100 Women Strong Presents:
“The Best Advice I Ever Received”
A compilation of meaningful advice from our members.
Engineering is a People business. You need more than technical skills to be successful!

- Soft skills are a MUST! (soft skills are personal skills that you need to succeed in the workplace such as relationship building, empathy, leadership, negotiation, communication - typically people related and hard to quantify).

- If you are having difficulty working with a peer, have coffee or lunch with them, get to know them as a person, let them know you as a person, then find out what you can do to make their job easier. Do it!

- Managing difficult people is a key skill set for success and ultimately promotion. There are always people who are difficult to work with, quick to anger, backstab... Knowing them as a person allows you to better understand what motivates them and their behavior and leads to finding common ground to work together effectively.

- Most issues start from perceptions rather than facts.

- Don’t take things personally - often it is not about you.
The importance of frequent (effective)communication cannot be overemphasized. If you do not communicate, no one knows what you are doing or the status of your projects.

Bad news does not get better with time. As project challenges are encountered, be upfront with your “customer” and not delay letting them know the situation.

Bad news should be communicated in person if possible. If not, a phone call is second best.

Well written documents are a must. Documents will get distributed to many stakeholders and serve as a surrogate of “your abilities” and represents “you and what you can do” when you are not around.
Network! Build & Maintain Relationships

- Network while you are in school and maintain contact with your classmates after college. You never know how a relationship that you have at Auburn might lead to a business opportunity in the future. The Auburn family is strong!

- Seek out an higher level female manager, invite her to coffee or lunch to just pick her brain. Find out what she thought the keys to her success were, how she feels about the company and her role (some are more honest than others), etc. Early in your career this not only gives you insight, but makes you more visible in the company.

- Engineering involves a lot of teamwork. So whenever you feel completely lost and feel like giving up, confide in your support network. You will feel less alone, you will survive and you will realize it was all worth it in the end! There is a light at the end of the tunnel and it is not a train!
Don’t be a Perfectionist!
(A member’s story)

“When I had just started work at Lockheed Martin after only a few months on the job (my first job out of Auburn) and had my very first performance review I got upset because one piece of constructive criticism was that “I needed to learn that sometimes everything didn’t have to be a Cadillac.” My boss explained that I tended to be perfectionist and wanted to make sure every little detail was right but that takes more time sometimes and sometimes there are tradeoffs – like having something right enough but in on time!! I learned that other factors and priorities were important to consider. Projects also have time and funding constraints and sometimes these are more important than researching something to death until I thought it was perfect. It really hurt my feelings a bit at the time because I thought I was doing so well with my meticulously completed work and to find out later that people were upset because they just wanted me to be done made me feel bad! The bottom line is that this hugely impacted how I approached my work from there on out - when I was assigned something I would ask the customer (internal/external) what was most important: deadline, quality, quantity, budget, etc. And that way I ensured I was tailoring my work to meet THEIR expectations and needs and not my own or making assumptions about what was important because the customer is who gets to determine that one!!

Take Aways:

► Understand the “Customer’s requirements” and deliver to meet those requirements. (Customer is whoever is requiring this work.)

► Apply the correct level of effort to achieve the goal by the due date

► Realize there is a real dollar cost to applying too much effort and it could also delay completion.
Keep your eye on the ball!

- Don’t get so focused on “what’s next” that you fail to focus on the task at hand.

- “Do not look for the job you want to have until you can do the job you have now.” If looking too far ahead there is a risk that while focused on the next project or next opportunity you become slack in your current job.

- “Flourish where I am planted. If I work hard where I am today, future opportunities will present themselves based on my excellent results.”

- Don’t get so caught up in career planning that you forget to focus on today. (Career development is a big emphasis at a lot of companies.)

- Soak up all of the experience and learning you can in your current place so that you are prepared to move on when it is time. You will naturally be noticed and given bright opportunities as a result.

- "Always do your best. What you plant now, you will harvest later."
You’ll learn a lot more when you aren’t wearing your regular “shoes”!

(A member’s story)

“My mentors when I was in college were two women engineers ... one was of Cuban descent, and one was Armenian. I was a 20-year old coop student and we worked for a Utility company in Florida. The project involved utility lineman, so my mentors had the insight to know that we would only be credible if we had “lived in their shoes”. So, off we go to take the two week *Introductory Lineman’s Training Course*. Can you image? 1984, and the three of us in this course, learning to climb poles and string wire? When the corporate photographer came to take a picture of the graduating class, he was caught off guard .... Where would he put the women in the picture? In the front? grouped together? After two weeks together as a team, the line “men” thought of us all as one team, so the guys insisted that we be scattered in the photo. My mentors had shown me that: you’ll learn a lot more when you aren’t wearing your regular “shoes”.
Do what you love and you will never work a day in your life.

- Being happy in what you do is more important than the money you can make. This is often a hard lesson to learn.

- Own your career. If your current job is not meeting the vision you have for yourself or stretching you to reach your potential; find the position that will. It’s your career and you want to enjoy what you do. You want it to challenge you while also being able to operate in your gifting’s.
Don’t be afraid to ask for what you want/need

- Figure out what you need to make “it” (a new job, a new assignment, etc.) worthwhile for yourself and do not be afraid to ask for it. (Always be reasonable.)

- Ask for help when you need it. This is not a sign of weakness but rather strength. But...
  - Be specific in the request.
  - Don’t dump the problem on somebody else.
  - Always come with ideas. It is still your problem or situation to own the outcome.
Never be too busy to LISTEN and really HEAR...

- A wise old owl lived in an oak. The more he heard, the less he spoke. The less he spoke, the more he heard.

- If you are fortunate to work with people who have been in a position for 30-40 years, soak up all the knowledge you can from them. They have so much to offer you.

- If an “operator” or “maintenance technician” tells you something will not work, believe him! There may be no technical reason it won’t work but remember this is a people business. If the solution is perceived to be inconvenient, cumbersome, disruptive, whatever...it will not be successful because the people will not “buy-in”. Often times there is no one-solutions there are options so adjust the approach, find an alternative, and “sell” the solution to those who have to implement it.
Own your career

- "Always do your best. What you plant now, you will harvest later." Success does not come by chance but by hard work and planning.

- Recognize and Seize Opportunities
  - Do not be afraid to walk through an open door.
  - Be who you are. Do not apologize for being yourself.
  - Be willing to help and do what is needed. Work HARD.
  - Be KIND to everyone, no matter of their rank.
  - Accept assignments that might seem odd, but that offer the opportunity to really learn new things.

- Get involved with organizations that will help you develop networking and leadership skills. Volunteer.

- Set Goals
  - Write down your goals. Make them SMART goals
  - Break big goals down into smaller steps and set milestones.
  - Place them where you will see them daily.
Embrace integrity in all that you do!

- Always do what’s right - it may be the tougher path, but at least you’ll sleep at night.
- Behave as if it is YOUR business.
- Don’t ever do anything that you would be ashamed of it if were known.
Strive for Balance...

- Achieve a successful balance among all the demands of your life over time.
  - There will never be a strict schedule that you can stick to - it will be give and take and rebalancing as you go along-sometimes day to day.
  - Whatever is “balanced” is unique to the individual.
  - Balance is not static but changes over time.
  - Things will never by perfect.
  - Be mindful when things are out of whack and make changes to bring things back into balance. You cannot be successful at work if things are not good at home or vice versa.
  - It is never easy.
  - Sometimes you have to make hard choices to find that balance.

- Don’t leave yourself off your to-do list
Learn from your mistakes...
and if you aren’t making any,
you probably aren’t doing anything.

- Learn from your mistakes but don’t beat yourself up about them. Some can be very memorable but correct the error and analyze what happened so that it does not happen again. Mistakes are part of “experience”. You will be a better employee going forward.

- "Don't be afraid to make mistakes. If you're not making mistakes, I'll know you are not doing anything." This conveys that the boss was not expecting perfections, was aware of limitations (skills, experience) and had set realistic expectations.

- Don’t let the fear of making a mistake paralyze you. But on the flip side do not be reckless either.
Accept the compliment

- Sometimes people want to tell you you’re great, they want to tell you about how you’d be great at this new stretch job. Rather than being humble, accept the compliment. This may require practice.
PLAN the work! WORK the plan!

- “Dress me slowly for I am in a hurry” - Napoleon. Make sure you take time to plan ahead and although this is more work on the front end, there will be much less chance for surprises along the way and the quality will be much improved.
- Failing to plan is planning to fail.
- If you do not have the time to do it right, when will you find the time to do it over?
Lead by example....

- Treat people with respect
- Be willing to help do any task
- The people you work alongside will make you successful
Simple is always better…

- Simple is a relative term. Some things are so complex that “simple” in that situation will still be very complex. But always strive for the simplest it can be given the circumstances.
- Razzle/Dazzle is often not required in the working world.
- Many companies operate 24/7. “The least well trained, in the most adverse circumstances, needs to be able to deal with the issues that will arise.”
- The Auburn creed begins with “I believe this is a practical world” - keep that thought in mind to always deliver the simplest but effective solution to whatever your assignment is - be PRACTICAL.
Believe in yourself!

- "The number 1 most limiting factor to success in life is your own self limiting beliefs." If **YOU** don't believe you can do it, you won't have a chance. You must believe in yourself, that you can achieve anything you put your mind to and commit your time to so that others will believe in you.
Focus your daily activities...

- Make a "To do" list of items to accomplish ranked by priority. Helps to maintain focus, track progress, and get more done.
- Working daily on your top 3 priorities is a key to success.
- Take small steps to achieve big goals. Write down your long term goals. Break down the steps or intermediate milestones. Keep this list where you can see it daily so that you keep moving toward those goals.
Understand expectations at the onset

- Setting clear role & responsibility expectations at the beginning of any role or assignment
Always remember and apply the 3 P’s: POSITIVE, PROFESSIONAL, PRAGMATIC

- Co-workers and bosses always appreciate a **positive** outlook and positive solutions, especially during tough, challenging, and controversial situations.

- **Professional** behaviors & actions are a must- ALWAYS! At work and in business situations, others don't need to know private details or deep secrets. (Careful what you share on Facebook!)

- Being a consummate professional is considered a really good thing that serves one well during an entire engineering career - and in life!

- One's career expectations (salary, promotions, job assignments) need to be realistic & **pragmatic**. Expectations of interactions with co-workers and clients should be reasonable. Recommended engineering solutions need to work (i.e. be pragmatic).
Dress appropriately... people do notice!

- You want to be remembered for the job you did not the way you dressed...
  - Nothing that requires continual pulling and adjusting.
  - Definitely not skinny jeans or yoga pants in a business environment
  - Business Casual is not weekend wear
  - Wear shoes you can actually walk in
  - Avoid flip flops and sneakers
  - Be well groomed.
  - “You don’t want to call attention to yourself because of your attire!”

- Choose your attire such that you could confidently walk into any situation at your company on a moment’s notice.

- You don’t want poor choices in attire to become a career limiter.
Begin with the end in mind…
applied to personal finance

- Develop good financial habits early in your career.
  - Plan for the home you want to own.
  - Plan for retirement.
  - Don’t leave money on the table - make sure you get any 401K matching funds.
1. Ability to work in a team structure
2. Ability to make decisions and solve problems
3. Ability to communicate verbally with people inside and outside an organization
4. Ability to plan, organize and prioritize work
5. Ability to obtain and process information
6. Ability to analyze quantitative data
7. Technical knowledge related to the job
8. Proficiency with computer software programs
9. Ability to create and/or edit written reports
10. Ability to sell and influence others
Commit to a task with a YES or a NO not with “I’ll try”
10 POWER TIPS

What are the real secrets of success? Here’s what some proven winners say.

1. Be competitive: "To succeed in business you have to want to win," says Liz Lange, founder and president of Liz Lange Maternity. "Too often, women feel they have to be nice. Don’t," says Lange.

2. It’s not about friendship: "Women want everyone to like them but it doesn’t really matter what people think of you," says Renee Edelman, senior VP of Edelman. "It’s that you get the job done and deliver results."

3. Stand up for yourself: Restaurateur Donatella Arpaia says responsible for two restaurants and 140 people. "I protect my interests, their interests. If someone is going to mess with that, I cut them out like cancer."

4. Trust your instincts: Dozens of people tried to talk Lange out of growing her business, now a major force with nationwide distribution at Target. "There are a lot of naysayers out there," says Lange. "Shut out negative noise and go for it."

5. Always project confidence: Oscar-winning film producer Cathy Schulman says presentation is key. "When someone asks ‘How are you?’ don’t go into a litany of what’s wrong with your life," says Schulman. Instead, present yourself as in control and happy.

6. Own your success: Say goodbye to fear and insecurity, says Arpaia. Have confidence in your decisions, and make them.

7. Reach out to other women: When Lange started her business, she called every woman (and man) she admired and asked to meet. "Don’t be shy," she says. Schulman begins each day by noting colleagues’ accomplishments with a quick call or e-mail. "We don’t have golf so create other communities of support."

8. Insist on being well paid: Don’t view wanting money as ingrateful or "not classy," says Schulman. "Men make decisions on the bottom line. Why shouldn’t we?"

9. It’s OK to make mistakes: When Arpaia realized a business partnership was doomed, she cut ties and moved on. "Don’t obsess over things," she says.

10. Be a problem-solver: If something on Schulman’s desk seems difficult to deal with, she tackles it first. "Big problems are an opportunity to grow."

-JULIE SCELFO
As Dr. Seuss says:

- You have brains in your head.
- You have feet in your shoes.
- You can steer yourself in any direction you choose!
- The women of 100 Women Strong hope that the insights we have shared will help you in steering your career.
QUESTIONS ?
THANK YOU!