



## The ENGINEERING CAREER COACH PODCAST SESSION #43

### Three Reasons Why Credentials are Important and Three Strategies on How to Get them – EYOS Part 2 of 7

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

**Anthony's Upfront Intro:** In this episode I'm going to talk about why credentials are so important for engineers and then give you some tips on how you can obtain the right ones. I'm also going to make a very scary public pledge about one of my 2015 goals. 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 who want to create extraordinary careers and lives. I have a very high energy show for you today. I'm really pumped up. This is the second part of the seven-part Engineer Your Own Success series that I'm doing with the podcast. I'm doing it to celebrate my biggest goal of 2014, which was rewriting my updated and expanded edition of my book *Engineer Your Own Success*.

So the seven-part series and each of the episodes, I will touch on one of what I consider to be the seventh key element for creating an extraordinary engineering career, and today, that topic is credentials that are really critical to advancement as an engineer and we'll get into that today.

But before we jump in, I want to just quickly recognize our sponsor. The sponsor for today's program is Purdue University's Master of Engineering Management Program. This program gives you the ability to earn a master's degree specifically designed to advance your career in the industry with both on-campus or online study options available. It's a wonderful program. I've met some of the people who run the program, spoken to some of the professors, had some of them come to our IECD Meetups in the past. And it's a topnotch program, top ranked in the country, and it's really for those of you out there who may want to get additional education but don't necessarily want to purely technical degree but also don't want to go into a heavy business MBA type of degree. It gives you that masters in management, more focused in the industry.

So for details, you can call 1-877-5984-233 or email [promasters@purdue.edu](mailto:promasters@purdue.edu). Applications are being processed daily. I also want to mention to you that my new goal setting course customized specifically for engineers is now open. And it's been opened for a couple of weeks now. It's at

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[engineeryourgoals.com](http://engineeryourgoals.com). I've gotten very positive feedback so far on some of the engineers that are going through, and I actually hope to have a few of them on the show and talk a little bit about the experience. But it's a goal setting course. It's a do-it-yourself course with a customized spreadsheet that walks you through the goal setting process and many deep questions to get to the bottom of what you really want in your career and in your life, and that's the feedback I've gotten from engineers so far. It's really made them think about themselves and who they are and where they're headed. And along the same topic, I'm actually going to make a public pledge at the end of this podcast about one of my 2015 goals to put a little pressure on myself. But I think you'll be very interested to hear about this goal at the end of the show, so stick with me for that.

But now, I'm going to give you a quote that's going to bring us right into the main segment of the show. The quote goes as follows ***"You don't win the U.S. Open by being lucky, throwing it up there and hoping. He's got credentials,"*** and that's from Hale Irwin.

## Coaching Segment:

**Anthony:** Alright. Let's jump into this main segment, and get into credentials, today's such an important aspect of your engineering career. I'm going to start by giving you three reasons of why credentials are important and then I'm going to give you three tips for how to obtain them in your career.

So first, let's start off with the WHYs. Number one, **credentials bring you credibility**. There's no other way around that. If you have a PE at the end of your name or whatever a big credential is for you in your specific field, it's instant credibility. I don't care how much experience you've had. I don't care how smart you think you are someone else's versus you. If you have something after your name that's a recognized credential, it's going to give you credibility. And when I got my PE license, I was only 24 years old. But right away, people look to me a different way. It was really unbelievable. That's when I knew the power of credentials right there.

The second reason that **credentials are very important is because they set you apart from other professionals in your field**. And when I say that, I don't necessarily mean setting you apart you know in a competitive way. You can look at it like that. But that's not the way I'm looking at it because I don't necessarily think that way.

I believe that if you do your job properly, you'd be who you are and you progress, you're going to do great and you're going to be successful. You don't have to necessarily think you have to fight and

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claw with every other engineer out there in the world. I don't like that mentality. That's the mentality of scarcity, not one of abundance.

When I say 'set you apart,' I just mean make you stand out. That's what I mean. It's going to make you stand out in a crowd. It's going to set you apart from, maybe your company is looking to promote someone or give someone more responsibilities and they see that you have some certain credentials, and they go right to you and put you on the top of the list. It sets you apart that tell someone that you're motivated.

When I was an engineer and I was going through a process of hiring people, the first thing we would say is, does this person have their FE or their PE, or have they submitted the application? I mean it tells you about a person. Are they motivated? Are they trying to get these credentials? So that's a big reason for considering credentials.

And the third reason is because **credentials are very helpful in charting your career path in where you want to go**. What I mean by that is, when you look ahead at your career, you look ahead in the future. These credentials can drive which direction you're going in. They have that much impact. They can determine whether or not you're going to get a promotion. They can determine how much money you're going to make. They have a big say in what level of success you reached depending on what you defined success as. And I say this because a lot of people think, "Well, this credential is not that important. I'm not going to study that much." This credential can shift your whole life and your whole career, not that important.

Those are the three reasons that I'm going to tell you right upfront here that you should definitely consider obtaining some credentials in your engineering career. They bring you credibility. They set you apart from others that make you stand out. And they are decision-driver. They are results-driver for you in your career.

Now, let's jump into some strategies for going about obtaining these credentials. I should have said this earlier, but what I'm talking about credentials here, I'm not just specifically talking about licenses. It could be in a certification of license. It could be something that's published or publication. That could be considered like a credential. You're an author.

When I wrote my book, that was a big credential for me and that was a big, big boost in my career. And it could be an award that you want, some kind of award that you applied for. Don't just strictly think of like an engineering license or something like that. Credentials have a wide umbrella that they fall under.

Let's get into this a little bit now. The first one tip that I can give you for obtaining credentials is, **do not procrastinate**. This is one that really hampers engineers from getting credentials. Because

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some of the credentials and certifications in the engineering world are lengthy processes like, for example, I'm going to use the PE license, for example, and obviously, this is a license that's specific to the U.S. If you're in another country, it might be a different certification like the P.Eng in Canada or a Chartered Engineer in the UK. But in the U.S., that's a lengthy process. It's two eight-hour exams. The FE, the PE exam, and then a... Sorry, the FE is not an eight hours anymore. They get to six now. But it's too lengthy exams and then, a period of work as well, four years of experience. In most states, it varies a bit. But the bottom line is that's the needs you need to do.

What happens is if you procrastinate at all with a credential like that, you're dead. You're totally dead! Because if you procrastinate on the first exam and you don't get that, then you're waiting to start the whole process. If you procrastinate on the application, which is a lengthy application process, then it pushes everything else back. You may procrastinate to the point that you can't get a signature from someone that relocated, and now, you've got to work another year or two.

Please, don't procrastinate, because the other thing that's going to happen, if some of you have probably noticed this already, is you are going to get more busy in your career the older you get. And some of you out there who are older are nodding their head right now or you're going to pick up more stress, more projects, more clients, if you're going to start to have families. By pushing off these credentials, you may never get them. It happens all the time. All engineers that I talked to that wanted to get their engineering license and didn't get it was because they delayed the first exam, the FE. Until that was too far out of school and then they couldn't pass it because all the fundamentals on the exam, all the equations were from or really you learned them in college, so you lost them. I think you get the picture there.

Let's jump to the next point, number two, **become an expert in the exam taking process**. This is more important than you would think. Most of these credentials do boil down to certifications or an exam process of some sort and you need to be able to go through that process and it's a trying process. And again, it really, really is a trying process. I'm going to give you a few steps right now to deal with the whole exam process.

But the problem with it is that it's not as easy as just signing up for an exam a lot of times. A lot of these application processes are lengthy. What I'm going to do is I'm going to walk through nine (9) little tips that I have and this is all from Chapter 4 in my new book Engineering Your Own Success. All of these details are in there. But I'm trying to give you a good breakdown of them here. I'm going to walk through these nine tips. I keep using numbers like 339 because I'm going to lay these out in the show notes as well, so the easy to order them for you.

And if you think of a tip, then you can remember it and refer to it. And by the way, the show notes for this show will be at [EngineeringCareerCoach.com/GetCredentials](http://EngineeringCareerCoach.com/GetCredentials), G-E-T-Credentials.



Here's the first tip with trying to pass one of these credentialing exams. *Start with the end in mind.* What I mean by that is, as soon as you know you need to take the exam, find out what date it is, sign up for the exam, and put it on the calendar right away. That's locked in. And now, you can work backwards and put a study schedule in place, which is important.

The second point for the exam process is to *start the application process as early as possible.* Regardless of what credential is, I mean the PE exam, I can speak for that, that's a lengthy process. But all, you just start the process early on for multiple reasons. One of them, you need to understand what's required on the application. What if you wait and wait and wait and you get it and you realize like, "Oh, my goodness! I didn't realize I needed four years of experience," or, "I didn't realize I needed two PEs to sign for me. I've only worked for one." Okay. Get the application early even well before you want to submit it and understand it. Understand what's required. Submit the application as soon as possible. I hate when engineers tell me, "Well, you know, I'm kind of borderline, so I'm going to work another six months." I said, "No, no, no! Don't work another six months. Hand it now." If they come back to you and then they tied the work another six months, work another six months.

But what if they don't? That happened to me. So many people like, "You're too young. You're never going to get it." I submitted it. I got it. I took it. I passed. So, get that application and don't let anyone deter you from doing that.

The next step, please, and I repeat this, please, *do not take this exam or any exam just to see what it contains.* I can't believe the people actually told me that they do that, "You know, the PE exam, I'm just going to take it the first time without study and see how it feels, see how it looks, and I'll go back and I'll take it again when I'm really want to focus." Excuse me? You're going to sit in an exam for eight hours just to see how it looks? Well, have fun. If that's what you want to do, if that's your idea of productively using your time, how about just studying and preparing and nailing the damn thing? That's a big tip because that just when people told me that, I just got really upset about that.

Next tip, *take a review course whether you want to or not.* I know what you're thinking. I'm an engineer. I went through rocket science classes. The last thing I need is a review course on how to take this exam. I can do it myself, and you probably could if you really tried. But here's the problem, life gets in the way, right, whether it's something that happens at home or I can't miss the Giants plan on Monday that I have football tonight or, again, I want to go, see this play in the city and it's going to be off Broadway soon. Those things get in the way.

But when you have a review course and you have to go and you have a schedule, it drives you. It gives you structure and it helps you succeed. I've taken six different certification exams. I passed them on the first shot and everyone who might took a review course and it helped me tremendously to stay focused.

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Next tip, *ask others what work for them*. I'm constantly telling engineers this in their careers, "Your job is not to reinvent the wheel," one of my idols, Tony Robbins. Tony Robbins says, "If you want to be successful with something, find somebody who is and copy them." He says it like that and that meaning like literally copy them but imitate what they do. They learned. They studied. They got there. Don't recreate the whole process.

Next step, *make sure you know what you have to bring to that exam*, because if you show up with the wrong calculator, after a year of studying, it's potentially the biggest waste of time ever. You probably learned through the process and you could learn something out of it. But it's just a silly mistake to make after going through such a lengthy preparatory process. Be really crystal clear on what you have to bring to the exam. Go to the website, call the testing center, do everything you have to do to be aware of that.

*Understand what the credentials actually give you the ability to do*. I include this with the exam process because if you're going to take the exam and prep for a credential. And make sure you understand if it's really something that's going to help you with your goals and it's really something that has traction. There's a lot of credentials coming up today that they pop up and they last for a year and they don't get a lot of traction and people like, "Oh, wow! They got this new green home building certification. I want to go get it." Does it mean anything?

Make sure, number one, that it's a line what your goal is going to help you get to your goals. And number two, make sure it has traction. Talk to people in the industry. Make sure that it's something that people are going to equate it with something reputable and give you that credibility. And the last step that I'll give you for kind of the whole exam taking process is if you fail an exam, please, sign up for the next one. Don't be discouraged. Everybody messes things up. Everyone doesn't pass all their exams that they ever taken their life. You're invested at that point. You put time and effort into studying and I know some people out there or Institute for Engineering Career Development, that have gone through this process, took the test two or three times and I just kept telling them, "Take it again. Take it again. And ten years from now, you are going to be so happy you did."

Just to recap those exam strategies, start with the end in mind. Sign up. Get the day on the calendar. Start the application process as early as possible. It was the second tip there. The third one, submit the application as soon as possible. Fourth, don't take the exam just to see what it contains, please. Fifth, take a review course whether you want to or not. Six, ask others what worked for them. Seven, make sure you're really clear on what to bring to the exam. Don't mess that up. Eight, understand the importance of the credentials, how much water really holds if it's worth it for you. Nine, if you fail, take it again. Sign up right away. The second you get the notification, sign up. And that's kind of looping you back around again, starting with the end in mind and start over.

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There's your test taking part of this process. The last step that I have for you on the how, how to approach credentials is do not fail to take advantage of company benefits for these credentialing processes. A lot of companies will reimburse you for test fees, book fees. Not all companies and not all the time, sometimes that the economy is not great, they'll come back in some of that stuff, grad school reimbursements, and that's a big credential getting that master's degree. Take advantage of that. So many engineers don't.

And if you're happened to be in the process of transition or you're a graduate and you're looking for your first job, talk to companies about that upfront. You ask them what their benefits are for credentialing, for master's degree programs.

And just before we go to the Take Action Today segment of the show, and I also make my public pledge, just remember, if you're considering any type of credential whether it's a master's degree, whether it's a PE license, or whatever the licenses you're part of the world that's important for engineers, make sure you ask yourself, is this degree or certification credential going to get me to my goals, to achieve my goals, or close to achieve my goals? Or, is it going to help me achieve my goals faster?

Look at it from that approach. Everything should be focused around your goals. And that's why I created the Engineer Your Goals Course that I just released because I'm such a believer that goals drive everything. They're your fuel for everything that you do. And so, you shouldn't be collecting credentials unless they're going to get you to those goals. Unless of course, your company asks you to get something and in their eyes, it's going to help you to get promoted, then it might make sense. But for the most part, it's got to be really lined up with what you want to do.

Again, all the show notes for the show will be at [EngineeringCareerCoach.com/Get, G-E-T, Credentials](http://EngineeringCareerCoach.com/Get, G-E-T, Credentials). So, you can go through the list that I presented here today.

But now, I'm going to jump into the Take Action Today segment of the show, close up the show with a scary public pledge from one of my goals coming up.

## Take Action Today Segment:

**Anthony:** Now, it's time for our Take Action Today segment of the show. This is where I tried to give you one piece of action I've extracted from the beginning of the show and give it to you in a format that you can take it, implement it, and get actionable results in your engineering career.

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What I want you to do is, if it makes sense for you in your career, commit to obtaining one credential today whether it's getting one of the certifications or licenses, whether it's signing up for a degree program, or whether it's trying to get a paper published in your field, it's going to give you that credibility. Commit to it and tell somebody about it. That's your ultimate accountability. Make it public to someone, ideally your boss or supervisor or someone else, a colleague or someone but someone that's going to really hold you accountable. Someone that's going to ask you maybe, "How's it going," or someone that if you don't get it, it's not going to look good because that's going to really, really drive you.

Because I want to lead by example, and I hope I don't regret this, but I'm going to tell you one of my 2015, actually personal/professional, goals is just to put the pressure on myself and I'm also going to do something else to put the pressure on what I'll also announce right now. I have identified that one of my goals I want is to learn how to speak Spanish and learn how to speak it, not only speak it but I want to be able to give my Engineer Your Own Success presentation in Spanish by the end of 2015.

Why is this going important to me? Multiple reasons: one, because I've always wanted to learn another language. I took Spanish at the high school so I don't really have a lot of background in it. But it is something that I like. I lived with a French family when I studied abroad so I have that a little bit of French and a little bit of Italian, just words. That was something that was important to me on a personal side.

And then from a professional side, I get a lot of requests from Spanish speaking organizations about my programs and my courses and there are a lot of engineers out there that speaks Spanish across the world. So I do want to try to diversify where I can. I have to thank also Rei Colon out there who's an IECD member who kind of brought this to my attention about how this could be a great way to really get my message out there to more engineers. And I guess she kind of put all those things together and that was my why of why it's important to me.

And so, I'm making this a public pledge to you right now and not only am I going to just saying it to everyone here in the podcast but I'm going to actually put on my website in the next few weeks, The Engineer Your Own Success talk, which will be sometime close at the end of the year in Spanish. And I will put the webinar registration page up there for anyone that wants to register.

It's holding them in kind of putting myself right in front of the fire. And Rei, if you're listening, thank you. But you might have to be on that call with me as a plan B translator. I might need you. But that's what I'm doing and I have signed up for a course and I'm taking the course. It's going well so far, but doing things like this push you, okay, making the public pledge, putting it out there for people, and I just did it and that's it.





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

With that, I'm going to wrap the show up and I do just really want to say thank you for those engineers out there that believe in what I'm doing through the Engineering Career Coach site. Several of you did sign up for the Engineer Your Goals Course and I have appreciated the feedback ready on it and several of you also have already purchased The Engineer Your Own Success, the updated book. And I know that because my publisher told us that it's going well. I want to just show my gratitude to you and thank you for that, and I look forward to catching up with you on the next episode. And until then, I hope that you continue to engineer your own success.

*If you want to hear more episodes of the Engineering Career Coach podcast, you can subscribe on iTunes or go to [EngineeringCareerCoach.com](http://EngineeringCareerCoach.com) where you will find lots of free engineering career resources. You have to click the Start Here button on the site for an easy to navigate index of all the resources available.*

*You can also follow Anthony Fasano on Twitter at [AnthonyJFasano](https://twitter.com/AnthonyJFasano) or Facebook at [Facebook.com/EngineerYourOwnSuccess](https://www.facebook.com/EngineerYourOwnSuccess). Until the next time, thanks for listening!*