The Effective Engineer

Make a Disproportionate Impact

THE EFFECTIVE ENGINEER

How to Leverage Your Efforts in Software Engineering to Make a Disproportionate Impact

Edmond Lau

Foreword by Bret Taylor
CEO of Quip and Former CTO of Facebook

Effective Engineers

Produce results
Get things done efficiently
Focus on value and impact

Success

Your career success and growth is proportional to the value you create

$$\text{Impact} \neq \text{Technical Ability} + \text{Experience}$$

- Technical ability plateaus over time

- Experience solving the same scale/scope of problems does not increase your impact

Growing

Identify and solve problems that are **core to the business** and enable those around you to effectively solve these problems.

Decide where to spend your efforts to maximize your impact

- Which business problems to solve

- What software to build

- What code to write

How to be Effective

Adopt the Right Mindset
Execute, Execute, Execute
Build Long-Term Value

Adopt the Right Mindset

- Focus on high leverage activities

$$\text{Leverage} = \frac{\text{Impact Produced}}{\text{Time Invested}}$$

- Optimize for learning

- Prioritize regularly

Execute, Execute, Execute

- Make a plan

- Invest in iteration speed

- Measure what you want to improve

- Validate ideas early and often

- Improve your project estimation skills

Build Long-Term Value

- Balance quality with pragmatism

- Minimize operational burden

- Invest in your team's growth

Grow as an Engineer #1

- Build tools/abstractions that multiply the output of engineering teams

- Develop expertise to consult on software and experiments from other engineers

- Deep technical expertise in an area core to the business/growing the company

Grow as an Engineer #2

- Identify critical business opportunities and build a solution to address that need

- Build on-boarding/mentoring programs to train engineers in increase their value

- Play a key role in developing a solid hiring process and help recruit top talent

- Contribute to build the engineering brand of the company

Taking Ownership

is the most effective way to get what you want

Reference

The Effective Engineer by Edmond Lau
Key Takeaways (PDF)