

Interview with Femi Sokoya, Implementation



MEMP Alumnus

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Services Project Manager at Epic

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It's a chilly winter evening in Wisconsin. Femi Sokoya, who works as an Implementation Services Project Manager at Epic, is in town for a change, looking forward to a relaxing evening at home after work. Epic is a privately held healthcare software company that works with large hospitals to provide them with solutions and products that serve their IT needs. As he starts wrapping up his tasks for the day, his phone rings.

"Hi, Pranav. How are you doing today?" he says, picking up the phone.

"Good evening, Femi. Thank you so much for taking the time to talk to me today."

"You're welcome. How can I help you?"

"I would like to talk to you about a few things about your current role at Epic that our readers back in the MEM program would love to hear. To start, could you elaborate on your role at Epic?"

"Epic is one of the largest healthcare IT providers in the country. We have a platform that allows some of the largest hospitals in the country to effectively consolidate and store the large amounts of medical data they generate on a day-to-day basis. We then have a number of products and applications that are built on top of this platform that allows the hospital to perform specific tasks with this data. I work with two products: Willow Ambulatory, an outpatient pharmacy application, and Willow Inpatient, an inpatient pharmacy application. My primary role is to work with our clients—hospitals and pharmacies—to help them get the most out of these applications. Our products are customized based on client needs and I work closely with clients to accurately determine their needs and help the product team deliver customization as needed. I also work with IT departments within the hospitals to help them use our platform to build specific products and solutions that cater to their needs. There is a lot of client interaction involved. I really like it."

I travel quite a bit, which is why some days might involve me leaving town first thing in the morning or spending all day at the client location.

"That's great. It sounds to me like a job profile that very closely matches with the courses we cover in MEM. What is a typical day like at work?"

"It absolutely is like that. Like any professional's day, my day begins with responding to emails from clients and colleagues. Since it is a client-facing role, I travel quite a bit, which is why some days might involve me leaving town first thing in the morning or spending all day at the client location. I would say that one of the most important functions that I perform in my capacity is trying to make our software easy to use. This involves extensively talking to clients and observing their behavior as they use the product. This helps the product team develop upgrades and improvements."

“What skills do you think are most valued in your line of work?”

“In my opinion, the most important skill you need is to be able to communicate easily with really smart people. I have to work with a lot of different people on a daily basis. I act as a liaison between our customers and our engineers and I have to be able to relate to both groups very well. Second, in a company such as Epic, it is very important to be self-directed. I don't have a boss telling me what to do all the time. I have a team leader and a mentor but they are only there to convey broad objectives and to act as a resource. You also need to be a problem solver and be able to break big issues down into smaller pieces.”

“That sounds both challenging and exciting. How have you leveraged what you learned at Duke?”

“The whole MEM experience was amazing. Unlike other programs that push you to a particular field, it gives you the ability to explore diverse career paths. With so many options present, both in the coursework and in potential career opportunities, you have the freedom to choose a role that is suited to your liking. It was a period of a lot of introspection for me as I tried to figure out the right path. It allows you to leverage your background effectively. As a biomedical engineer, it definitely helped me do so. I found the breadth of knowledge that it gives you very beneficial as well. Subjects like Law and Management helped me understand how organizations and teams function. I find this very useful in my current role.”

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“That's a great way to look at the program. I'm sure a lot of our readers will find it interesting. What advice would you give to someone interested in a job such as yours?”

“First of all, you should be a people person. You should have the ability to communicate effectively with a diverse set of people, since you work with both the engineering teams and the customers very closely. Articulating your thoughts and ideas in a way that is easy for others to understand is also a skill you should have. Finally, you should be very passionate about what you do.”

“Another question that a lot of students think about before they consider joining an organization is its culture. How would you describe the culture at Epic?”

“The culture here is incredible. It is a very flat organization and the work environment is not stressful at all. There is no dress code so you can dress comfortably on days you don't have to meet a client. Everyone here is passionate and love what they do. They're also very helpful. I really enjoy it over here.”

“That does sound great. Finally, where do you see yourself 5 years from now?”

“Honestly, I don't see myself leaving Epic for a long time. I love the culture here and as long as it stays the same I would not consider changing. At the same time, I would probably consider a job that involves less travelling, but that would only be more than 5 years down the line if I settle down and have a family.”

“Thanks a lot for talking to me today, Femi. I really enjoyed it.”

“Not a problem at all. Anything to help out my fellow MEMers. Take care!” ■
