

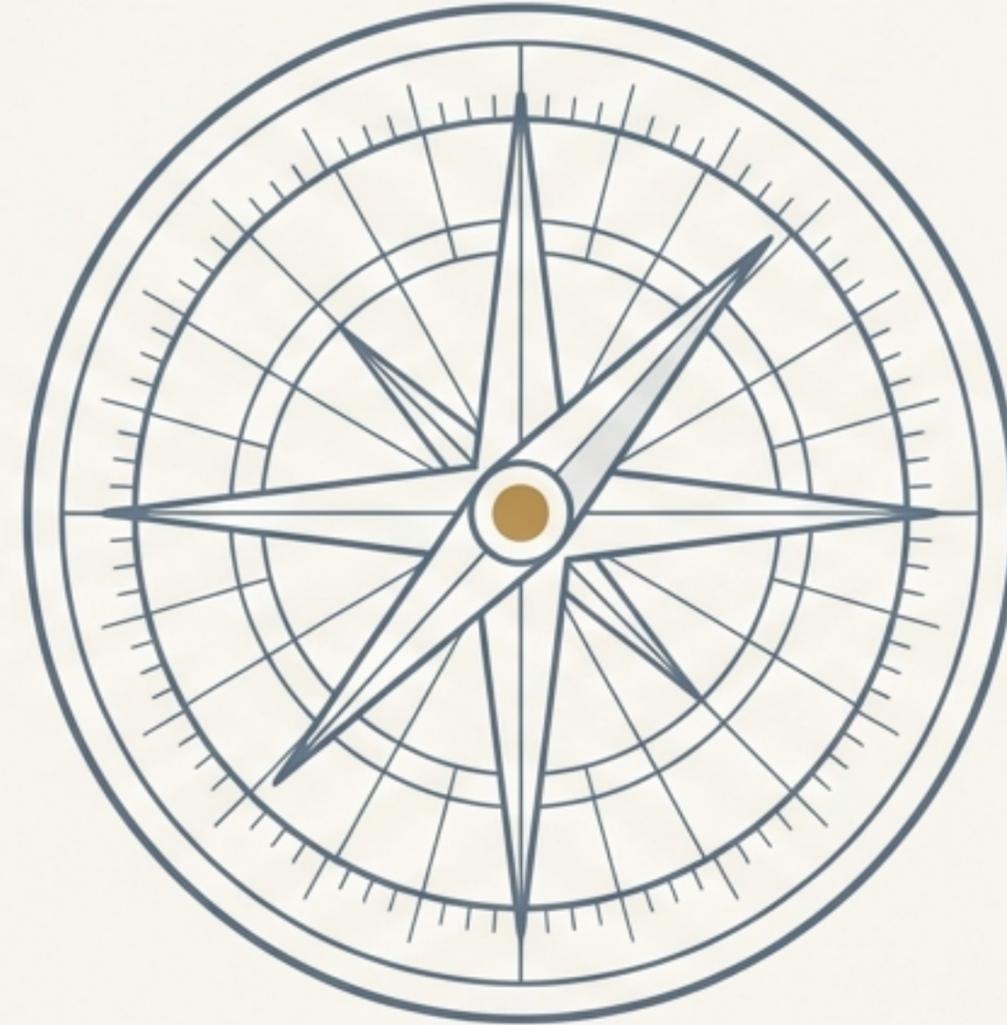
The Engineer's Odyssey: Blueprints for a Modern Career

Distilled Wisdom from Leaders in Engineering,
Engineering, Technology, and Business

This Isn't a Map; It's a Compass

We've distilled hundreds of hours of conversations with successful alumni into a guide for navigating the modern career. We'll explore four key domains that shape a fulfilling and impactful professional life.

Part 1: The Inner Compass —
Core Mindsets for Navigating
Uncertainty



Part 4:
Charting the
Future —
Leading
Through
Technological
Revolution

Part 2: The
Builder's
Toolkit —
Essential
Skills for a
Dynamic
World

Part 3: The Architect's Vision —
From Doing the Work to
Driving Impact

Your Career is a Jungle Gym, Not a Ladder

Success is rarely linear. Pivots, exploration, and even perceived detours are features, not bugs. They build resilience and a unique combination of skills.



“I wish I had known that careers aren’t linear. Do what excites you, not just what you majored in. It’s okay to pivot.”

— **Alice Yan**, who transitioned from biomedical and mechanical engineering to a leadership role in a health tech startup.



“Don’t put yourself in a box. Just because you’re an engineer doesn’t mean you can’t be an author, entrepreneur, or leader in other fields. Engineering gives you the tools to solve problems—how you apply those skills is up to you.”

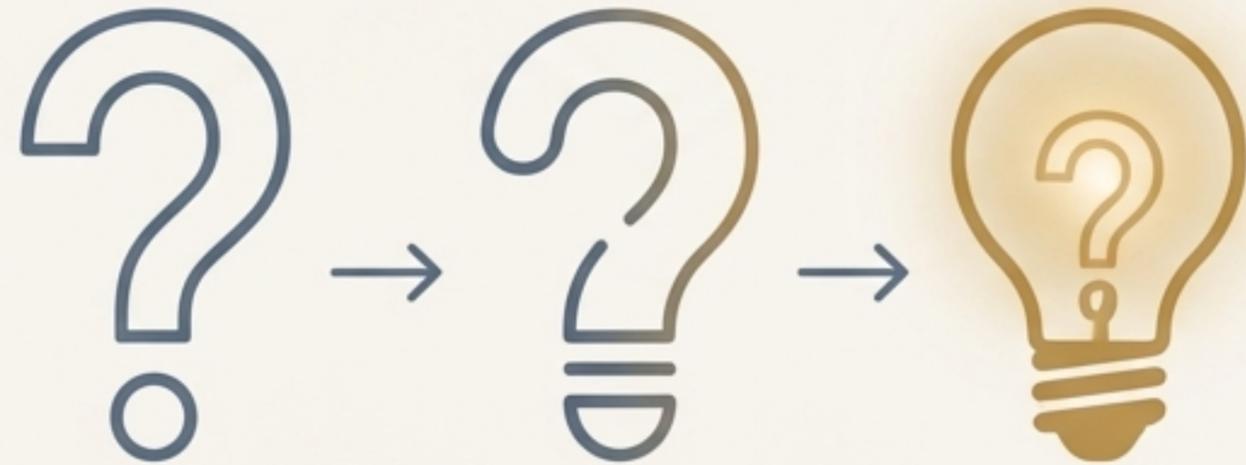
— **Malika Grayson, PhD**, Program Manager & Founder of Steminist Empowered.

Impostor Syndrome is a Signal, Not a Verdict

The feeling that you don't belong often means you're in precisely the right environment to grow. Transform "not knowing" from a source of anxiety into a catalyst for curiosity.

“Impostor syndrome is the greatest thing that can happen to you. We all know that if you're the smartest person in the room, you're in the wrong room. So if you feel impostor syndrome, that means you're in the right place.”

— **Stuart Peña Feliz**,
Founder & CEO

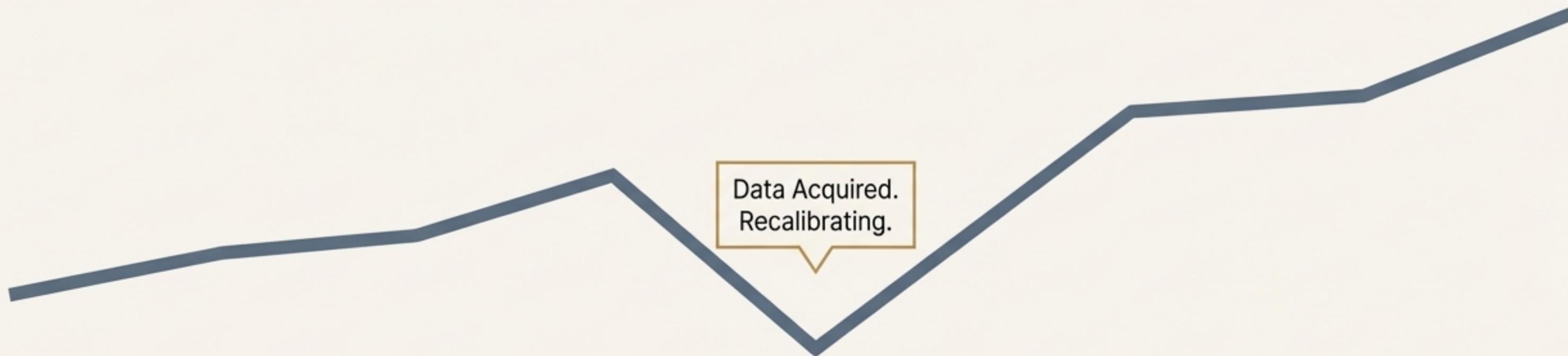


“I realized that *not knowing* is an opportunity. Now, when I meet someone who is really knowledgeable, I get *excited* to ask questions.”

— **Alissa Diminich**,
Civil Engineer

Setbacks are Setups

Challenges, rejections, and moments of high stress are unavoidable. The key is to treat them not as judgments on your worth, but as valuable data points for learning and recalibration.

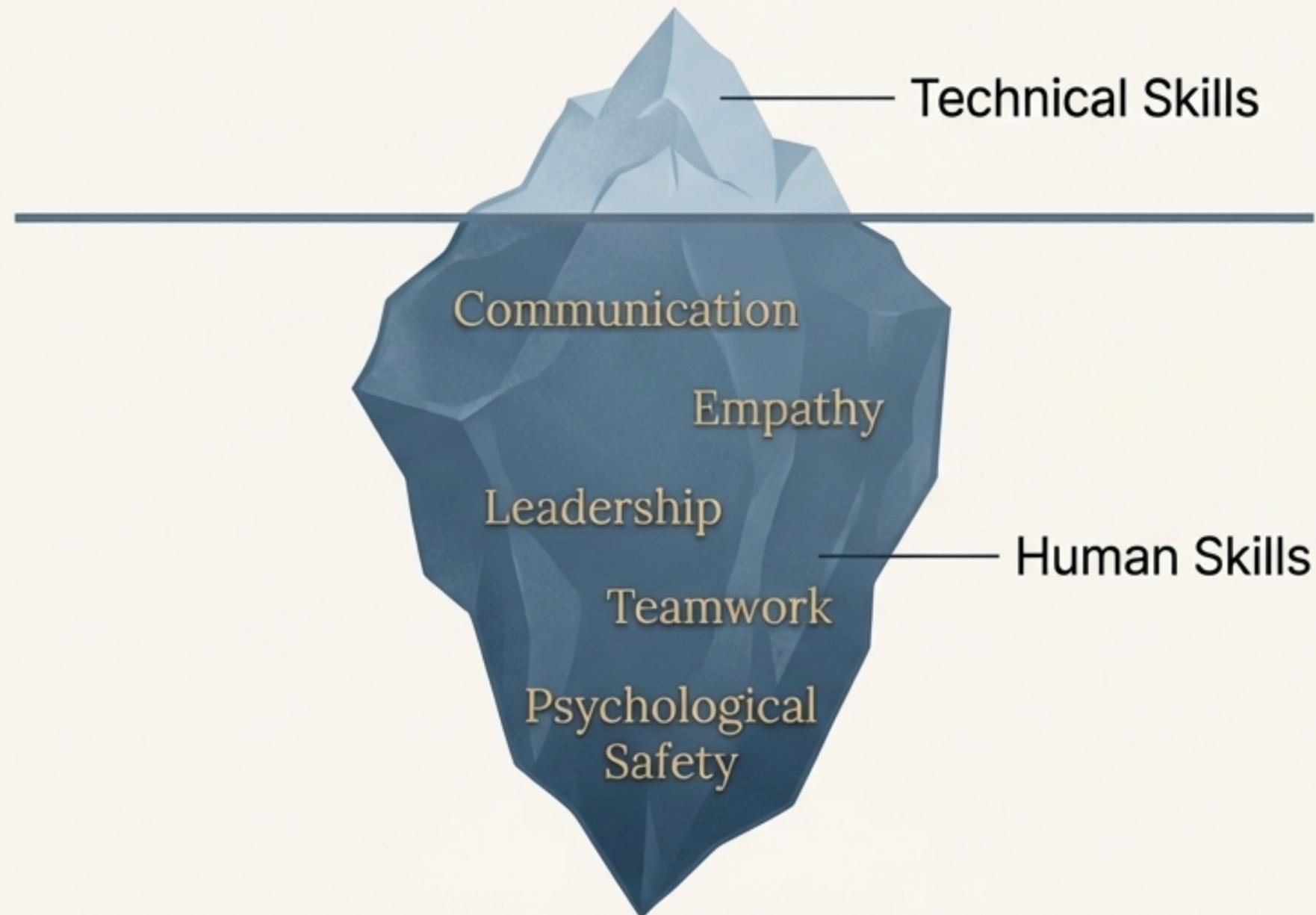


After not receiving a return offer from a key internship, **Caitlin Stanton** wrote a personal blog post about the rejection. It went viral on LinkedIn, revealing how common—and survivable—such setbacks are.

“It’s not like you’re going to get to some magical paradise just over the horizon... The growth can come from working to manage that [stress].” — **Matt Richwine**, Founder & CEO, on the constant nature of challenge.

Technical Problems are Solvable. People Problems are the Real Challenge.

Key Idea: Your technical skills will get you in the door. Your ability to communicate, lead, and collaborate with empathy will determine how high you rise.



“ The technical challenges as an engineer... are always solvable. It's the people challenges that... become a little bit more difficult.

— Chaz Calitri, VP of Operations, Kyowa-Kirin

Google spent millions researching what makes teams successful. The number one factor? **Psychological safety**. Do team members feel they can speak their minds, disagree, and still be respected?

— Debbie Madden, Serial Tech Entrepreneur

The Most Valuable Person in the Room is the Bridge

In a world of specialists, immense value is created by those who can translate complex ideas across different domains—from engineering to business, science to operations.



“The fact that I could explain... how things worked at YouTube or Spotify to the people whose whole background was signing artists... was the thing that got me where I was. It was being able to take engineering and technical stuff and speak English, right?”
— **Howie Singer**, former Music Industry Executive

Technique: Use frameworks like **SBAR** (Situation, Background, Assessment, Recommendation) to deliver clear, concise, and actionable information, especially in high-stakes environments.
— **Esther L.**, Regulatory & Safety Pharmacist

Go Deep. Go Global. Get a Mentor.

A great career is intentionally constructed through a combination of deep expertise, broad perspective, and a strong support system.

1. Go Deep



Gain true proficiency in a technical area to build acumen.

2. Go Global



Seek experiences that expose you to different cultures and ways of thinking.

3. Get a Mentor



Find trusted advisors who can help you navigate the “real way that things happen and how things get done.”

The Strategy: Think of your network in “boxes, not lines.”

Attending a single reunion or conference is efficient because it allows you to reconnect with an entire ‘box’ of contacts at once. — **Tony S.**

From Industry Expert to Founder

Entrepreneurship often isn't a sudden stroke of genius. It's the culmination of deep industry experience, identifying a critical problem, and finding the right partners to make the leap.

Industry Experience

The Path: After 10 years at GE, **Matt Richwine** had deep industry knowledge. He made the leap to start his own company only when he "met someone else who had a very complimentary skill set" and a shared mission.

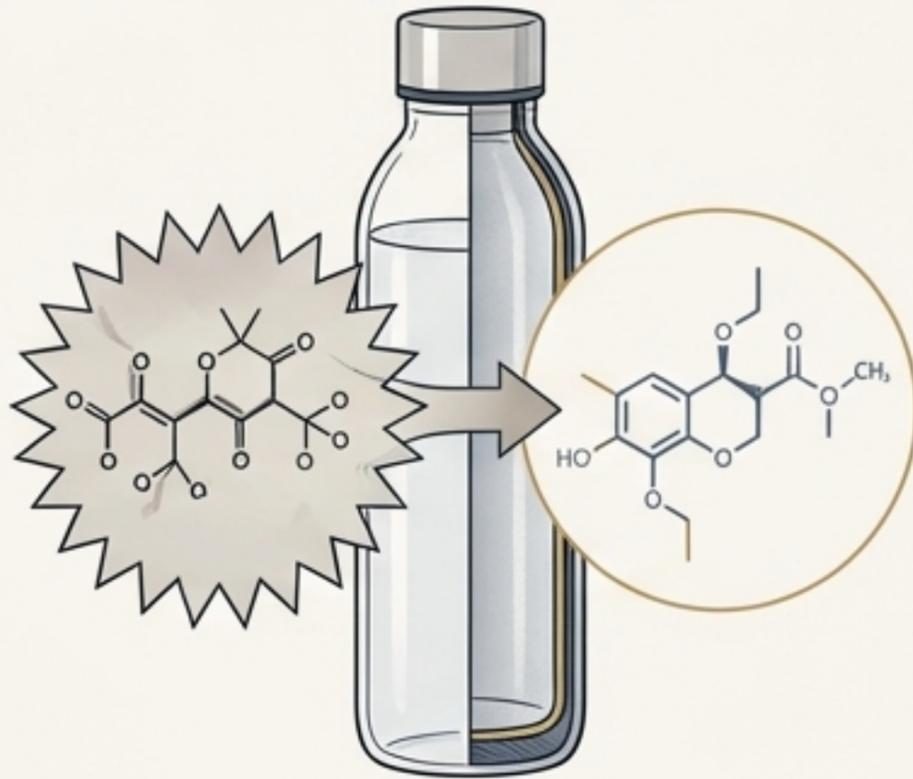
The Leap



The Reality: "I didn't plan to start a company... I doubted whether I had what it took... There were a lot of rejections... The first 'yes' was pivotal."
— **Ilayda K.**, Founder & CEO of LLume.

The Mission is the Motivation

The most profound careers are animated by a purpose beyond profit. Use your engineering mindset to create a healthier, more sustainable, and more equitable world.



Sustainability: Florencia Paredes leads product at a software company that helps materials engineers remove “forever chemicals” (PFAS) from consumer products faster.



Health & Equity: Jason Wright develops assistive technology for individuals with paralysis because as our world moves into the digital realm, “it’s just so important that people with physical disabilities aren’t left behind.”



Community: Abena Ojetayo uses her civil engineering background to lead resilience and equity initiatives in local government, helping her city transition to 100% net renewable energy.

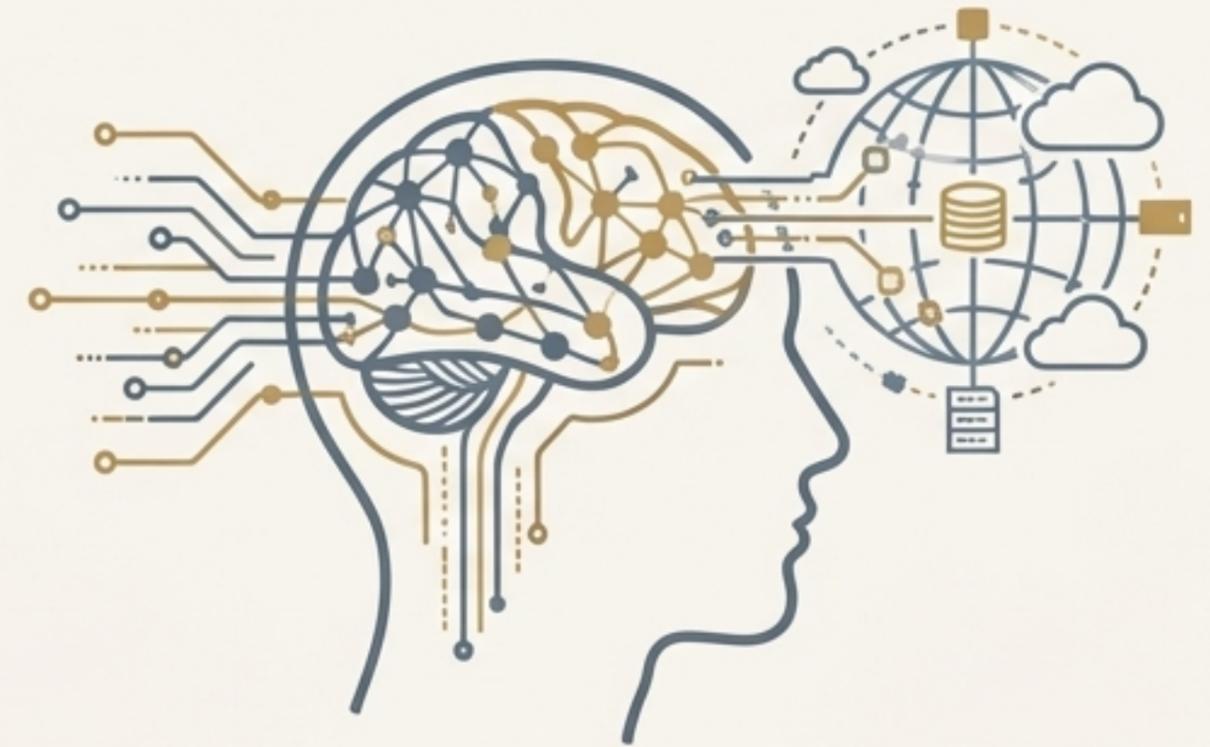
“We are now living through... the first revolutionary technology change [of our generation].”

Artificial Intelligence isn't just another tool; it's a foundational shift comparable to the invention of the automobile. The challenge for leaders is not just to adopt it, but to grapple with its societal consequences.



c. 1904

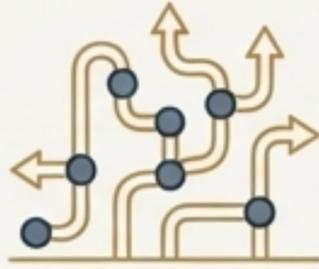
“[AI] is more akin to the days when you saw a horse and buggy on the exact same road that you saw the first vehicles in 1904. It's that style disruption.” — **Patrick Nichols**, Managing Director, Vista Equity Partners.



Today

“What would you do if you displaced 500 million knowledge workers? ...That's not a question that the commercial markets are well tuned to answer. The right places [to answer it are] likely at institutions like Cornell here.” — **Patrick Nichols**

Key Takeaways for Your Odyssey



1. Cultivate a Growth Mindset

Embrace non-linear paths, treat failure as data, and get comfortable with not knowing.



2. Be a Translator

Master the human stack. Your ability to communicate complex ideas simply is your superpower.



3. Build Your Capital

Go deep in your craft, seek diverse experiences, and proactively build your network of mentors and allies.



4. Find Your Mission

Apply your problem-solving skills to challenges that create a healthier, more equitable, and sustainable world.



5. Lead the Revolution

Understand AI's profound impact. Learn to use it as a tool and prepare to lead responsibly through the disruption.

The Journey of a Thousand Miles...

Grand journeys are built from small, intentional actions. Start today.

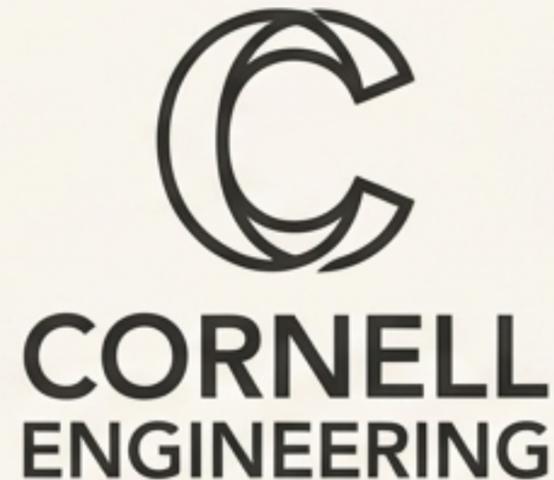
- 💡 **This Week:** Ask one “dumb” question in a meeting.
- 💬 **This Month:** Reach out to one person on LinkedIn or CUeLINKS for a 15-minute conversation.
- 👥 **This Quarter:** Volunteer for a task outside your comfort zone, especially one others might avoid.



“Don’t stress, do your best, and accept the rest.” — **Garrett Lang**, Founder of PlateRate

The Voices of Experience

The insights in this presentation were compiled and synthesized from dozens of interviews with alumni, primarily featured on the award-winning Engineering Career Conversations podcast from Cornell University.



Listen to the full conversations and continue your journey of learning.

Thank You.

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