



Have you heard or read about engineers becoming dissatisfied with the profession, their employer, or their career and pursuing employment in other occupations? Some suggest the source of dissatisfaction is a result of a conflict between the work the engineer is engaged in and their values and passions. In his book *Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies*, author Jim Collins encouraged companies to ask themselves, “What do we stand for and why do we exist?” That is sound advice for companies wanting to be successful and long lasting. It is critical advice for individuals wanting a satisfying, rich, and rewarding career.

Losing an engineer to some other occupation is a great loss to the profession. It is also expensive for companies and organizations. An engineer’s career consists of years of education and experience, as well as the accumulation of knowledge – all of which are difficult and expensive to replace. Many companies recognize the cost and difficulty associated with training engineers, so they painstakingly vet potential employees to find candidates whose values and passions parallel those of the company. However, even the best companies find this difficult to do consistently and the results are usually hit and miss.

Discovering what inspires and motivates an engineer is not easy. A person can attend exotic retreats, sit in sweat lodges, or practice yoga for months and not discover their core values or passions. Discovering these can take considerable effort and commitment. The best way to simplify the process is to write down your thoughts and compile them into a manifesto. A manifesto – a personal creed – is useful for defining one’s values and passions, and helpful in establishing boundaries to avoid conflicts.

The use of a manifesto has diminished in recent years because of the rise of vision and mission statements; however, a manifesto is fundamentally different. While vision and mission statements are generally vague and company-centric, a manifesto focuses on a person’s own core values and passions and provides direction when making decisions. A manifesto is more than a list of rules. Once implemented, it becomes a personal brand – a kind of personal vision and mission statement – differentiating you from your peers.

Many companies have had great success using manifestos. To reinforce his values, beliefs, and brand, Frank Lloyd Wright used an Apprentice Manifesto which reads: “An honest ego in a healthy body; An eye to see nature; A heart to feel nature; Courage to follow nature; The sense of proportion (humor); Appreciation of work as idea and idea as work; Fertility of imagination; Capacity for faith and rebellion; Disregard for commonplace (inorganic) elegance; and Instinctive cooperation.”

Many successful people have used a manifesto as a guide to keep them aligned with their core values and passions. In June 1938, Edmund N. Carpenter, at the age of seventeen, wrote an inspiring manifesto (www.wsj.com/articles) titled *Before I Die*, highlighting the kind of person he wanted to become, the things he wanted to accomplish, and the experiences he wanted to have to live a full and rewarding

life. Using such a powerful manifesto as a guide, it is not surprising that Carpenter won the Bronze Star during World War II, graduated from Harvard Law School, and was president of a law firm. Using his manifesto as a guide, he no doubt enjoyed a successful professional career and deep personal satisfaction.

My first manifesto was provided by an admired professor at graduation. It is short and direct: “Don’t Kill Anyone.” It was simple and easy to remember but lacked depth and breadth. After a few years of experience and exposure to a variety of situations, I changed my manifesto to read, “Don’t kill anyone as a result of ignorance, arrogance, negligence, or indifference.”

After thirty years of experience, the key points of my current manifesto include:

- Own your career. Your goals, vision, mission, and destiny are yours to decide.
- Be a professional. Your responsibility is to the health, safety, and welfare of the public, and the environment – not to a deadline or profit margin. Before applying your professional seal and signature to any document, pause and reflect on your ethical contract with society.
- Don’t just belong to the profession, contribute to it. Serve the profession with spirited dedication.
- Nurture your creative and technical mind. Ask: What if...? and Why...?
- Be inquisitive. Education never stops. Doubt. Question. Verify. Prove.
- Endeavor for a clear conscience. A clear conscience is the most valuable award, benefit, or acknowledgment you will receive.

A manifesto is a personal roadmap for professional success. A manifesto is about values and passions – period. Nowhere do I declare the titles I want to have, the positions I want to hold, or the amount of money I want to make. They do not belong in a manifesto. Instead, a manifesto focuses on areas that will provide lasting benefits and personal rewards.

Having a manifesto will not guarantee professional success. However, my experience has shown that, when followed, a manifesto will keep a person aligned with their values and passions and provide clear guidance. Best of all, it is a potential antidote for dissatisfaction with one’s profession, employer, or career.

What are your thoughts? Do you have a manifesto? Would you like to share it? The discussion continues at www.STRUCTUREmag.org. ■



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