



## The ENGINEERING CAREER COACH PODCAST SESSION #52

### What You Need to Know About the Job Search Process as an Engineer

Show notes at: [engineeringcareercoach.com/hireengineers](http://engineeringcareercoach.com/hireengineers)

**Anthony's Upfront Intro:** In this episode I'm going to interview a top engineering recruiter and he is going to tell you everything that you need to know about a job search process whether you're looking for a job or not. 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.

**Anthony:** Welcome to today's show. This is the show for engineers who want to create extraordinary careers and lives. This is a great episode that I have today because I interview a top engineering recruiter, Paul Heidhues, and I really didn't know what to expect in interviewing a recruiter. A lot of times people have a negative stereotypes to recruiters, which is I think is unfortunate because I do think they help people and they help companies. But Paul just dropped an amazing amount of value on the episode today in so many different aspects. I asked him a lot of different questions, master's degree, GPAs, what companies are looking for an MBA, all types of stuff we covered in the episode. So we'll get into that in just a moment.

And one thing Paul talks about in this episode is being able to sell yourself, sell business as an engineer and become a seller. And that's one of the things that we're focusing on at the Engineering Career Success Summit, which is an event that I'll be putting on in Washington D.C. at the end of April, beginning of May. It actually starts April 30th. There's a kickoff evening. We're going to have a little icebreaker reception. Then May 1st, we'll have a lot of learning session structure around communication, networking, business development, project management. We're going to have panelists from the engineering industry. We're also going to have topnotch professional development and personal development speakers like Jonathan Fanning, author of *Who Are You Becoming*.

And Saturday, we're going to focus on lifestyle design, which is something that a lot of engineers don't think about. We have some excellent speakers on those topics as well. We have a party Friday night and an awesome engineering tour of the U.S. capital on Saturday. So, all that you could check out at [engineeringevent.com](http://engineeringevent.com). I hope that you'll consider coming and joining myself and the other speakers and engineers. They'll be there. There's also a virtual ticket option where you could



purchase a virtual ticket and one that creates summaries of all the learning sessions and send them out to those that purchased the virtual ticket.

So with that, let me introduce my guest for today and we'll get into the interview. Paul Heidhues is an expert engineering recruiter with years of experience hiring various types of engineers for utilities, OEM, A&E and engineering services/consulting firms. Paul understands engineering disciplines and what engineers in each discipline do. That's what I really like about Paul. We connected through LinkedIn. And it definitely comes out in the interview that you'll hear momentarily that he does understand engineering, which I think is where and you work with the recruiter and whether you're an engineering company from that perspective or an individual that recruiter has to know something about engineering.

All the show notes, that we'll list to any references that Paul and I discuss or any key terms that he mentions, will be found at [engineeringcareercoach.com/hireengineers](http://engineeringcareercoach.com/hireengineers). That's /hireengineers. And I'm going to give you a quote and we'll jump right into the main segment with the interview. The quote is from Albert Einstein and then it goes, "**Information is not knowledge.**" Again, that's "Information is not knowledge." And the reason I picked that quote for today's because I think Paul gives a lot of information in this episode and we all consume a lot of information. But the question is, do we use it, and it's not really knowledge in my opinion unless you're actually taking in information, implementing in your career, and then getting results from it. So let's hope that this interview will help you to do that. Let's do it!

Now, it's time for the main segment of our show. And I have with me Paul from [hire4engineering.com](http://hire4engineering.com). Paul thanks so much for coming on the show today.

**Paul:** You're welcome.

**Anthony:** So, Paul, obviously, you have a lot of experience in recruiting I just introduced to you a few minutes ago here and kind of gave some of your credentials. So why don't we start by maybe you could just give us an overview of some of the key things that engineering companies are looking for in engineers today, things that you kind of hear over and over from companies?

**Paul:** So, a lot of what I deal with engineering and the power utilities and oil and gas, and I deal with just as a little bit of quick background some of the original equipment manufacturers for different systems as well as the engineer design companies that design the systems themselves and, say, and then the utilities or oil operators who may use it. It all depends. I've done everything from entry-level to senior staff. What we look for, for example, an entry-level is how well do they do in school, or were they good solid students and they don't have to be a straight A student. They have to show, you know, some of their projects are nice to look at on the resume and what they did. That always helps.



**Anthony:** Okay.

**Paul:** What else they did in school like extracurricular activities or where their internships were. In the senior level staff, we look for how long did they tend to stay at position. We don't like people, and especially firms when they're paying the headhunters don't like people who move around regularly because they feel they're going to spend all this money to invest in an individual. And they're afraid they're going to walk after 6 to 12 or 18 months. Companies usually tell me when they hire it takes 12 months to 14 months to see a return on their investments. And so they want to know, you know, how well or how long people like to stay around. So if a person said, "Good stability and I stay at a position three to four years, and they've had three to four positions in 15 years, they like that. And the past couple of years, because of the recession, you know, somebody has done a lot of contracts from 2012 to 2015. They'll understand that.

**Anthony:** Okay.

**Paul:** But if that's been the bulk of their career, they tend to shy away and they even shy away in general when they look at it from themselves that they're not using the headhunter –

**Anthony:** Yeah.

**Paul:** - because they don't want to see, you know, somebody jump. What else they like to look at are projects, you know. What has this person done with their career? Have they sat in the cubicles for 15 years and done the same thing? Or, have they gone out there, done other things in their field? You know, have they tried to learn other skills and attributes related to it? They will look at advanced degrees just depending, you know, a Master's or an MBA can be useful depending on the position. So it boils down to what sort of work have they done, how stable are they. And then obviously in an interview, their personality and how well do they get along with the hiring managers. And after a while of working with the same clients, I've kind of gauged with people's personalities are like. And I could tell who's going to work well or where. You'll learn how to make a match. Somebody who says, "I'm really interested. I want to do this," that's the sort of person I want. And people who just say, "I'm in it. This as a job," and the companies don't get too thrilled even when they're looking on their own. They like people who are there for a career.

**Anthony:** That's a good one. So people looking for a career and not a job.

**Paul:** Right. Most of the people that I get hired or employed somewhere already using 90 to 95% of the time, so they're already gainfully employed.

**Anthony:** Got yah.

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**Paul:** And you just have to explain this is a good career move. The other thing companies don't like is I'm in it strictly for the money. The guy who says, "I'm moving just because of a raise," it's not going to be a good fit. I look for quality of life, how's his position going to improve it. Do you get flex time? Do you get the ability from work from home at times? Is there a good calm time? Is there good benefits? Somehow is they're going to improve their quality of life and not just financially.

**Anthony:** Those are excellent points. Thank you for providing them. Can I go through, Paul, and just throw out a bunch of questions that you based on questions I've got from the listeners?

**Paul:** Sure.

**Anthony:** Great. So first of all, and I'll go to different experience levels... but first of all, from entry-level perspective, how important is your GPA? You kind of mentioned already that you don't have to be a straight-A student but I'm assuming you should have it on your resume, correct?

**Paul:** I tend not to like to put it on the resume just because it doesn't... it's not necessarily a good bell weather indicator. You're obviously not going to advertise if you're a 2.2 Grade Point Average student. Typically, the firms I work with like students between 2.8 and 3.5. They are smart enough to realize that they can learn this. They are smart enough to realize that they can still learn.

**Anthony:** Okay.

**Paul:** But they're not so smart that all they're interested in is bookwork, you know. They're not just pure academic. And so they're also not, what they like to call, overly ambitious where it's going to be, let's say, discipline problems. The guy thinks he is, well, Mr. Brainy, and that's all I am and I feel I'm entitled.

**Anthony:** Okay. That's interesting.

**Paul:** It's kind of a complicated thing to explain. But I've had people tell me, "I don't like 4.0 students because all they are pure academics and at that point, you know, they don't bring any real world perspective to the table and especially if they haven't had any good internships. They also come in with... if I'm a 4.0 student, and let's say, I'm a graduate right out of college, the attitude is, "Well, I'm smarter than you and I can do the job better than you." And so it causes sometimes discipline rank, you know, it causes issue with, let's say, workers who have been there longer.

**Anthony:** Okay. That's very, very, very interesting. And actually, there's a smile across my face right now because I don't feel as bad about my 3.0 as I did when I graduated.

**Paul:** Now, you're fine. And I can't tell you which client it is that does that. But I have a client like,

you know, 2.8 – 3.5. I look at them all day long. And if he had a 2.7 or 2.6, he'll look at him. If there's other circumstances, let's say, the guy was working while he was in college to support his family, he'll look at it. So there's always many gaining circumstances.

**Anthony:** Right.

**Paul:** But we have some rules of thumb we like to go by.

**Anthony:** Okay. Alright. Great!

**Paul:** Or, if the guy had great reviews, say, from his internship, then it's different.

**Anthony:** Good. Well, that's really, really informative, right. Next question I got for you is, I always get the question, "How long should my resume be? Is there like a general rule of thumb for maybe different experience levels as far as how long the actual resume should be?" Like students, for example, is that a page?

**Paul:** Yeah, usually a good page, page and a half is good. You know, tell me what you did in school and especially if, let's say, you graduate in 2014, and you're applying for a job this year, tell me what you did in school. It gives me a good idea. Give me an idea the sort of classes you took. Give me an idea the sort of projects and tell me your internships. It really helps because I can look at them and say, "Oh, okay. This guy did this, this, this." People who are entry-level and try to like right and I have seen it to trust me, right, let's say, four-page resumes, why are you telling me all of these? You don't have four pages to back it up.

**Anthony:** Right.

**Paul:** You're trying to fluff yourself up.

**Anthony:** Okay.

**Paul:** At the same time, people who are experienced who send me 12-page resumes drive me nuts, too. A good senior person should have a 3 to 5-page resume. And normally, people say a resume should be no more than two pages. Well, with engineers, it's a little different because, you know, it's so technical. And what I like to see is, okay, first of all, where have you worked obviously and for how long. And then give me five or six bullet points of what you did in that job. And then on the back couple of pages, you know, try and detail some projects you've been involved in.

**Anthony:** Yeah.

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**Paul:** I've done a lot of work for the utility world, control systems, high-voltage power lines, done a lot of work for oil and gas. So, give me a project or two, "Hey, I was responsible for overseeing ten miles of high-voltage power from here to here. I worked on these offshore floating platforms. I worked on these onshore drilling rigs. We did these substations and this was my responsibility." But don't put that under, let's say, you were working for Entergy. Don't put it under Entergy. Put it on the back couple of pages and then as we put the company, at Entergy, I did, and then give me some projects because you don't want to clutter up the fun out here. I want a good idea of what you get.

**Anthony:** No.

**Paul:** And at that point, and if I think you did a good job, I'm going to read further.

**Anthony:** I see. So you kind of summarize it again in the first page, it's like all your experience and then you go into detail.

**Paul:** Right.

**Anthony:** Oh, that's interesting. Okay.

**Paul:** And it really helps out. And then the last page, if you were involved in any publications, that's where you just referenced the publications.

**Anthony:** Got it. Okay.

**Paul:** Oh, and if you're a PE, -

**Anthony:** Yup.

**Paul:** - put it at the top.

**Anthony:** Okay. I was going to ask that.

**Paul:** And put your PE number in the license. What I always try and tell people is, and I've had people tell me, they are PE and they're not, every state keeps a database of licenses and if you tell me you're a PE in whatever state it is, I can go to that state's website, run your name and run your PE number and verify if it's valid. It takes like ten seconds.

**Anthony:** Okay. Excellent.

**Paul:** I've actually had people tell me they have a valid PE, "Well, what's your PE Number?" "I don't

know it.” Okay. Well, I can usually figure out if you’re lying to me.

**Anthony:** Well, those are great. So, for those of you listening, some great points there. Have a kind of a summary in the beginning of your resume. Then go into detail in the back pages.

**Paul:** Correct.

**Anthony:** Publications going the last page of the resume. And put your PE as well as the license number. But you just put the PE at the top and then the license number on the resume somewhere?

**Paul:** Yeah, just like it’s top you put your name and then PE, and then at the top, you have education and licensure.

**Anthony:** Mm-hmm.

**Paul:** Put it right there.

**Anthony:** Okay. Excellent.

**Paul:** Because, and I can just read down see it and I can verify with the state. And before I even represent somebody to a client, and if they tell me their PE, well, the first thing I’m going to do is check that PE license.

**Anthony:** Okay. Paul, I have an objective because people used to have that at the top and I feel like they’re all the same like I want to get a job, blah, blah, blah -

**Paul:** They are.

**Anthony:** - and I don’t know.

**Paul:** So I don’t really care.

**Anthony:** Okay.

**Paul:** What I always ask him is... I never look at their objective. My question is, “Why you’re interested in my position,” and I ask him this when I’m talking to them and then I want to know, “why are you interested and how is this going to help your career.” And I don’t know how to tell people to put that in an objective because they are all the same. And as far as I am concerned, people can leave it out.

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**Anthony:** Okay.

**Paul:** Because you're just trying to make yourself look better.

**Anthony:** That's what I've told people that too to leave it off because no recruiter or probably your hire man is just looking at that when they're doing a scan to your resume.

**Paul:** No, I'm looking at your education. I'm looking where you're currently employed. I'm looking at what you're currently doing, and then I'm going to scan down through your first couple of employers. And what people don't realize is you get good at this. And they try... HR tries to do this and it's never been done with computers. They tried to do it on keywords. Let me run a keyword search in my database, see what this person does. Well, I never look at the keywords. What I do is I actually read people's bullet points. And so I may be looking for something the computers will miss. But it could be bullet point four under employer 3 on the first page and it's like, "Oh, really?"

**Anthony:** That's good, good input.

**Paul:** So that is good for HR. So stop trying to let the computers do the work.

**Anthony:** Yeah. Let me ask you this question, and I know that this is a question that could be different for every industry, of course.

**Paul:** Sure.

**Anthony:** But Master's degrees, when you're an engineer and you're thinking about, "Should I get a Master's degree? What kind of Master's degree do I get?" What should engineers know from the employer's side is to how that might look on the resume?

**Paul:** That is a tricky question and I'm glad you asked. Now, it depends on how you want to look at that. There are a couple of schools of thought on this one. So, let's say, you're Anthony and you just graduated with the degree in Electrical Engineering, are you going to go for a Master's right away or do you go to work first? It all just depends. Personally, this is between... this is what I do.

If I have a guy who's come through the door and, let's say, he has a degree in Electrical Engineering, just use this as an example, and he has three years of experience. But, let's say, I have a guy comes through the door who has a Master's degree in electrical engineering but no work experience, I'm going to take the guy with the experience because as much as I like Master's degree, it does not suffice for real world experience. You are not going to learn in a classroom of what you learn in the workforce. And at the end of the day at 15 years in somebody's career, unless you're in a super specialized engineering field, say, medical devices or something along those lines, the Master's



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degree may or may not make a difference. It looks nice and you'll learn some really useful education but it does not suffice for real world experience. That is not say, don't go get a Master's degree. But I always tell engineers, "If you have a choice, get your PE instead."

**Anthony:** Okay.

**Paul:** Because the PE, you can actually license sign off documents and then you're more useful to a firm.

**Anthony:** Got yah.

**Paul:** And especially if they are design firms.

**Anthony:** Yeah. And the recommendation that I made to engineers in the past is that if you really want to get a Master's degree, you really think it's needed in your industry. But try to do it why you're working so you're getting the experience at the same time and maybe even getting reimbursed by the company.

**Paul:** Companies will reimburse and especially if they feel it is important. Well, I have clients that say, "Hey, this guy wants Master's. We'll pay for it to a certain extent." You know, they have to sign some commitments for a couple of years, some other issues because they obviously just don't want to be hung with the tuition bill, then the guy leave. But it all depends.

What I always tell people though is, "Don't go get a Master's degree right out of college because you're not going to be able to compete against that guy who has experience. I have a family member that's going through engineering architecture in engineering school asking if she should get a Master's and I tell her, "Go get some experience before you do your Master's."

**Anthony:** I like that idea because what I've also told engineers, too, Paul, in a similar situation is, "Why don't you try to get a job and express to them that you're interested in going for the Master's, if it's useful to them while you're working."

**Paul:** Sure. As I said, I have firms that will pay for it. For example, I have firms whose corporate offices are in Pennsylvania. So they will reimburse, you know, "Go, get a Master's degree at the rate that would go, say, University of Pennsylvania, Pittsburg, or Philadelphia, whatever state you're in. They'll pay that amount of money if you were in state at their school. And it's usually fairly close across the board. You may have to pay some of it. But they really tried to work it where you don't.



**Anthony:** This is another one that's general. But with regards to Master's degrees like an MBA, like a business-type Master's degree, would that be something that would be of interest of...?

**Paul:** Oh, absolutely.

**Anthony:** Definitely okay.

**Paul:** Because the engineers can't sell, and if you work for, say, in Emerson or a GE or Rockwell Collins, it's a name of firms, and they do, you know, heavy technical sales, if you're an engineer but have the business acumen, you're going to do much better because most engineers can't sell. Don't know why, but for some reason, they have a tough time. But if you show you have the business acumen, you can do technical sales and leadership for them.

So they'll consider you very valuable. In fact, I've had engineers take the jump from engineering to technical sales with their MBA.

**Anthony:** Wow!

**Paul:** And they understand what the client wants.

**Anthony:** Great. So that's good. Good input and good feedback on the MBA because I get a lot of questions on that. Let me ask you another question that I... it's very important to me because I tried to focus on this with engineers, is non-technical skills, communication, I guess business development sales like you referenced... how important are those in the process?

**Paul:** I want a guy who could speak well. I want a guy who can write well. And I want a guy who enjoys his life more than just, say, going to work and putting AutoCAD together. So, you know, I want somebody who shows some other skills and attributes, non-technical skills. Does he communicate well? Does he get along with his peers? Does he have good friends?

**Anthony:** Do your clients ask for those skills? Are they interested in those skills?

**Paul:** They look at them.

**Anthony:** How do you express those skills to an employer if you're an engineer? I mean if you've done speaking, if you've done sales, you know, how do you... just on the resume or...?



**Paul:** I ask them. When I'm interviewing and I'm going to say, "Hey, what else have you done? Besides your engineering, what else have you done? Do you go and do any speaking? Do you do any teaching? Do you do any teaching to, say, at any of the colleges or high school? Do you volunteer anywhere? What do you do for fun? What else do you do? Tell me about you as a person."

**Anthony:** Alright. As to those of you out there, we talk a lot about on the show about developing those non-technical skills: communication, the ability to network, bring in business your leadership abilities. These are things that are going to be important in the process and you need to get them across to your resume that you do extra things like that, and that sounds important.

**Paul:** Oh, absolutely. And I always ask him even around the office, if you see an engineer that's having trouble, do you stop and then say, "Hey, let me help you out. Let me show you a good way to do this?" So I always ask him, do they do any steps, you know, to help people.

**Anthony:** Good. Great. One last question that I have for you, Paul, is, is it okay in an interview to ask about the benefit package like as far as like graduate school and stuff like that? Is that acceptable? Is it going to hurt you? Or...?

**Paul:** Since I usually I'm representing the firm, I usually handle it and I ask the HR, do I have permission to send over a copy of the benefits package so the candidate can look at it.

**Anthony:** Okay.

**Paul:** Don't be shy about it. I always tell people. A job is like a marriage and you want to know what you're looking at because, okay, the salary is nice. You're going to get offer like a hundred grand, right? But what else are you going to get with it? What's your vacation time like if I want to go to grad school? What's that like... What's your health benefits like as more than just a bunny? And the person I think should have the right to review it even before the offer is extended. So just ask. The worst they can tell you is no. And I always say, "Put the question this way." And at the end of the interview, if you felt the interview not really well, and you have to use your judgment call here, ask them and especially if you're sitting with the HR, "Do you have a copy of the benefits package I can take to look at?"

**Anthony:** Okay, excellent. I'm going to have Paul stick around so we could do our Take Action Today segment at the end of the show. But before we do that, Paul, why don't you tell everyone where they can find you or hook up with you on LinkedIn or where's the best place to get in touch?

**Paul:** Okay. So you can email me at paulh, P-A-U-L-H, @hire4, and that's the number 4, engineering.com. P-A-U-L-H-H-I-R-E-4, engineering.com. I am on LinkedIn. My last name is spelled



H-E-I-D-H-U-E-S. I am the only Paul Heidhues on LinkedIn because it's a nice, unique last name. So you're not going to sort through 20 of me to find me. And then my office number is 210-909-7578. Again, 210-909-7578. And as I always tell engineers, I'm always willing to listen to you. I may not be able to help you but I may be able to point to the right recruiter as I can. So if you have any questions, you want some advice, feel free to call me. I tell firms had this well. And if I feel I can't handle your headhunting, I will tell you who possibly could.

**Anthony:** That's great, Paul. And I'm going to have Paul stick with me here for one more minute. I'm going to ask him one other... On *Take Action Today* segment, we'll do one point on interviewing. So come back for that.

### **Anthony's Closing Remarks:**

**Anthony:** Alright. I'm back here with Paul Heidhues. We're talking about recruiting and what companies are looking for. And this is the Take Action Today segment of the show. So we're going to just try to give you one piece of advice that's valuable that you can use. Paul, let me pitch it to you this way. If you're in a meeting or an engineer calls you and says, "Paul, listen. I only have a minute or two to chat. I'm running into a job interview, what's one or a few pieces of real actionable advice you can give me? What would you tell him, Paul?"

**Paul:** I'd tell him, "Don't oversell yourself and don't tell him all the keywords they want to hear when they ask you the question, so, this is what I can do. That's what I know how to do. And if I've had experience and the other stuff, I may or may not feel comfortable with it but I never oppose to learning it and the companies will appreciate the honesty more than you just hitting on the keywords and saying, "Yeah, I can do everything you want."

**Anthony:** Okay, great. So Paul gave you his information. We're going to link to everything Paul talked about in the show notes, which will be found at [engineeringcareercoach.com/hireengineers](http://engineeringcareercoach.com/hireengineers). And one other thing I like to mention is Paul talked a lot about engineers not being able to sell and how important that is. The event that we're going to be putting on the Engineering Career Success Summit at the end of April in Washington, D.C., [engineeringevent.com](http://engineeringevent.com), we're going to have tools and trainers to help you become a better seller. So take a look at that event if you're interested.

And with that, I hope that you continue to engineer your own success!



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