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INTRODUCTION

In today's business world, people recognize process skills as the "coin of the realm." What we know, and most importantly, how fast we can do something with that knowledge, is powerful stuff in this fast-paced, unforgiving, global economy. Too often, we IEEE members, especially younger engineers, spend so much time honing technical skills—that we can miss the digital economy's important message: *The future belongs to the fleet of mind and market*. People use process skills to manage and modify actions in completing daily living, as well as professional, tasks—such as pacing oneself, choosing and using appropriate tools to complete a task, or organizing a task into a logical sequence for successful completion.

In this brief volume, I distill fifty years of engineering and IEEE experience into what I hope are valuable nuggets of wisdom you can use to help your career. I talk about knowledge, process skills and enabling skills. Always remember, you are the master of your fate—no one else. You control what happens to you. You are in charge of maintaining and growing your skills bank. I hope this book motivates you to do so, with both commitment and gusto.

Through your knowledge and process skills, you can help to shape the company that employs you. You realize the true value of your skills when you can translate them into new processes your company can use to gain and maintain strategic market advantage. Your true value as an employee, manager and leader is about teaching these skills to those whose career development rests in your hands. Process skills are not meant to be hoarded, but should be shared among colleagues and friends, and especially those you mentor.

In tough times, your process skills can be a powerful selling point for why another company should hire you. And though I explore process skills from the vantage point of an engineering manager/leader—they really apply to all levels of a professional career. They can become the lynchpin of your resume. Process skills are powerful tools, and those who know how to wield them—and even create new ones—will be tomorrow's business leaders.

Metaphorically speaking, process skills are *the action verbs of your career*—the know-how to integrate knowledge and make something happen. These skills are *must-haves* for the engineer's toolbox.

~Harry Roman
IEEE Life Senior Member

TWO GREAT ENABLING SKILLS

Let's boil this down. Five years out of school, your two greatest skills on the job, the most versatile ones (and the ones most likely to help you move up in the company) are not your technical skills. Learn this early, and avoid a great deal of frustration.

These two skills are being able to write and speak effectively. Take note of this big reality: in your career, you will not appear regularly in front of your company's senior management. Likely, you just will not have that kind of exposure. People in high authority positions will judge you by how well you write; and perhaps, by what they hear come out of your mouth in a presentation, or meeting. Your written reports *can* make their way to senior management desks, where high-level executives will most certainly scrutinize your writing style.

At most, you may have 10-15 minutes with senior managers in a meeting or conference, or perhaps at a budget hearing or technology/project update session. *That* is your oral exposure window. You must be able to make it count.

Polish your written reports, and practice giving oral presentations, as often as you can. These two skills will last well beyond your early years—and will open up many interesting career and personal opportunities. Throughout my career, these two, important communication skills were my opportunities to serve as a water commission president in my hometown; sit on my alma mater's engineering school advisory board; teach graduate school at two local universities; serve as a docent and special lecturer at a national historical park; hold high office in various IEEE volunteer positions, and many other public occasions. I have published many professional papers, articles and books, which I could have never done without the ability to write well. I have also lectured in front of many engineering societies and committees, as an invited speaker. Excellent writing and speaking skills are what will allow you to work with many other professionals, creating all sorts of favorable circumstances and ideas that you can use to sell new concepts to your company. All processes are fundamentally "enabled" through communications that are clear, concise and powerful.

I retired early from a career I loved so much, that I felt I never worked a day in my life for 36 years. However, the company's management and leadership changed radically, and I felt it was time to leave. Opportunities for me to implement new processes in my old company were evaporating.

I was an R&D guy, with few process opportunities, which became stifling. Fortunately, my previous track record of new processes and well-polished writing and speaking skills moved me seamlessly into consulting, advisory and authorship roles at a foundation—where I work with schools, teachers and educational leaders to teach teachers and students about STEM, invention and engineering. Now, I have a second wonderful career. You can reap such benefits as well. Master the written and spoken word. These enabling process skills will most likely gain you an audience—get you on the train, so to speak. It may lead you to develop other new processes for your company, for your own benefit, and to highlight your resume.