Direct Connect Session

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Things to think about moving into the engineering community:

1. Communication:
    a. Be grammatically correct – yes, good written and verbal skills are still important.
    b. Spell check, proofread – written communication as well as drawings.
    c. Reduce use of this, that, these, it – they can be ambiguous; spell out what it is you're referring to.
    d. Your writing should be well thought out – thorough, yet concise.
    e. Engineers aren't necessarily the best writers so it's something we have to try hard to overcome. Being a good communicator can separate you from the rest of the crowd.
    f. **There is no worse lie than a truth misunderstood by those who hear it**.
2. Listen to your clients:
    a. Ask good leading questions when they are asking for advice.
    b. Try to get a full understanding of the issue. The real problem may be slightly different from the initial question.
    c. Don't be quick to <u>assume</u> what a client is looking for to show off your engineering skills and knowledge. Let the problem come to you by asking good questions.
3. Trust:
    a. It takes a long time to build trust with clients – and it can be destroyed in no time flat.
    b. It has to be <u>earned</u> and <u>deserved</u>.
    c. Be fair and honest with <u>all</u> your clients.
    d. Read *The Trusted Advisor* by David Maister, Charles Green and Robert Galford.
    e. Don't be afraid to say you need to look into something for an answer. You don't always have to have an immediate answer.
    f. Helping your clients solve their problems goes a long way in nurturing relationships.
    g. Being <u>helpful</u> trumps being <u>right</u>.
4. Client Relations:
    a. You will find all of your clients are different – different personalities, different hot buttons, and different interests.
    b. Most of the time we are a consultant.
    c. Learn to adapt to all of the different client personalities and meet them on their terms.
    d. Treat them all the same – big and small.
5. Computer Software:
    a. There is a significant reliance on software to do all the design work for us.
    b. While this comes as a great benefit to us, it is not without risk.
    c. Learn and <u>understand</u> all the peculiarities and idiosyncrasies of each program you use. They all have differences.
    d. You must understand each program and its limitations to use them effectively and correctly. This applies to the analysis as well as the design portions of a program.
6. Social Skills:
    a. You do not need to be the smartest engineer on the planet.
    b. Learn to get along with others – both your clients as well as other members of your firm.
    c. Never talk behind people's backs. If you wouldn't say it to their face, it isn't worth repeating. It is an incredibly small and connected world. There a significantly good chance saying something bad will come back to haunt you.
7. Engineering:
    a. Be humble. I still learn new things every day.
    b. Be willing to listen to/overhear other engineer's discussions. You can learn the thought process for thinking through problems effectively, and you might just learn something new.
    c. Our knowledge and design principles are changing all the time. Be willing to go with the flow and adapt to new changes.
    d. See 3h above.