The ENGINEERING CAREER COACH PODCAST
SESSION #68
Listener Questions Answered

Show notes at: engineeringcareercoach.com/questions

Episode Intro: This is *The Engineering Career Coach Podcast*, the only podcast dedicated to helping engineers succeed in work and life. This show is hosted by engineering enthusiasts, Anthony Fasano and Chris Knutson. Both are professional engineers who found success early in their careers and now work together to help other engineers do the same. Now, it's show time!

Anthony: Hello! This is Anthony Fasano and this is the show for engineers who want to succeed in both work and life. It's a pleasure to be with you today. I'm flying so long in today's episode and all of the content for this specific episode was driven directly by you, the listener. In today's episode, I'm going to answer questions from our listeners, whether it's career advice, help with the resume, a job search. I've been getting quite a few questions.

If you are a regular listener, you know that Christian Knutson and I recently joined forces and we now run the **Engineering Career Coach website** and all of the offerings beneath it together. We redesigned the website and one of the things we put into it was an 'Ask Us' page where you can literally click there and you can leave us a voicemail or you can type in a question, any question you want about your engineering career or personal development. That's where all the questions from today's episode came from.

So, as we jump in here, just know that you have the ability anytime to go to our website at engineeringcareercoach.com and leave your questions. And every once in a while, we will do these questions and answers type-ish episodes. Now, the other thing with regards to the redesign of the **Engineering Career Coach** website kind of our brand, we did also rename our community. It was formerly the Institute for Engineering Career Development. It is now called the **Engineering Career Community**.

And we have also, at the request of many of you out there, we have made a 30-day trial membership available. So, you can check out everything that the community has to offer. It's totally open access trial membership, meaning you can access all of our trainings, all of our recordings on soft skills training for engineers. You can access all of our forum discussions. You can check that out at engineeringcareercommunity.com. Now, we are going to rock and roll with this show. We are going to answer some questions and before we do that, let me take a quick moment to recognize our sponsor for today's episode.

If you're thinking about taking the FE, PE or SC exam this year, I recommend that you check out PPI, the leader in engineering exam preparation. For a special 15% discount, use promo code **coach** at ppi2pass.com/coach. Again, that's ppi2pass.com/coach and use the promo code **coach** and check out for a 15% discount on your order.

Alright, let me give you a quote that's going to bring us right into the main segment of the show. The quote is from Katherine Whitehorn and it goes as follows: "Find out what you like doing best and get someone to pay you for doing it." I use that quote because these questions always comes from engineers about challenges and problems and goals, and one of the kind of underlying things that I have always tried to do is do something that I like and do something that I enjoy, and if you do that, a lot of these other challenges kind of get flushed out.

Coaching Segment:

Anthony: Alright. The show notes for today's show will be at engineeringcareercoach.com/questions because I may answer some of these questions with links to other resources, websites or books and you will be able to find them all in the show notes. Again, that will be at engineeringcareercoach.com/questions.

Alright, so our first question came from Tomas from Poland and his question is as follows.

"I got my current job two years ago. It was just after graduation but despite lacking experience and specialized knowledge, I was very successful from the beginning. I was innovative, smart, hard, fast working. My superiors, the company owners, were very fond of me; taking me to some negotiations with customers and suppliers, giving me important tasks. It was openly said and planned that in time after gaining some experience, I'd be a manager of my own department.

However, about eight months ago, I had a series of failures. Some of the reasons were my lack of organization and communication skills. I was in management. My boss said no technical background and we had different expectations and approaches to the work. I wasn't able to establish good practices, can't file management, good templates for design, drawings, key procedures from activities, etc. And I wasn't able to really gain technical knowledge. There was no one to mentor, guide or train me.

Since then, I've fell in a favor. I'm not the entrusted one anymore. I'm just a regular engineer who does his work. After the failures, I can't snap out of the state of being like a rounded soldier. This is a serious threat for my future and development of my career. Do you have any advice for restoring my morale and rebuilding my previous position? I want to become an important figure in the company who has influence on it. Of course as far as my field is concerned, how should I regain the trust and

support of my superiors?"

Alright. Tomas, thank you for listening to the show. Thank you for submitting a question. Let me give you some feedback on this one. And I'm also going to give some advice on the Take Action Today segment at the end of the episode. It's going to tie in to all these but with regards specifically to Tomas. The first thing I think you have to do is you have to start to build your confidence right away because everything is built around your confidence. And the way that I recommend you do that is by taking on responsibilities both at work and outside of work.

So, what I mean by that is if there is a new project at work, jump on it. You mentioned that there isn't a lot of cad or templates or design templates, maybe you create them and take on this initiative of creating a quality control checklist. And then outside of work, maybe you join a local professional association where you volunteer to be a board member. That's going to build your confidence. That's going to put you in front of people.

The second thing I'd recommend to help you with this is to learn your craft as best as possible. You said you weren't able to really learn the technical side of it. Well, I'm going to challenge you to do that. It could be finding a mentor, which we have talked about on several past podcasts episodes and I'll link to some of them in the show notes, it could be reading books that are going to help you; do whatever you have to do. When I was a civil engineer up and coming, my supervisor gave a great book on land grading and I read it and I got really good at grading. And I wasn't a mentor. I just got a book and read it. So, there is things you could do to develop that craft and I'd urge you to do that, especially at this younger stage of your career.

And just think about ways you can make a shift in the company. If you can make something big happen, people are going to trust you again. If you create some of these templates and you improve the quality of the projects, they would be like, "Wow! This guy is impressive." And if you go out there and get a new client, they are going to be like, "Wow! Tomas is really impressing us." So, build your confidence, Tomas, learn your craft and do something to stand out. If you do those three things, you will turn your career back around and you will be in a really positive life for the company.

Alright, next question is from Usen who is an engineering student in Georgia.

"I am an engineering student and I don't have much experience related to engineering directly as I am now seeking internship. However, I do have a lot of campus involvement experiences since I have been a leader and heavily involved on campus. What would be the best way for someone to use this to his advantage when writing a resume or cover letter since soft skills would be an advantage for an engineering career?"

Okay, it's a good question. And this is something that is applicable to probably every engineers listening because there is always going to be a time when you are going to try to potentially get

access to something that you hadn't had experience in the past. So, what I'd recommend, Usen, is to you have to find a way to make it clear to the company that you are trying to, of the perspective employer, how the skills that you have built up on campus will help build that company. You have to translate your skills to success for them, if that makes sense.

I'm going to give you an example that I give when I speak to a lot of engineers. A lot of engineers sometimes ask me that if they don't have an engineering summer job, if they should put the other job on their resume. And I say, typically yes because the experience but you have to craft in a way that makes that company say, "Wow, we want that experience here!"

So, the example that I always give and this is in my book *Engineering Your Own Success* as well, is imagine you worked at McDonalds and you know, you worked all summer and you are flipping burgers, you are prepping the kitchen, you are giving the food to customers; you can write your resume in a way that would say along the lines of, "Preparing the kitchen at McDonalds taught me how important it is for a business to have all the right tools and to take care of them. I believe that this will help me to ensure that in my engineering career or in the company I work for that I will understand the importance of the tools and how to use them, etc."

You could also say, "I was tasked with interacting heavily with customers at McDonalds and it helped me to understand that the customer is the most important aspect of any business and I've really improved my customer service skills which I think would be a tremendous asset to the engineering company that I work for because I will have a leg-up on how to correspond with clients."

At the end of the day, if you know you're engineering, it's not a lot different handing someone a burger, making sure they are happy with it than handing over a design and making sure they are happy with it. It's that same process. Now obviously, if you want to be able to talk to a client about engineering, you got to have the engineering knowledge but obviously, you've had that. So, my recommendation to you is to really translate the skills to them and how they can help them.

Second question from Usen kind of a follow-up is with his resume and a cover letter. I'm aware that it is vital that a cover letter tailor to the application. However, what will be some key things that can make the cover letter stand out without it being an exact replica of your resume? What I'd say, if you're going to write a cover letter, you'd try to connect with the company as strongly as possible in the letter. Make it about them and not you, right? Not about you but how you can help them, similar to what I was just speaking about.

So, for example, you might say something in the cover letter like, "I've read a lot about your XYZ project and these are the type of projects that my skills can be utilized because of XYZ." Because right there, if I am reading that letter, I'd know that you did your homework because you mentioned one of my projects in your letter and now you're telling me that you have skills that can work on projects like this. That makes me more interested in you.

The next question is from Darnell in Cleveland, who is also an engineering student.

"How do I get in contact with a company to receive a pre-hire letter?"

Honestly Darnell, I don't have an answer for you on this one. I don't even know what a pre-hire letter is. I did some research on it and it seemed like a pre-hire letter was only in very specific industries and the one that kept coming up was truck driving. So, I'm not sure how applicable it is to engineering. However, if you're looking to get the interest of a company, I'd go to a career fair or I'd contact them, not just generally like through the website. I'd contact them through a key contact on LinkedIn. We've had some podcast episodes on LinkedIn, at least one recently that I'd link to in this episode in the show notes so that you can take a look at that yourself and see if that can help you.

Next question comes from Ramkumar from Daytona Beach, who is a recent engineering graduate.

"I recently graduated with a major in Aerospace Engineering. I'm really interested in taking up a Systems Engineering job but most of the stuff in my resume is inclined towards Aerospace Engineering. How can I approach a recruiter and tell of my interest in Systems Engineering?"

Well, a couple of things here. First of all, be honest with the recruiter. Be honest about the experience you have and what you want to do. What I'd recommend that you do most importantly is that you reach out to people in the Systems Engineering world and ask them how they got their positions, what they've learnt, what courses they took, what books they read; and the way you can find them is through a couple of ways.

One, you can use LinkedIn like we always talked about in the show here. Secondly, go through your engineering alumni association and look for Systems engineers because then you have a link with them. You're both alumni of the same schools so they are naturally are going to want to help you and you can learn from them. And who knows, maybe you get a job through one of them. And another way you could do it is see if there is a professional association for Systems Engineering. And if there is, then you should be a part of that organization. You should be attending those meetings. So, that's what would be my recommendation to you.

Here is another question from Sam in New York.

"My name is Sam. I've graduated from college over 20 years ago with M.Eng Civil Engineering. I recently moved to New York and I'm looking for work. Everywhere I look, they are requesting a PE license. Where do I start? Do I need to be doing something before preparing for the exam? Thank you."

Alright. So, the reason I selected this question was really to emphasize the importance of the PE

license. Personally, I think every engineers should get a PE license if you are able to do so. And that will depend on the type of experience that you need. And Sam, in your case for civil engineering, I know you are going to need to have four years of design experience because I'm originally from New York but you should double check that yourself like going to the New York State website for the department of education.

However, a lot of people say that I will need to get a PE because it's not relevant in my industry. But the bottom line is that, what if you change industries? What if you decide to become a consultant? It can hurt you to get you the PE license if you have all the experience and credentials that you need to sit for the exam.

And Sam, in your case I'd make sure that you have the proper design experience and then I'll consider taking a review course. As you know, I recommend PPI for that. They are sponsor of the show. There is CEO Michael Lindeburg who wrote the book that I used as a Bible to pass my PE exam at a young age and I have also tested out their online courses before we took on their sponsorship so I know that they are good. So, you can check them out at ppi2pass.com/coach. Like I said in the beginning of the show, there is a discount if you use the code **coach**.

The last one I have for you and then I'm going to jump in. I've got a pretty powerful Take Action Today segment that I want to go over with you today. This one is from Juliano in Ontario.

"I'm currently trying to improve some technical skills and it feels like I think I am professionally promising like wireless communications and project management. I have tried to improve my soft skills for some time but it seems hey should always be further improved. Still, I need to improve my personal marketing skills in order to become more visible in my profession. By the way, I listened to the podcast about becoming a visible expert which was very useful. I had difficult delivering presentations and lectures which I know I should improve on. I also would like to write more on technical issues like blogging, for example."

So Juliano, thank you for reaching out. I appreciate that. This is definitely a good question. I mean, listen, like a lot of listeners of the show, Juliano wants to improve his soft skills. This is something that is not an easy thing to do and he referenced the visible expert podcast we did which was Episode 53 of the **Engineering Career Coach Podcast**, which was a great episode. But, the way you develop those expertise is developing all these skills.

So my answer, Juliano, is you need to do something consistently to get better at it. You have to. So, you can't just say, "I want to get better at soft skills and read a book, a couple of pages of book one and then you're going to come back to it three weeks later." You can't go to YouTube one day and watch a video on public speaking and then say that you're working on your public speaking. You have to take consistent action regularly however you can do it to improve.

That's why anytime you can take a course and that's why we started the **Engineering Career Community** because it's one thing to watch a training but then how about having a community of people that they can help you improve on it and you can ask questions or you can get a coaching session on it? That's where you need that accountability.

I'll give you another example, just an everyday example. My daughter plays soccer. She is young. She is nine and she wants to get better. She loves it. So, she's done well in the town we live. She is moving up. Now I asked her if she really wants to get better. I said, "If you want to commit, I'll go out with you every day during the summer early in the morning before work and I'll play with you half an hour to 45 minutes." So, we have been doing that every day for the last few weeks and I'm sure she is improving but she is improving because she is taking consistent action. I'm helping her to develop this habit of getting out there and playing every day.

So, you need to do something, Juliano, that you want to get better at every day for as long as you can do it and that's how you are going to get better. That's truly how you are going to improve the soft skills. Alright. With that, we are going to jump into the Take Action Today segment of the show and I'm kind of going to build on this last answer and kind of give you what I believe is the real key that you can take to be successful in your engineering career in life.

Take Action Today Segment:

Anthony: Alright. So, this is the segment of the show, my favorite segment because this is where we try to push you into action. You're listening, you're listening, you're listening; now you have got to take action. And I'm going to give you a big, big piece of action today. Before I jump into this though, let me just give you a word from today's episode sponsor, PPI who makes this podcast, I believe they really supported in a way that allows it to keep it free and makes it available for you. So, I want to give them a minute here.

My listeners often ask me what exam prep materials or review courses they should use when preparing for the FE, PE or SC exam. Hands down, I recommend PPI. If you plan to take your exams soon, I have a special promo code for listeners of our podcast. Use promo code **coach** for 15% off your order at ppi2pass.com/coach. Again, that's ppi2pass.com/coach and use the promo code **coach** and check out for a 15% discount on your order.

PPI's mission is simple. They want to help engineers pass the FE, PE and SC exams and advance their careers. Quality is paramount at PPI. In fact, it is the driving force behind everything they do and that's why we took them out as our sponsor. Like I said, I tried their course out and I really liked the versatility of it and the use ability of it online. With the best-selling exam review materials developed by PPI founder, Michael Lindeburg and other experts in the industry, they have been the source and solution for passing the FE, PE and SC exams for more than 40 years. To see how PPI can help you

pass your exam and for special offers and discounts exclusive to our podcast listeners, visit ppi2pass.com/coach.

So now, let's get back to the Take Action Today. Let me give you this one piece of advice that I want you to take with you for the rest of your career. I want you to take massive action on tasks and goals that will create the biggest impact for you, your company, your family, etc. It's a very simple sentence that I just said. If you live of off this sentence, if you live off this guideline, you will be extremely happy and extremely successful. This is a big change that I've been implementing more and more for the last year and I'm leaning in on it more and more.

You only have so many hours in a day. You have so much time. You have so much energy. You have so much passion. You need to use these things on the tasks, the actions, the goals. They are going to generate the biggest results for you and for whatever you want to accomplish. You will see it a lot in what we are doing with **The Engineering Career Coach**.

We've decided that this **Engineering Career Community** is a very important task because we love getting motivated engineers together and helping them put these new habits into place to improve their skills and improve their lives. And so, we are going to put a lot of effort into growing this community and now that's the reason why we created the one-day trial period that you can check out at engineeringcareercommunity.com because we felt that if we create a trial and let everyone inside and give them a full view of everything we've had, that there is a good chance they would come out and join us and join the other motivated engineers that are members. And we felt that was a game changer. It was kind of our 80/20 tasks.

So, we spent a lot of time in the last month preparing that and launching that. And that's the kind of things that you need to find in your career. Early on in my career, I felt that writing the book *Engineering Your Own Success* was going to be a game changer and for me, it was so I spent a lot of time and effort on it. So, my point to you is that when you sit here and you say, "What am I going to work on today? What am I going to work on this week? What are my goals for this year?"

You're going to want to tackle those goals that massive positive impact on you, your company, your colleagues, your wife, husband, kids, family, etc. Because there is not a lot of time to work on everything else. Just do it over the night. Again, I felt a little bit flustered. I took out a piece of paper, I drew about five or six circles on it and those were the big impact things that I thought I should be focusing on and then I wrote inside of each circle a couple of actions that I can take to get those things going. And then I just started working on them the next day. So, focus on the big, big, big wins.

I hope you enjoyed the episode today. Please continue to leave questions for us so we can do more episodes like this and we would love to hear your feedback, comments or any questions at any time of the shows. For this episode, you can go to engineeringcareercoach.com/questions. You can leave comments. We monitor all comments and we will respond to them if you leave us one. Also, you can

email me at any time, afasano@engineeringcareercoach.com or tweet me @*anthonyjfasano*. I've been getting quite a few tweets about this show from engineers out there, very positive tweets and we appreciate that. Until next time, please continue to engineer your own success.

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