

editor's note



I GUESS I'M SORT OF A PACK RAT. I have a terrible tendency to keep a lot of clutter—especially electronic clutter. And every once in a while, I'll go back and re-read some of the 13 or 14,000 emails in my inbox. Recently I was reading an email from MSC's former managing editor (and now an AISC regional engineer), Keith Grubb, who sent me a note summarizing some of the things he had learned about career development and leadership from reading some recent issues and listening to speakers at some conferences.

It was all great advice, but what really made me smile was how much of it was applicable to everyone—engineers, fabricators, and even my 12-year-old daughter.

In Keith's memo, he summarized Richard Weingardt's "Six-Pack Plan for Career Development." He recommended the following: participate in continuing education (my daughter takes accelerated classes and participates in study groups before school!); develop your communication skills (she has a major role in the upcoming school play); become an expert in something besides your profession—it broadens your perspective (Julia takes dance classes six days a week); get involved in community affairs (she's recently become a volunteer soccer referee); get involved in politics (in the past, Julia's been on student council); and find a mentor/role model to emulate (my daughter admires and looks up to her very accomplished cousin Beth Ann).

Keith also presented a summary of Anne Scarlett's advice (plus some of his own) on "10 things every entry-level engineer should know." And again I had to smile, because a lot of Anne's advice was dead-on for how we do things at AISC:

1. Compensation is more than just salary; recognize the worth of the benefits you have, including working conditions.
2. Be aware of alternate career paths.
3. Having a personal life is a great thing.
4. Look for a mentor.
5. Raise your hand; volunteer to be in charge of events, projects, etc.
6. No question is too dumb to ask.

7. Get involved with local professional groups.
8. Develop your interpersonal skills.
9. Make it a point to learn the business of engineering.
10. Learn to manage your time; everything is not a priority.

Anne, one of my favorite business consultants, also offers solid advice on the traits of leaders. According to Anne, leaders have:

- Honesty and sincerity
- Courage
- Pride
- Adaptability
- Influence
- Competence

She also stresses that leaders know how to delegate, and offers specific guidance on how to do so:

- Determine the task
- Match the task to the designated doer
- Clearly define measurable expectations
- Communicate authority, responsibility, and deadlines
- Monitor periodically—and give feedback!
- Reward performance

Finally, Anne reminds us that it's okay to single out employees who exhibit leadership traits by "grooming" them for leadership roles with extra training. Remember, you're investing in your firm's future. Or in the case of my daughter, I'm simply investing in the future.

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