



The ENGINEERING CAREER COACH PODCAST SESSION #33

How To Turn Your Biggest Challenge In Your Engineering Career Into Your Biggest Opportunity

Show notes at: engineeringcareercoach.com/session33

Anthony's Upfront Intro: In today's episode I'm going to help a younger engineer in Florida take her biggest challenge and turn it into her biggest opportunity. 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 and this is the podcast for engineers who want to create extraordinary careers and lives. That's right - extraordinary careers and lives. And today I have an awesome show for you. I'll be working with a young engineer from Florida and she thinks she's got such a big challenge and such a big problem in her career and I end up helping her turn it into a huge opportunity and probably a problem that most of you out there would want to have yourselves.

So before I jump into the show, and I'm going to do that momentarily, I want to just make a few announcements. First of all I'm going to be putting on an event in Washington DC at the end of April, April 30th, May 1st, May 2nd called *The Engineering Career Success Summit*. It is going to be the only conference for engineers that's dedicated a hundred percent to your personal and professional development, however I need help. We're trying to fund this through Kickstarter because we're trying to bring in some huge speakers, some big headline speakers and we're trying to get a lot of engineers together from all different experience levels to help each other grow.

So please take a look at the Kickstarter campaign. You won't even believe the price of the tickets if you fund this project through Kickstarter. Visit engineeringevent.com to check it out. We have about thirty days to fund the project and I really need your help and trust me you will not be disappointed when you see the prices on the tickets that we're giving out. There's only a limited number of tickets on this Kickstarter campaign but you can get one today if you go there and do that, and I hope you will.

And next, I want to just talk very briefly about the sponsor for today. I always get questions from engineers about, "Should I get a master's degree in engineering management or a master's degree in business?" It's a question I always get and you know a lot of times the question I put it right back to

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the engineer, "What are your goals? What do you want to accomplish?" So I've done a lot of research in the whole master's of engineering management and I found the Purdue University MEM Program. I found it through one of our meet-ups. They sponsored it. Melanie from Purdue came down. I got to see her presentation and I was really, really interested in what they're doing so I took a deeper look into their program and it's a phenomenal program. It allows you to earn a master's degree that's specifically designed to advance your career in industry, that has on campus or online study options. It's a phenomenal program. It's ranked really high. I really want to urge you to check it out.

If you want to learn more about the Purdue MEM Program simply call 1 877 598 4233 or email promasters@purdue.edu. Again, that's promasters@purdue.edu. They're processing applications daily and I'm telling you, it's a top of the line program. And one of the things that I'm trying to do and coordinate with them is to bring a couple of students onto the podcast in the coming months. I've had directors of MEM programs on but I've never had actually looked at the student's side of it and that's something that I want to do. I want to ask them how they see it applying to them in their career because these are students that are working and doing the engineering management program. So I'm working on that for you. But again, thanks to Purdue for sponsoring. They're doing a great job there and I hope that you'll check that out.

So now what I'd like to do before we get into the main segment of the show, I'm going to give you a quote that relates to today's show and is focused around opportunity. And the quote comes to us from none other than Kobe Bryant, **"Everything negative - pressure, challenges - are all opportunities for me to rise."** It's a very simple quote but I love it because it's so true. Whenever someone brings a challenge to me I always ask them to look for the opportunity and that's what I'm going to do with my guest here today. So let's get into it right now.

Coaching Segment:

Anthony: Alright, so now it's time for our main segment of the show and today I have with me here Kathy from Florida. She is a Civil Engineer in the field of water, wastewater. She graduated with an undergraduate degree in 2003. And I'm going to let Kathy kind of explain a little bit of her challenge to me here, that she sent into me and then we'll start from there. Kathy, how are you tonight?

Kathy: I'm doing quite well, thank you.

Anthony: Good. So Kathy, tell me about your challenge in your career that you're facing right now.

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Kathy: Okay. So here's the skinny. Yes, I'm an educated engineer and all that jazz. I even had a couple of years under my belt when I actually married a member of the Coastguard, also known as Military Officer. So with that comes the challenge of every three to four years having to relocate because of his job. I already lost one job for that particular thing, about three or four years ago back in Maryland. And it took me about a year and a few interviews - I would say maybe three or four very far in between - to actually be able to land a nice, steady job.

Now next Summer I am going to be moving again and the prospect of job interviews is kind of looming over me, particularly that pink elephant in the room about me being a military spouse. When I was doing my interviews for the last time that I got relocated that was always like something like a big boulder that I never mentioned in my interviews because I feared that it marked me as someone not reliable or someone that you shouldn't invest your time in because you'll just be gone in three years.

So I never did but I'm wondering if I should even breach the subject if I, when I get into future interviews if for whatever reason I cannot keep my current job. And if I should breach the subject, how do I approach it? That's basically my question. Sorry if I dragged it too long.

Anthony: No, no, no, no, that's perfect and just to summarize it for myself so that I understand. So basically, you married a Military Officer and you have to relocate every three to four years and every time that happens obviously you have to go through a process of getting a new job, potentially at a new company. I guess there's some possibilities of potentially being able to transfer within a company but even at that it's still like a new job because you're still going to a totally new office, totally new location, totally new people. And you know I guess part of your challenge is that because of this anytime you go for a job interview or you try to go through the transition it poses a big challenge, not just to getting the job but because if people think you're not going to be very stable there that would pose a challenge for them.

Okay, so this is a great thing for us to talk about tonight. I'm sure a lot of you out there are listening have a similar situation, where you have a certain circumstance or something that you've chosen to do. I mean obviously Kathy's chosen to get married to her husband and this is something that came along with it. And when you make a choice like that obviously there's consequences potentially that go with it and now Kathy has to try to deal with these consequences in the best way possible. And I'm sure many of you have consequences out there that you might have to deal with.

I'll just give you one example. Maybe I'll use my own example. I have three kids that are very young. So I decided to have kids and I knew obviously I was going to do that but also there's consequences for career and I'm not saying it's a negative thing but what I'm saying is I had to understand that I was going to have kids now I had to have a different kind of balance in my life. So maybe I don't work as

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much or maybe my business or my career isn't going as fast as I want it to so I had to learn how to adjust that and I guess use that to my advantage.

So Kathy, before we start and talk about the interview part of it because I can certainly, I think, help you out with that, let's think about this entire situation for a minute, of the prospect of relocating every three to four years. What would you say, what's the opportunity in that situation for you?

Kathy: I would say that I can reinvent myself every three to four years. I basically, every time I go to a new location I have a better handle about what I like and what I don't like in a position, in a company, in my career for my 'next life'. I'd say that's about the best thing I can come up with.

Anthony: That is an excellent point because I talk to a lot of engineers who end up working at a company for a very long time and they don't even like what they're doing anymore but they're too afraid to make a change. And in your situation you have no choice.

Kathy: Yeah.

Anthony: So I do think that that's a big, big opportunity, a big positive point to take out of it. The other question I would ask you is when you're working somewhere okay, like you know right now that next Summer you're leaving.

Kathy: Uh-huh.

Anthony: So what goes through your mind on a regular basis because of that, that maybe other people don't have to think about or do?

Kathy: At work or in daily life? Because that's a big, looming prospect.

Anthony: Well no I mean like at work, like with regards to your career and your career development. How does that affect....

Kathy: My work.

Anthony:what you decide to develop in yourself as far as training or your work or your projects. How does it affect everything that you think about?

Kathy: Well in terms of training it actually intensifies whatever training I'm willing to take on because I can transfer anywhere in the States and any other location but my brain is staying with me.

Anthony: Right, okay good.



Kathy: That training stays with me. On another aspect, in my project work it actually drives me to be a little more detailed as far as documentation so if, God forbid, I do end up going to a different job and I cannot continue my projects, I have all my notes and all my different approaches well documented so that if I have to pass the baton to another engineer I can explain clearly and they can go back and reference all my documents.

Anthony: Okay, let's just recap this. So basically you get to reinvent yourself every three to four years. You intensify your training so you probably learn quicker and absorb more and you are more detailed on your projects because you know that you may not be around to finish those projects. So there's probably hundreds of engineers listening right now saying, "Man, I have to start relocating every three to four years."

Kathy: Oh gosh, don't!

Anthony: Yeah, so I'm kidding but honestly for all of you out there listening, I mean when you have a situation you always have to try to ask those questions like where's the opportunities, how can I leverage this situation, how can I make it work the best for me? And we've only just started this conversation but I wanted to get that right off the bat so that I understand some of the positives and some of the opportunities here for Kathy that we can try to leverage now for the rest of the conversation here.

So let's get into the interview part of it. Tell me a little bit about the last time you did this. You said you relocated, I guess, from Maryland to Florida. You said you had three or four interviews. How did that process go? I mean was there any possibility of staying with the same company or where you definitely going to a different company? Tell me about the process.

Kathy: I definitely had to go to a different company, given they had no offices in Florida. To make the situation worse it was the bottom of the recession so that's when everybody was actually laying off people instead of hiring. So that definitely affected the job search. The couple of jobs that I was able to go in where mostly government jobs and I basically just got them online. I didn't know anybody here. I didn't exactly know how to start networking. At the time I didn't even know the power of professional associations. Let's just put it that way.

So all I did was just surf on the internet on Indeed and heaven knows how many other sites, waiting for something to come up and just apply to that. Once I got to the job interview I would try, well I'd just answer the questions, try to give myself some answers so I could answer appropriately or as far as I could and that's about it. Was there something I missed?

Anthony: Alright, and you ended up, obviously you ended up getting something. Is the job that you have, is it for a private engineering company?

Kathy: Yes.

Anthony: And do you know where you're going to be moving to roughly?

Kathy: I wish!

Anthony: Oh okay.

Kathy: I wish. They tell us March next year.

Anthony: Okay, and that gives you how much time before you move then? A couple months? I mean....

Kathy: Four months.

Anthony: Okay. Does the company that you work for now, are they big? Are they nationwide or no?

Kathy: Yes.

Anthony: Okay.

Kathy: They are. The thing is that they don't have my department at every single office. So the possibility of me not being able to stay with them is kind of real. I would, yeah....

Anthony: Okay. It's pretty real, okay. First, before we get to the interview let's talk about the transition process. Are you on LinkedIn?

Kathy: Yes.

Anthony: Okay. Are you active?

Kathy: I go on every, I don't know, three or four days. I've got a bunch of notifications in there for people who message me and such.

Anthony: Okay, that's good. I think that that could be a real advantage for you, especially having to relocate every so often. Building up that network online is always a good thing. You obviously don't

know where you're going to end up yet but regardless, when you're on LinkedIn you obviously can build a network that's in different locations, which is a big positive. What kind of training have you taken in the last three or four years that is going to be helpful for you in the interview process?

Kathy: I got my PE this year.

Anthony: Okay.

Kathy: How's that?

Anthony: Well that's the best one I think.

Kathy: That's the biggest one. I also got some project management training because I'm trying to become project manager within my company and of course, yes there are some tools that are particular to my company but there are also some other that are more people management, how you basically manage a team and make sure that you don't get any losses or anything like that.

Anthony: Okay, excellent. So let's go over this now. So you find out where you're going let's say and let's say you've identified, let's say that you can't work at your company now, just to take kind of that 'worst case scenario'. So you find some companies in this new location and you reach out to them and you get an interview. Now you go in to the interview.

The first thing I can tell you is I definitely would not say anything about the idea of being a military spouse. I don't think that that really can help you in anyway nor do I think you should be obligated to say that anyway. I mean that's probably more than they would ask for. However, if they ask why you want to come there, why you're leaving Florida, you could always say, "My husband's being relocated for business," which is fine.

And then as far as the interview itself, what I would do honestly is I would pretty much lean on everything that you've told me so far, which is basically you are flexible - and obviously you've had to relocate before so you're flexible, you're able to do it - you're very detailed in your project management, you have done a lot of training, you're an avid learner, you've done a lot of training, you've got your PE license, you've got project management training. I mean all those things, when you put all those things together I mean those are all really big positives. You're involved, you told me, in the AWWA, I believe.

Kathy: Uh-huh.

Anthony: As a board officer. So you've got a whole bunch of positives. So basically what you're doing is, and I think one approach that I would take if I were you, for the rest of your career as long as

you have to deal with these relocations is you're building a resume that is just making it easier and easier for you every time you relocate.

So last time you left Maryland you said, "Oh I had to really get a lot of job interviews and look for different jobs and it was stressful." Now this time I feel like, based on everything you've told me, it's going to be easier for you because obviously you've got more credentials to stand on, you've got more experience.

Kathy: Yes.

Anthony: Now the only reason that you might bring up the military spouse is if a company says, Listen, we like you a lot. We're a little bit nervous because we've noticed that you've changed jobs a couple times. Could you explain that to us?" And then you could say, "Well listen, I want to be honest with you, my husband's in the military so we've been relocated a few times, however having to relocate has really strengthened me because of (all these reasons) and it's made me really the engineer that I am and it's going to help me be able to help you for (xyz) reasons."

Kathy: Oh, so kind of like the talk of the weakness and how you spin it into a positive.

Anthony: Exactly. You always want to try to take whatever you think is a weakness or a challenge and spin it into how it can benefit ideally in this case the employer.

Kathy: Yup.

Anthony: You can say you know, "Listen, I've had to relocate twice in the last eight years but I could tell you what, because of that relocation whenever I train it's intense. I've got my PE license. I've gotten project management training. I've had to be extremely flexible and meet and learn with new people, with new clients. I've had to increase my networking skills and abilities. So basically in the last eight years I've probably learned twice as fast as most engineers that are my age and now I have all of those abilities that I can bring to the table for you and utilize them."

Kathy: Wow.

Anthony: What do you think about that?

Kathy: That is sweet. I need to write it down.

Anthony: That's alright, you can re-listen to the podcast.

Kathy: Oh I will, definitely.

Anthony: So that's definitely all a positive. And honestly, if I'm looking at it from the other perspective, of the employer because you know I've hired people before - when I hire people, especially younger engineers I never would think about them leaving or when they were leaving. I really wouldn't even care about that. What I would think about is what are they going to bring to the table and how they can help me like tomorrow when they start.

So part of your mindset and approach too should not be going in there like, "Oh man, they're going to ask me about my military spouse. They're going to think I'm going to relocate." My approach would be, "Listen, I've got all these skills now, I'm going to tell them how I can help them." And when you take that approach they're going to be like, "Wow, you know Kathy is like, she's killing it the last four years," and they're not going to even think about, they won't even care if you leave in three years, they're just going to care about what you can do for them in the next three years.

Kathy: Yeah, that's a good way to look at it.

Anthony: The world we live in is basically like, "What can you do for me right now? Like if you don't do something in the next ten seconds I'm not going to care about it anymore." So I think that that's got to be your focus too, going into it, is that, "I can walk in this door tomorrow and help you a lot!"

Kathy: That's good. That is very good sir.

Anthony: I hope that this can shift your mindset a little bit and make you understand that I think what you've gone through is actually puts you way ahead of a lot of engineers at your age and you can use that to your advantage. And really engineers out there listening to this, there's probably a lot of you out there that have challenges too and you have to think, hopefully along the same thinking patterns that I'm trying to speak about here with Kathy in that, "Where's the opportunity here?"

If you can't find an opportunity after looking at it for a really long time, the first thing you should do is apply to come on the podcast, number one. But the second thing you can do is ask yourself the next question, which is you know, "How can I learn and grow from this situation?" And if you do that, you're always going to be looking for positives, you're always going to be taking learning situations out of whatever situation you're going through and then be able to apply them. And so hopefully Kathy's situation here has helped everyone out there to learn that everything is an opportunity and everything you can leverage - and you always have to think about how you can leverage it.

And the other point here that I'll kind of emphasize here, which is important, is the way to be successful as an engineer, the way to reach your goals is to always be able to bring a ton of value to other people, meaning employers, clients, colleagues, professional associations, really anyone that you

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come into contact with. If you can bring them value then you're always going to win. And when I say win I mean achieve your own goals because I mean to me that's what winning is.

So hope that was helpful for Kathy. Hope that was helpful for everyone listening. Kathy, any other questions that you have, anything else you want to bounce off of me here?

Kathy: Well at this particular time that was the big boulder. That was the really big boulder.

Anthony: Yeah. I mean the one thing I would say that I would focus on too if I were you right now is LinkedIn, like we talked about briefly, because that's basically a way for you to network with people all over the country and for you, you don't know where you're going to be so being able to make contacts in some of the different locations would be helpful for you.

And I know that you don't know where you're going but maybe your husband has some cities in mind or he knows that there's certain locations where his bases are, whatever the case may be and if that is the case then I would definitely spend some time on LinkedIn, looking at companies and connecting with people in those regions at least.

Kathy: Whoa, that'd be good to know if I did. I guess the benefit of the particular branch of the military that he is, The Coastguard, is that we usually get sent to major cities. That's you know the biggest one. So when we looked at the possible locations, it's not just one of two, it's about a dozen if not two dozen. But we're talking major cities here. We're talking New York City, Seattle, San Diego, San Francisco, Portland, Miami - I wish. There's Virginia Beach. I think there was Houston. There was New Orleans.

Anthony: Well listen, here's the key. This is what I would do if I were you. I would make a list of all those cities and even if you connected with one person a week in each city, in ten weeks from now that's ten connections in every one of those cities. And when you find out what the city is you never know who those connections will know and how you can reach out to them further. And I would definitely try to focus in one some of the larger companies potentially because that will give you more flexibility in the future if you build up a good network with these larger companies with the ability to transfer.

Kathy: Okay. That'll be great.

Anthony: So I would focus on that. So Kathy I hope that's helpful for you. I hope everyone out there has learned a lesson here in that there is really no such thing as bad situations or challenges, it's just a matter of how you look at them. It's your perspective only. And some people out there might have the same situation as Kathy but maybe they didn't apply for the podcast because they saw it as an opportunity or a benefit for them. So it's all perspective.

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So Kathy I hope you enjoyed this and I hope that, I hope everything works out well and I'll definitely keep in touch with you so we can find out how you ended up.

Kathy: Sure, that'll be no problem.

Anthony: Alright?

Kathy: Thank you.

Anthony: Alright, if anyone wants to catch the show notes for this show you can go to engineeringcareercoach.com/session33 and I'll just kind of recap our conversation and put some links to anything that I might have referenced throughout the show that might be helpful, like LinkedIn for example. So you can find them in the show notes.

Take Action Today Segment:

Anthony: I hope you enjoyed the coaching segment of the show today. I really did. I thought Kathy had a lot of really good energy and hopefully I'm going to help her channel that in the right direction. So what I'd like to do now for the *Take Action Today* segment of the show - alright, this show is about action, that's why I do the podcast. It's not about just putting your ear buds in, listening to this for half an hour and then going on your merry way, burying yourself in your projects and clients and other things.

So what I want you to do today is think about one of your biggest challenges right now, one of the biggest 'problems' you're facing in your career, in your life, however you want to approach it. And I want you to ask yourself, "Where is the opportunity in this situation for me? How can I take what I'm perceiving as a challenge and spin it around and leverage it into a strong opportunity," because I know you can. You can do it, just like Kathy did it. She had no idea coming into that call what she was going to leave with but she did.

So please, this could be one of the most important things you ever do in your career. Take a sheet of paper and write it down and then brainstorm by just scribbling words around it of all the positives and all the benefits you can take from it.



Anthony's Closing Remarks:

So with that, I want to thank you for spending some time here with me today. Please tune in next week for *The Engineering Career Coach Podcast*. And please take a look at engineeringevent.com and check out the event that I'm throwing down in DC for engineers. It's not for engineers that are not motivated. If you don't want to advance your career rapidly it's not for you, but if you do check it out because the ticket prices are awesome and I would like to meet you, talk with you, network with you and help you to create an extraordinary engineering career. Until next time, I hope you continue to engineer your own success.

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