



CHAngemaker
Tom Karis, PE

The Industry Is Ready for You, Are You Ready for the Industry?

If you're getting ready to launch your engineering career, you've likely spent years working hard inside and outside the classroom on projects, coursework, jobs, and internships. While what you learned in the classroom is valuable, there are things not covered in textbooks that are just as valuable to know and understand before entering the workforce.

After nearly 35 years as an engineer, I've learned essential tips for making a lasting impression that I wish I had known early in my career. If you're reading this, you're probably well aware, or will become well aware, that our industry is constantly evolving. There is always something new to learn! However, it's important to remember that while technology has changed, people haven't. When it comes to success, three things will never go out of style: **impression, impact, and integrity.**

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Impression

You have one chance to make a first impression, and for young engineers just entering the industry, your resume is your first chance. It's important to differentiate yourself from the competition. Stay accurate, humble, and don't overinflate yourself. As a recent college graduate, you are not expected to be an "expert" and you shouldn't portray yourself as one either. Be proud of your accomplishments.

It's equally important that the company or future boss makes a good impression on you. Know what you want and what your job expectations are. Always ask yourself; is the company a good fit for you? Do you understand the culture and how it fits with your goals and aspirations? Did you make a good connection with the interviewer and your future boss? It's important to do your research. Your success depends on it.

Impact

Expand your scope of influence beyond just your job description. Try to make one impact every day – small or large. Maybe it's a smile or saying good morning to a colleague, peer, or leader in your office, offering to help solve a complex problem, or presenting new approaches to challenges. You will be remembered by the actions you take on a daily basis.

Always look outward, but don't forget to reflect inward. Focus on the results you are helping your team achieve. Focusing on delivering excellence will allow you to make the biggest impact with your work.

Integrity

Never compromise your integrity – it will define you. An engineer makes a direct and vital impact on quality of life and must be dedicated to the protection, safety, and welfare of the public.

Ask the right questions when faced with a challenge. Asking questions forces us to consider all the options. It extends our comfort zone and helps us grow. Perhaps Albert Einstein said it best, “If I had an hour to solve a problem and my life depended on the solution, I would spend the first 55 minutes determining the proper question to ask, for once I know the proper question, I could solve the problem in less than five minutes.”

Becoming an engineer is an extremely rewarding career, one that requires a continual stream of learning. As you navigate through your professional journey, always remember that impression, impact and integrity never go out of style.

About the Author: Tom Karis, PE, is a Chief Engineer at CHA Consulting, Inc. (CHA) with 35 years of transportation infrastructure design, construction, and management experience. Beginning his professional career with CHA in 1986, Tom has advanced his career through his pragmatic approach to problem-solving, comprehensive knowledge of transportation policies and procedures, prudent decision-making, and advocacy and mentoring of young professionals. Throughout his career, he has subscribed to a management style and leadership philosophy that his success is measured by the success of those around him. You can reach Tom at TKaris@chacompanies.com.



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