

What It's Like Being a Product Manager for Medtronic with Andrew Bochenko



Medtronic

MEMP Alumnus

2010

By Shreevaishnavi Venugopalan



Andrew Bochenko, originally from Southern California, pursued a bachelor of science in biomedical engineering at the University of Rochester. He chose to pursue the Master of Management Degree at Duke over three semesters. He contributed to CDAR while at the program and led the committee as well. He worked with Medici Medical Technologies Inc. as a Senior Project Engineer for more than a year. He also worked with CRISI Medical Systems, Inc. as an Engineer. He is currently working with Medtronic Diabetes as a Global Product Manager.

“I would like to know more about the day to day activities involved with the role of a product manager in a medical device company,” said Vaishnavi.

“No two days are the same as I work in a very cross-functional environment. I serve as the technical product manager and upstream marketing lead for insulin pumps as they go through the product development process. I’m a subject matter expert on the product and represent the voice of the business and voice of the customer on these programs. My job is to work with the team and make trade-offs to make the best product we can, given the timing and resource constraints. My day involves interacting with engineers on technical reviews, consulting on regulatory submission strategy, reviewing user guides, editing user interfaces with the human factors team, giving input on launch strategy and more. Insulin pumps require a lot of user interaction, so it’s important that they are simple and easy to use while serving the needs of patients. I really enjoy the different people and topics I deal with day to day and enjoy putting the different parts of the puzzle together.”

No two days are the same. I ensure that projects being chosen and worked on cater to the needs of the patients.

“What are some of the skills that are most valuable in your field of work?”

“The ability to communicate effectively and break down problems. You also have to be comfortable with change. It’s important to be able to take different people’s opinions and perspectives and bring them together. Emotional intelligence is a valuable asset that helps one understand and read people better. The engineering problem solving process applies to people and business as well as developing the product.”

“Thanks, Andrew. That will help students understand the skills they would need to focus on. What are some of the challenges one might face while taking up this role?”

“The role requires an individual to pick up domain knowledge quickly. One should develop skills that will help them work in a place where they are constantly challenged by unknown situations. MEMP group projects provide the perspective of working in the real world with different priorities. The role involves managing projects and it’s important to have passion for your project.”

“What are the courses and social events that you would recommend for students currently pursuing the MEM degree who wish to pursue a career similar to yours?”

“Networking events help build skills that one would use while working. The Friday seminars are a great opportunity to interact with students and gain a wide variety of perspectives. I use a good amount of learning from the course in project management. The finance, management, law, and marketing courses have provided a strong backbone for the cross-functional work I do. Students could consider courses in project management, product management and also explore courses from Fuqua. The Industrial Practicum aids in teamwork and creates a real world experience.”

“Could you tell me more about the work culture at Medtronic Diabetes?”

“The organization is more than fifty years old and has a very strong culture. Everyone is passionate to do the right thing and work towards restoring health and extending life. People are helpful and collaborative. Culture varies based on the people you are working with and the office set up. Culture is very important and there is a lot to gain from it. Since the office I work in was acquired in 2004, it is inclined towards a startup culture. The startup culture creates an environment of change and movement in the company, which has its strengths and weaknesses. There is also a regional differences across the country with respect to culture.”

The experience of living with people from various cultures helped me be open to different thinking and perspectives.

“What was your most valuable experience at Duke that you can recall?”

“I lived at Campus Walk and this created a great opportunity to meet people from different parts of the world. I happened to make some very good friends from various countries. I attended a friend’s wedding in India. The experience of living with people from various cultures helped me be open to different thinking and perspectives. I also worked in a startup alongside a biomedical engineering PhD who was getting his MBA. This enhanced my ability to think out of the box. We iterated often, allowing ourselves to fail, learn, and explore new avenues.”

“Andrew, thanks for sharing your experience. Where do you see yourself professionally in the next five years, as this would prove to be a source of inspiration for the current students?”

“I wish to continue my career in medical devices. I look to gain more experience, get some product launches under my belt, and develop into a leader in the product management or program management role. I can see myself heading up a cross-functional product development team and becoming the voice of a customer champion.”

“Thank you your time, Andrew. I’m sure the students of MEMP will appreciate your insight on the industry’s expectations and what they should focus on to excel in their careers. Hope you have a great week ahead.”

“It was my pleasure. I wish all the students great success.” ■
