(I wish) Someone should have told me this stuff 15 years ago!

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My Career Path:
• B.S. Engineering Technology (1995) Huslin’1, Corps of Cadets
• M.S. Mechanical Engineering (1997) Advisor: Dr. San Andres
• Professional Experience: Rocketdyne, TurboCare, Boeing, SwRI

What will yours look like? All technical? Move to management? Mix of management and technical? If you don’t have a plan, someone else will make it for you. Your organization will strive to use you to the best advantage of the organization.

KISS – it’s not a joke, it really works and is a critical skill!

The answer is always “YES”, followed by “here is the path towards that goal…”

Develop Marketable Skills

• Analytical skills (CFD, FEA, design)
  o How do you know the simulation is working? How can you validate the results?
• Hands-on skills (instrumentation, hand tools, machine tools)
• Project management (Gantt charts, budgeting, earned value)
• People skills (team work, leadership, independent study)
• Continuous education – never stop picking up skills/ knowledge – be curious

Relationships Matter

• Pick up the damn phone! Don’t limit your relationships to email
• Take a brief moment to acknowledge the person before taking on the task
• Spend task-free time with people including co-workers and customers (lunch, activities, etc.)

Communication

• Know your client – listen to their real needs
• Don’t neglect to identify internal clients
• Spend more time listening than talking – you’ll learn more about client/ industry needs than you will if you try to impress people with your ignorance
• Ask questions – even experts don’t understand everything
• Writing skills are critical for promotion, proposal, reporting, etc.

Project Management

• Manage combined challenges of Cost, Schedule and Quality (Safety?)
• Learn rational decision making, potential problem analysis, and failure analysis skills
• Manage client expectations – schedule slip is in the eye of the beholder