or your life, I challenge you to find someone that can help you and ask them a question. That's what today's show was all about, asking questions and getting answers. There's hopefully ten engineers out there that I helped today, well hopefully a lot more than that because of all the listeners listening. But they asked a question and they got an answer that hopefully can change their career and change their life and I can't tell you how many engineers and other people and professionals out there, they get stuck on something and they get stuck for months or even years and all they have to do is find someone to help and ask a couple of questions.

And I don't want you to go through your career being stagnant or missing the boat because you didn't get to ask a question or you didn't ask the right question. Please, it's a simple career changing tip but please ask a question today of someone that can help you get closer to achieving your goals.

Anthony's Closing Remarks:

With that, I thank you as always for listening. Please take advantage of all the resources on our website at engineeringcareercoach.com and I look forward to catching you on the next session, where I'll answer ten more questions from ten different engineers. Have a good one.

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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