These 3 Common Mistakes Are Holding You Back at Work, According to a Former Meta Engineer Known as the 'Coding Machine'

Software engineers are likely making a few common mistakes that prevent them from advancing in their careers, says a former Meta senior staff engineer — and these mistakes are general enough to apply to any job.

Michael Novati, an engineer who spent eight years at Meta and earned the nickname "Coding Machine" after being the top code committer company-wide for several years, told "The Peterman Pod" that there are three common mistakes engineers and other professionals make that prevent them from moving forward in their careers.

Novati, who now works at a remote software engineering fellowship program, Formation, as its chief technology officer, said one problem is "thinking too much" and "not doing enough." Novati said that oftentimes developers come to him to ask for advice or questions without first "turning the gears" and writing code to address the problem.

"Step one is do something, just do anything," Novati told "The Peterman Pod."

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The second mistake Novati identified is not asking "the right

people" for feedback, or not going to "respected people" or "people who have that experience and taste and judgement" for advice on how to improve. He gave the example of his days at Meta, when he was writing so much code that his manager spent all day reviewing it. His manager was the respected person Novati turned to for feedback, because his manager had the "judgement and taste" that Novati aspired to have.

The third mistake, which Novati admitted to making "a lot," was not taking action on feedback and taking it more as a harsh judgment or a pat on the back of approval than a call to action.

"My advice to people who are ambitious and who want to get those perfect scores and check off all the boxes is to really reflect on feedback, on how you can improve and try to push your comfort zone there, instead of trying to look at it as a judgment or a grade," Novati said.

The end goal is to "write a lot of code," get feedback from experienced people, and "actually [take] action" on the feedback, Novati said.

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As AI advances, software engineers might not have to write as much code as they used to, anyway. Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella said in April that engineers at Microsoft are using AI to generate up to 30% of new code at the company. Google CEO Sundar Pichai stated in the same month that Google was generating "well over 30%" of new code with AI.

Meanwhile, Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei predicted in March that AI would take over coding completely for all software engineers within a year.

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