



The ENGINEERING CAREER COACH PODCAST SESSION #45

TECC 45 The Engineering Career Coach Podcast – How to Find or Become a Mentor in Your Engineering Career – EYOS Part 3 of 7

Show notes at: engineeringcareercoach.com/mentoring

Anthony's Upfront Intro: In this episode I'm going to give you the steps that you can use to find the mentor in your engineering career or maybe even more importantly to become one. 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.

Welcome to the show today. This is the show for engineers that want to create extraordinary careers and lives. Today's topic is mentoring, which is something that way too many engineers don't take the time to look for the right mentor, and without doing that, it can really, really, really have a negative effect on your engineering career. And we're going to dive into both sides of mentorship today. I'm going to give you the steps to find the mentor regardless of what experience level you're at. And I'm also going to give you the steps for becoming a mentor which, in some ways I believe, is more important than actually finding a mentor and I'll explain why as we dive into the show.

And then at the end of the show, I'll get into my Take Action Today segment and I'll give you one piece of advice from this show that you could implement immediately as soon as you hit the stop button on this podcast and get going with it.

This is the third part in a seven-part Engineer Your Own Success series of podcasts. We're on detailing each of the seven key elements from my book Engineer Your Own Success, the seven key elements to creating an extraordinary engineering career. The book was just republished, updated and expanded edition by Wiley Press in December. You can go on Amazon and check it out. I'm thankful for those of you that have left reviews. They've been very positive and I appreciate that.

The first two shows in this podcast series, you can find at engineeringcareercoach.com. Just click on Podcast: Session 41, we covered goals; 43, we covered credentials. And today, we'll cover mentoring. And the show notes for this show will be found at engineeringcareercoach.com/mentoring.

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Before we dive into the main segment of the show and start talking about mentoring, I want to just briefly mention our sponsor. The sponsor for today's show is Purdue University's Master of Engineering Management Program. This program is specifically designed to give you a master's degree that will help you advance your career in the industry with on-campus or online study options available. If you're out there looking maybe at the business side of engineering and you're confident that you're going to stay in engineering, then this is the perfect program for you. I met the people from the program. They sponsored some of my events in the past and they will help you to understand if this is the right program for you. So to get more information, simply call 1-877-598-4233 or email promasters@purdue.edu. Applications are being processed daily.

And one last announcement, I'm happy to announce that just starting about a week ago, I put up a tab on *The Engineering Career Coach* website, engineeringcareercoach.com called Free Webinars and at least once a month for this year and maybe beyond, I'll be doing one free webinar a month. At this point in time, I'll be rotating between my Engineer Your Own Success webinar and my resume and interview webinar for engineers. They'll be monthly. They'll be interactive. You can go there right now. You can register and I'll be on the call with you for an hour or so on those webinars and you can ask any questions about your resumes, about communication, networking. Again, it's a way for me to help to inspire you to take action in your career this year. So please, check that resource out.

With that, let me give you a quote that will carry us right into the main segment of the show. "Mentoring is a brain to pick, an ear to listen, and a push in the right direction," and that's from John Crosby. Let me say that one more time, "Mentoring is a brain to pick, an ear to listen, and a push in the right direction."

The first thing I want to do as we get into this discussion on mentoring is I wanted to find what I believe a mentor to be and everything in this podcast today is pretty much a summary of Chapter 5 in my book, *Engineer Your Own Success*. And I'm going to read the definition actually out of page 61 of the book, my definition, which goes as follows: I would define a mentor as a person who helps develop your professional life by assisting you in defining, pursuing and achieving your goals and ultimately creating a successful and enjoyable career. I really like that definition.

However, there's one word in there that is an important word that has to be further thought about and that is the word *Success*. I say that a mentor helps you to achieve your goals and ultimately create a successful and enjoyable career, but you have to understand what the word *Successful* means to you. And I've spoken about that before. I've blogged about it. It's in my book. In my book, I have a whole section where you actually write your success definition and you have to know that. Because if you don't know what *Success* is, then how can anyone help you to find it?

And essentially, big picture, what a mentor is going to do is help you realize your definition of

success. So what I'm going to cover today for you is I'm going to give you four points or four steps you can take to actually find the right mentor for you, the perfect mentor for you. And then I'm also going to give you five steps for becoming a great mentor. And a lot of people think only about finding a mentor and not becoming one. I think that that's not the best approach.

So let's jump right into finding a mentor.

1. You have to be absolutely clear on your goals before you look for a mentor.

If you're not clear on your goals, you won't be able to pick the right mentor. And I'll explain why as I go through the next few steps. So you have to be focused on your goals. And those of you who aren't aware, I recently put out a goal setting course specifically for engineers, which is at engineeryourgoals.com.

Those of you that are taking the course, I appreciate your feedback. It's been excellent so far and I've been enjoying connecting with you in our private Facebook group, which is part of the program. But you have to be super clear, super focused on those goals before you go to the next step to find the right mentor. So let's go on to step number two.

2. So once you're clear on your goals, actually look for a mentor. Where do you look? Many engineering companies have mentoring programs especially if you're in bigger companies. So if you are in a big company, contact your HR Department and find out if they have a mentoring program. And of course, if they do, you can enroll in it. If not, check with your professional associations. I know that some associations, for example, I know the American Society of Civil Engineers has a mentoring program because I've done some webinars for them in the past.

But whatever your engineering association is, contact them or go in their website and do a search for mentoring. They may have a mentoring program in place where they'll hook you up with other members and they can help you in your career and you never would have found that without that association. And if you still can't find the mentor between your company or an association, go online. There's tons of websites like LinkedIn.com where you can go and search for engineers. You could enter engineering groups and put up a post that you're looking for a mentor. I know in my Institute for Engineering Career Development, we have a very close net community in our private online community where if you're an IECD member, you can put something out there within a community and try to find the real specific member or someone that knows a mentor for you, a potentially good mentor for you.

3. Select the mentor. So you're clear on your goals, you're looking in your company or looking in your association, you're looking online, you actually have to make a selection. How do you do

that? Now, let me give you some tips on this.

- The first thing you want to do is you want to make sure that the mentor you select has similar goals as you or has achieved goals that you're striving for. This only makes sense. If my goal is to create a really awesome podcast for engineers, well, ideally what I'd want to do is find someone else whose got really awesome podcast so I can talk to them and I can understand how they did their podcast, how they grew it, and that's what I did. I joined a podcasting mastermind group to help me build this podcast, and we've done over 300,000 downloads now. so I would say it's been helpful getting that mentoring aspect. So that's kind of the first step in the selection process, is to make sure you have similar goals.
- The next step is to ensure that the person you select is in your specific discipline. So, for example, you might say, "My goal is to become a project manager." That's fine. But what is your discipline? Is your discipline in transportation engineering? Because if it is, then you should try to find someone in transportation engineering who's a project manager and not someone who's just a general land development engineer or something in that field you want to hone in. And even better if you're in transportation and you focused on bridges only, then find someone in transportation on bridges who's a project manager. The more specific you get the better.

In my case, with the podcast, I couldn't find someone specific to engineer so I had to branch out of it, but as specific as you can get the better because obviously, they are the ones that can help you because they did it already. Tony Robbins, who I love, is a big proponent of not reinventing the wheel. He always says, "If someone did what you want to do, find who they are and copy them," and it just makes sense.

- The next step in the mentor selection process is think intently about the person and try not to select your supervisor because I know that it's going to be kind of automatic for some of you to think, "Wow, my supervisor is you know where I want to be. Alright. I want to be in his or her position." But the problem with that is that you're so close to that person that they might not really be able to give you kind of unbiased objective or like a clean perspective on yourself. And also, in a lot of cases in the mentoring relationship, which we'll get into momentarily, you really need that confidentiality. You may be upset with your supervisor or you may be upset with your team or your client. But you might not want to share that with your supervisor. And if you hold that back, then you are not getting the most out of that mentoring relationship.
- And the last point here as far as selecting a mentor is, do not settle for less than your

ideal mentor. Because if you do, you are wasting two people's times, your time and the mentor's time. Find the best possible mentor that you can find. Take your time. It's worth waiting the extra six months to find the right person. That's how important it is.

So those are your tips for actually selecting the mentor, and we'll recap everything at the end of this section.

4. The fourth step in finding the right mentor is to get the most out of the mentoring relationship. So this first part of the show, we're talking about actually finding that best possible mentor and getting the best out of the relationship. In order to get the most of the relationship, there are some key things you have to understand.

First of all, a mentoring relationship is like an electronic computer program, an engineering program where what you put in equals what you get out. You can have the best stormwater-modeling program in the world. But as my old boss used to say, "If you put crap in, you'll get crap out." And it's the same thing with the mentoring relationship. If you say you have a mentor, you never talked to them and you never do anything, you're not going to get anything out of it. So that's one key point to remember.

The second aspect of getting the most out of the relationship is to establish guidelines and expectations early on with your mentor. Some of these responsibilities obviously falls on the mentor, not you as a protégée, but also, you should understand going in that you want to have some guidelines and some expectations so that you can measure your success. Because if you can't measure your success, then how are you going to understand if you're actually successful? And I'm hearing some great stuff back from the engineers taking my Engineer Your Goals Course right now and one of whom is actually a PhD student and he's trying to figure out how he can track how well he does as a TA. So we're having some chat in the Facebook group on then. It's a tricky one. But I'm happy for him that he is really taking the time to try to establish these measurements. You have to do the same thing in your mentoring relationship.

The next point to help you get the most out of the relationship is to meet consistently. I can't trust this enough. There's way too many engineers that I know that tell me they have a mentor and then they only meet with their mentor like once every other month or a couple of times a year and that's not really good to help you. You need to meet consistently. I highly recommend monthly at a minimum and I would recommend even more than that for the first few months to get to know the person. Without consistency, nothing changes, nothing improves. So this is not just about mentoring, this is just in your entire life, nothing improves without consistency.

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And then the last point under getting the most out of the mentoring relationship is, establish goals for accountability purposes. So what I mean by that is, if you have a session or you have you're setting these the expectations with your mentor, say, "I want to take the PE exam next April," so my goal between now and the next time we speak is to have the application prepared. This way, if you don't have it prepared, then your mentor can say, "Well, Anthony said you were going to have the application completed wise," and they completed it and they can hold you accountable for that.

So let me recap the first segment, which is finding the best possible mentor for you and maximizing that relationship. There are four steps:

1. Be clear on your goals.
2. Start the process of looking for a mentor by checking with your company, your professional associations or websites online like LinkedIn.
3. Select your mentor. Ensure that it's someone who has similar goals. They're your specific discipline. They're not your supervisor. And ensure that you do not settle for anything less than your ideal mentor.
4. Get the most out of that mentoring relationship by remembering that what you put in is what you get out. Establish your guidelines and expectations early on. Meet consistently, minimum monthly. And if not, more frequently in the beginning. And remember, that could be done by the phone and it does not have to be in person all the time or right off for that matter. And then, establish goals for accountability as part of that fourth step. If you're going to take the PE exam, make sure you tell them you'll have the application done by what date and then get it done and be accountable for that.

So those are some tips for finding a mentor and getting the most out of it of that relationship.

Now, let's kind of flip the coin and go towards becoming a great mentor. And I know some of you might be thinking, "I'm young and I don't really need to listen to this part of the show," but please, stay tuned in here because this is actually a very important aspect of your career and your ability to grow as a person is when you mentor other people.

Remember, you're never too young to be a mentor because there's always someone who's younger than you. You may be a recent graduate. You may have graduated last year. Well, guess what? There's a senior who's getting ready to graduate this year that could probably use your help. So remember that.



So let's go through them and let's walk through five... I have five steps for you on this one on how to become a great mentor.

1. First of all, volunteer as a mentor through your company or through your association. Some of these things will be kind of in the reverse to the beginning of the show. But still, there are some nuggets here that you can take away. Go to your association, go to your company. Maybe go to your company and start a mentoring program. One of our IECD members, after reading my first edition of my book, he started the mentoring program at RPI which is his alma mater. It was a lot of work and he did a great job with it.
2. Select your protégée and make sure it's the right match. And how do you do that? You think about what we talked about from when you find the mentor. You think about what you've achieved, your discipline and all that stuff. Think about it. If you're an electrical engineer who graduated from school a year ago and you still have contact with some of your... maybe your student group like an IEEE student group or something along those lines. Get back in touch with them and say, "Listen, I'm a year out. Is there any engineers that want to talk to, any students that want to talk to one year out?" And when they say, "Yeah," then say, "Okay. Talk to the person. Find out who they are. See if you can help them if that a rematch, and take them on as a mentor."
3. Here's an important one, step three is to discuss confidentiality. I mentioned it a bit earlier but didn't spend enough time on it. Confidentiality is really a key to the mentoring relationship. I know when I coached a lot of engineers one on one, they have to feel safe in the conversation. They might want to tell me something about their boss or their colleague or a friend of theirs. So something they need help getting buy it or getting around it or understanding that person and they wanted to be done in the confidential manner. Because if they don't have the confidential manner that support, they may not share everything and then they're not going to grow. So it's important that you say to your protégée from the beginning, "Listen, I'm here to help you. This is going to be a confidential relationship so you can tell me anything. You can bounce stuff off me and I'll do my best to help you move forward in your career and your life."
4. Meet consistently. And if you can meet the person from time to time, it's a big help when you can meet in person. But, listen, if your perfect match happens to be across the country, then hey, it is what it is. But maybe you can meet them at a conference or if you know that you both go to the same conference, you can get together.

The key takeaway, there is the consistency. Like I said before, if you don't meet consistently, you're not going to be able to help your protégée and then they're going to say, "Geez, this person is not helping me." The same thing when I offer coaching to engineers. A lot of engineers say you know, "Can I purchase a coaching session?" I'm like, "You can."

But if you want to get really lasting change, you should try to purchase a package because the odd of someone doing something to want to make me change is very low. Consistency is critical.

5. And here's a really important one, the last step, step five, do not tell your protégée exactly what to do. That's not your job. Your job is to ask questions and to guide them. Don't assume what they need. This happens all too often and this was a big takeaway for me from coaching school, was to understand that. Well, yes, I think I can help any engineer achieve their goals no matter how lofty they are. I still have to understand that every engineer is different and I can't just go in there with the same recipe and plant to help everyone. I need to listen and I need to ask questions and I need to guide them. And you need to do the same for the people that you're going to mentor.

And the best part about becoming a mentor is you grow. I always hope that you grow through giving. It's one of the biggest ways to advance yourself is to give. And some examples, is by being a mentor:

- You're going to become more confident in yourself and that's huge. A lot of engineers lack confidence.
- Your communication skills are going to improve because you're communicating with this person about very important issues. So you're going to articulate things that's going to help you think on your feet and be a better communicator.
- And lastly, it's going to help you to develop your leadership abilities because essentially, you're leading this person.

And those are the things that you really, really, really have to think about and have to consider.

So let me summarize the second part of the show, which was how to become a great mentor.

1. To volunteer as a mentor through your company or association.
2. Select that protégée who is the right match for you. Think about what you've accomplished, your discipline, etcetera.
3. Discuss confidentiality with that person.

4. Meet consistently, and if possible, in person from time to time.
5. Don't tell your protégée what to do. Ask him or her questions and guide them. Be a resource all the time.

Now, I'm going to jump into our Take Action Today segment of the show. And I'm going to give you one thing that you can do right now to put you on the path to finding a mentor. Let's do it.

Take Action Today Segment:

Anthony: So you just listened on all these different steps on how to become a great mentor or find the great mentor. And now, this is what I want you to do, if you're out there whether you want to find someone to mentor or whether you want to find the mentor, go to [LinkedIn.com](https://www.linkedin.com). If you don't have a profile yet, create one because you should have one. And go to the Advance Search and put a search in for some keywords that would be associated with the good mentor for you, electrical engineer and a certain discipline, project manager, civil engineer, owner and firm, a bunch of different words, and then go down to the locations and select your zip code and start with the closest mile as maybe like 20-25 miles away from you. And then just keep expanding out if you don't see anything and see if you could find the mentor. See if you could find a couple of possibilities.

I mean I don't want you to just listen to the show. Remember I want you to take action. That's the perfect thing that you can do.

Anthony's Closing Remarks:

Anthony: I hope you enjoyed today's show. I hope it's going to inspire you to either find the mentor right away, become a mentor or hopefully both.

Again, all of the notes here I'll lay them out at [engineeringcareercoach.com/mentoring](https://www.engineeringcareercoach.com/mentoring). And I just want to mention lastly, again, my goal setting course for engineers. It's live on my website. You can visit the page at [engineeryourgoals.com](https://www.engineeryourgoals.com). There's a short video from me describing the course, showing you some of the insights of the course, and even you can read every single lesson on the [engineeryourgoals.com](https://www.engineeryourgoals.com) page. List all the lesson plan and the lesson titles for each lesson.

So please, invest in yourself a little bit. You need to understand your future so you can make all these right decisions. You can get the credentials. You can find the right mentor. You could do all the things that you want to do in your career and your life.



Until the next episode, I hope that you continue to engineer your own success!

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