The ENGINEERING CAREER COACH PODCAST
SESSION #70
Developing the Engineering Leader Inside of You – EYOS 7 of 7

Show notes at: engineeringcareercoach.com/eyosleader

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. Welcome to another episode of the Engineering Career Coach Podcast. In today's episode, I'm going to talk about leadership. This is the 7th part in the 7-part podcast series that I did for my book, *Engineering Your Own Success*. My book *Engineering Your Own Success* was republished this past December with IEEE-Wiley and thanks to all of you out there, it's been successful and I mean that really from the bottom of my heart. I get emails from a lot of you that said that you bought the book and you enjoyed it and that support is great. That's the reason I wrote it to get it out to many engineers as possible.

So, I will include links to the other six parts of the series. In case you've just started listening to the podcast, you will be able to catch up on them. I focused on all the chapters in the books that I did on goal setting, credentials, communication, networking, organization; and we will link to all of them. Before we get into the main segment of the show today and jump into leadership, I want to take a moment to recognize our sponsor for today's episode, PPI.

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 the 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.

Alright. To take us into the main segment of the show on leadership, let me give you one of my favorite quotes on leadership from Dwight D. Eisenhower. "Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it." I love that quote because if you have someone working for you because they have to, then it's going to be rough for you and for that person. So, we are going to walk through leadership in the main segment and then in the Take Action Today segment at the end of the show, I'm also going to give you something that can really line up with this quote as far as getting people to really want to work for you. Let's do it!

Coaching Segment:

Anthony: Alright. So, let's jump into leadership. I'm going to do everything from define leadership in this episode, my definition of leadership, and then talk to you about how you can employ your leadership skills as an engineer regardless of your current position. The show notes for today's show will be at engineeringcareercoach.com/eyosleader. The EYOS stands for Engineering Your Own Success. The show notes will contain a summary of all the points that I discussed here in the episode, links to any resources, websites, or books that I might mention during the show. And again, that's engineeringcareercoach.com/eyosleader.

So, if you are a regular listener to the podcast, you know that we recently did an episode where we played one of the sessions from the **Engineering Career Summit** which was Pat Sweet called *Engineering Leadership*, and it was very interesting. He talked about a couple of different models of leadership and I recommend that if you haven't, you check that out. That's Episode 64 of the **Engineering Career Coach Podcast**. Today's show I'm going to jump into leadership from the perspective that I've had over the past few years coaching a lot of engineering managers and also working as an engineer, working for a couple of different engineering managers. I've done a lot of perspective on this topic. Of course my partner Chris Knutson, who previously wrote the blog , I've had a lot of conversations with him on this too. So, I've got a lot of perspective on engineering leadership.

So, let me start by defining what I believe leader is. I personally believe that everyone is a leader and the question becomes, how much do you want to lead, how much do you want to develop those abilities; but there is a wonderful book called *Energy Leadership* by Bruce D. Schneider and Bruce was the founder of iPEC, the institute that I went to for my coaching and training. Few episodes ago, you heard Chris interview James Lehman about career transitions and who also was an iPEC graduate, former coaching school. If anyone interested, feel free to contact me for info about it.

In his book *Energy Leadership*, he defined a leader as someone who inspires themselves and/or others to take action every day and that definition is always stuck with me. And the reason it's stuck with me is because if you think about that definition, it covers everybody here because you're inspiring yourself right now to listen to this podcast, which means you want to improve yourself. So, you are a leader. You may be a parent, that means you are a leader. You might be a coach, that means you are a leader. You're an engineer leading a team; you're a leader. So, everyone is a leader. I want to give you some tools in the episode to develop your leadership abilities.

The first point I want to touch on is positivity. It's extremely important to adopt the positivity about work as a leader. Your peers affects everyone around you, your confidence, your energy; it affects the way people view you, the way they react to you, the way they take orders from you, it affects everything. If you go into a project meeting with your team and you say, "You know this project stinks. I've got to deal with this client who is a pain. It's dragging me down. This is just going to be a hard

battle." And guess what? Every person in that room is going back to their office with that attitude. If you go into that room and say, "Listen, this is a challenging project but if anyone could handle it, our team can handle it. This client is a little bit rough to handle but I'm going to do my best. I'll take him/her on. I'll handle him. I'll make him happy and I'll need you all to stand behind me. Let's get this work done. Let's make this a great project." Then those people sitting around the table are going to go back to their office with that attitude and that's what people don't realize, don't realize how contagious that attitude is and I really urge you to maintain a positive outlook.

Now, how do you do that? Surround yourself with positive people as much as you possibly can. And believe me, I know that it's not easy to do that. I know that a lot of times there are negative or abrasive people at work, potentially. But, find that around with. That's why we created the **Engineering Career Community**. Check out our community. You can surround yourself with motivated engineers. You can log in in the matter of minutes and get inspiration from people, from other engineers. If you're interested in that, check out the engineeringcareercommunity.com and take our trial. We would love to have you. That's what you have to do. You got to surround yourself with positive people.

Another thing you can do is to read positive books and quotes. I do it all the time. That's why I used to write the Monday Morning Motivators. I really insert as a motivation to myself and a couple of family members and it spread to thousands of engineers. The one thing you have to understand about positivity is there is actually a lot of studies out there and I reference these in my book **Engineering Your Own Success** because I research them.

They say that positive people are healthier than negative people because when you have a negative outlook, a negative attitude, a negative emotion, chemicals that are not good for your body get released into your system like cortisone and over time, those chemicals can wear you down. So, I'm not going to sit here and say that positive people are always going to be more successful and negatives will not. That may not be true but over the long term, a lot of times it really stress you out, the negative attitude.

The next point I want to focus on is opportunity. Great leaders, they see opportunity. They turn problems into opportunity. Engineers know what we are going to face our entire lives in our entire careers – we are going to face problems because that's what we do. We solve problems. So, people are going to come to you and say, "Anthony, I've got another problem that I need you to solve." And if I want to be a leader, a positive, powerful leader, I need to look at the problem and I need to find opportunity in it.

This is something else I learned at iPEC and I'm grateful for them because they taught us these two questions that I'm going to share with you now that can basically help you turn any bad situation into a positive one. I'll include these two questions in the show notes but if you want to jot them down right now and look at them every day and remember them, I use these all the time. The first question is,

let's say you're in a bad situation. Something happens on a project. The first question you ask yourself is where is the opportunity in this situation? Let's just say they are out on a certain kind of material and they can't get it to a project site in time and delayed a project. The first thing you say is, "Where is the opportunity in this situation?"

Now, now you get opportunities that you find it cheaper, more efficient material but you wouldn't find it unless you are looking for it. Let's just say you look and you look and you look and you don't find any of the materials, the situation doesn't get any better, the second question you ask yourself is, 'How can we learn and grow from this situation?" Well, we learn and grow because next time we know that next time we can't speck out this material on this project with this kind of a timeline and then you learn. That helps you forever. So, if you ask yourself those two questions, where is the opportunity and how can we learn and grow, you are forcing an opportunistic mindset. Please use them. It is completely life changing. Trust me, I probably use them every day.

Next point is understanding your role. You absolutely have to understand your role as an engineering leader, which is ideally in my opinion to ensure that your team members are successful because if your team is not successful, then what kind of a leader are you, right? So, I remember I had a couple of different engineering managers when I was doing engineering and one of the managers, I would bring in a set of plans and specs and I'd give it to him and say, "Listen, plan inspection is done. Can you reveal them?" And he would always say, "I'm too busy right now. Put them in my shelf." It was extremely deflating to me. The second manager though, I'd bring in a set of plan inspections and specs and I'd say, "Please review this," and the first thing he would say is, "Oh yeah. Come in right now. Have a seat. Let's go through them right now so that you can keep moving on the project." That was an engineer who is a leader. That engineer knew that he had to keep his team moving at all costs and that's why he is still very successful today.

The next step is delegation. So, you're understanding your role. If you know what that role is, you have to stay in it. You can't get too tied up in the details as a leader. You've got to let people help you. But then, you also have to get a hold on delegation. You have to identify which tasks are the most important for you to work on and then delegate the rest. This is one of the most difficult things for engineers to do because we are so involved in a project in our younger stages of our career.

So then imagine that we are going to give that those technical tasks away is scary, to be honest with you. It's extremely scary! I went through it myself. And so, what you can do if you're struggling with this is to start delegating by assigning very small tasks to people. Something small that we are capable of doing and as they do them, they impress you. They build your trust and then you can let them do more and more and more and really start to truly delegate more. Listen to this statement please. If you do not learn to delegate, you will not be able to advance your engineering career because you will get stuck at a certain level. You will get stuck. You are going to hit the ceiling. To let go, you have to delegate. I hope that is a key take away from the show today for you.

Two more points. First of all, respect. If you want people to want to work for you, people to be excited about what they are dealing with, they need to respect you. And the only way to get the respect from people is to respect them. I see way too many engineering managers that are extremely condescending to people. Get out of that mindset. We are all in a team. Respect people and they will respect you back. And it's could just be the way you ask people to do something. It could be more courteous in a nicer manner.

Alright, last point is there is no I in team. Always take that approach. There is no I in team. There is no one bigger, no one better. The person that I always looked to for this, that always gave me a great example of this is Derek Jeter and I'm sure many of you know who Derek Jeter was. He was a member of the New York Yankees and I don't watch a lot of baseball anymore but when I was younger, I was very fanatical fan, especially when Jeter was playing. I used to watch the games and I used to see him in a game winning homerun in the bottom of the 11th thing.

And then they would interview him right after the game and then say, "Derek, tell us about that homerun! You crushed it! Take us through the whole of that." And what he would always say to the reporter pretty much every time, he would say, "Well, listen. That game wasn't about me. If our players and our pitchers didn't keep us in that game, it would have been over well before the 11th thing." And that was his approach and that's a leader. He sent the messages his team saying that, "I don't care about myself. I care about the team. We are all working together. We don't win that game without every one of you." And that's the approach you need to take as an engineering leader. So, I'm going to jump into the Take Action Today segment in a minute but let me just summarize the key points here.

Everyone is a leader. It's up to you to develop your leadership abilities and the points that I touched on here was: one, positivity. Surround yourself with positive people. Keep positive energy around you because it's contagious. Number two, opportunity. Turn problems into opportunity every day and use the two questions that we spoke about. Number three, understand your role as an engineering leader and stick to it. Help your team to be successful. Number four, learn to delegate effectively. If you can do that, you're going to be able to put your time and effort and focus it on the big wins and have a lot of success as an engineer. Number five, trust and respect people that you lead and they will trust and respect you. And number six, there is no I in team. Always take that team approach.

I hope you enjoyed these points. I'm going to give you one more big one in our Take Action Today segment which I'm going to jump into right now.

Take Action Today Segment:

Anthony: Alright. So, here is the segment of the show where you can actually take action. I just went through all the points with you on leadership. What are you actually going to do to implement it?

That's what I want to know from you and that's what I want to challenge you to do in this segment of the show. So, before I give you a challenge for today, I'd like to offer a brief word from today's episode sponsor, PPI.

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 my 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.

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Alright. So, my challenge for you is simple. I want you to lead initiative by asking instead of by telling. So, what I mean by that is that it could be as simple as a project assignment, like doing a cat drawing. Instead of going up to someone and saying, "I need you to do this project f or me now," say something like, "I need your help with this project. I really need you to draw this cat, draw it in xyz manner. Do you think this is something you can do for me?" Or at home, instead of telling your kids you better get up in your room right now or you're not getting dinner, say, "Hey, listen. We are all working hard around the house to try to keep it clean. Can you do me a big favor? Can you go up to your room, straighten it up and clean u before dinner?" You will see that there is a difference in the way people respond to you. People want to be asked because they want to be a part of something. When you tell them, they just feel like it's you telling them what to do and they have no part of it.

So, I challenge you to lead by asking and I'd love to hear how you made out. You can either email me at afasano@engineeringcareercoach.com, you can tweet me @*anthonyjfasano*, or if you go to engineeringcareercoach.com and click on the 'Ask Us' tab, you can actually leave a recording there and let me know how it went and I'll even play it on a future podcast. I hope you enjoyed the episode today. We would love to hear your feedback on this specific episode comments, questions; go to engineeringcareercoach.com/eyosleader. We monitor all the comments and we will respond if you leave one there. Until next time, please continue to engineer your own success.

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