Your Work Won’t Promote You

Even in chip design, visibility beats velocity.

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THE DATA

Time to document impact

The time it took one engineer to realize he’d been overlooked for promotion despite years of high-impact work.

Engineers in semiconductor R&D often work in silos, building complex systems that only they fully understand. Without documentation, their contributions remain invisible to leadership and promotion committees. The article shows that even when work is critical — like enabling AI-driven chip design flows — it goes unrecognized if not formally recorded.



Source: IEEE Spectrum · Published November 06, 2026
https://spectrum.ieee.org/how-to-get-a-promotion

01

Documentation is the new design layer

In advanced semiconductor development, where design cycles span months and teams span continents, a 'brag document' isn’t self-promotion — it’s operational necessity. Every breakthrough in AI-assisted layout, power optimization, or yield improvement must be logged in a way that non-specialists can understand. This turns tacit knowledge into institutional memory, which is essential for scaling innovation across fabrication plants and process nodes.



02

Promotions reward visibility, not just velocity

In the semiconductor industry, where technical excellence is assumed, the difference between a senior engineer and a principal engineer is often not the code or the design — it's the ability to communicate impact. The article reveals that engineers who fail to document their work are effectively invisible to promotion committees, even when their work directly enables AI-driven chip architectures or reduces time-to-market for next-gen logic nodes. Visibility isn't vanity — it's the mechanism by which innovation is recognized and rewarded.

George Arnold Alexander III, MPA

Partner, ALEX Companies
Associate Broker, Alexander Tiffany Southwest, LLC
Licensed Broker in TX, CO, NC, AL

george@alex.realestate · +1 713.918.9951

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