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Meet Adora: A pioneer who tests the boundaries of tech

13 min read

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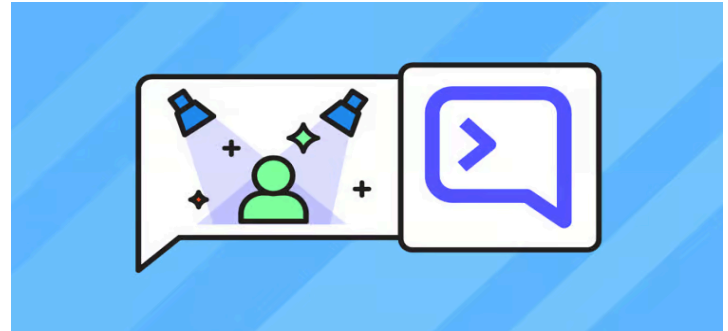
Nenne Adaora Nwodo, professionally known as Adora Nwodo, is a Software Engineer from Lagos, Nigeria. She currently works at Microsoft where she builds Mixed Reality in the Cloud. She is also the published author of "Cloud Engineering for Beginners" and is well on her way to publish a second book.

Adora has built an expansive community through her YouTube channel and blog, AdoraHack where she posts content related to technology and her career. Through her personal brand, she pushes past the boundaries in tech and tackles new challenges. Adora shows her community that a career in tech isn't just about coding, it can be whatever you make it. She uses her platform to build communities, write books and courses, create her personal brand, and motivate her peers to learn something new.

This past winter, Adora partnered with Educative Answers to host a technical writing workshop within her community in Nigeria. This is just one of the ways she has encouraged learning within her community by utilizing her platform. Keep reading Adora's story below to learn about how she expands her presence in the tech community worldwide.

> Could you tell me a little bit about your role at Microsoft?

"At my job, I build mixed reality on the cloud. Specifically, I work on infrastructure, rather than the product itself, and all the necessary tools to allow people to build their own metaverses. So I would say that I am working on the

metaverse toward the future of inward computing, which we might be able to see in the next few years."

> How did you move into mixed reality at Microsoft?

"Well, the short answer is that I got my current role. But how I got my role at Microsoft is a longer story.

I had just graduated from University of Lagos and I was thinking about what I wanted to do going forward. I had a few options. Initially, I had two offers from Nigerian startups. But I wasn't really thinking seriously about working at those startups because I wasn't excited by the kind of work that I would be doing there. So my other option was to go back to school and get my master's degree in the US. I had always wanted to work in places that would allow me to build the future. So, I focused my targets on Google and Microsoft even though I had tried to join Google in the past and that hadn't worked out for me.

After graduating, I landed an interview at Microsoft. But for me, joining Microsoft wasn't entirely about joining the company, it was more about joining the team. When I saw that it wasn't just any sort of random product, but that it was mixed reality, I became really motivated. I did mock interviews, coding, and data structure refresh. When the interview came, I did really well. I was counting the days when they finally called me back!"

> Did you always know you wanted to work in tech?

"Yes, pretty much. I always knew I wanted to write code, but I didn't know what to do in order to achieve that. I loved math growing up, so I thought that I was just going to study that and then learn to code some other way. But I didn't realize

there was a whole computer science degree that you could get. So from as far back as I can remember, I wanted to be in tech.

I think I was around 6 when my dad first brought home a computer and I was always on it. Even during secondary school, I was already writing code.

Do you know how people tend to go online and complain about some form of documentation that is stressing them out? Even as a kid I would rant about bad user experience. And at the age of 7, I wanted to go to tech companies to fix things I didn't like.

If someone had told me this is where my life would have been now, I wouldn't have believed them. I wouldn't have believed that my path would lead to actually working in a company like Microsoft. I have always wanted to code, and now I am! It's such a big deal for me. I have been intentional about everything that has had to do with computers in my life."

> It sounds like even as a child you could see the holes in technology and places where you could grow and contribute to it.

"Well, I am creative; I have always been creative since I was a child. I used to be that kid who would open up my teddy bear's head just to see what would come out. I was also always drawn to writing, as it helps me express my creative nature in tech. So it wasn't necessarily about figuring out the holes, but about trying to make the technology better.

My approach is always 'this thing doesn't seem fun. How can I make it more fun?' Even beyond tech, I've been able to express my creativity in different parts of my life through my YouTube channel, and my book. I even DJ sometimes."

> Could you share a little bit about your first book, "Cloud Engineering for Beginners"?

"For the lack of a better word, it's a very easy book to read. The goal for me was to introduce everything you need to know about cloud engineering and how people can land their first cloud engineering role. I wanted to make it so that people who are interested in getting into cloud engineering could understand what the technology actually entails and make a decision for themselves.

This isn't the book that will teach you about Azure, GCP, or AWS. But it's a foundational book that opens your mind to what the cloud really is. Then it helps you decide if cloud engineering is the right career path for you. If you decide that it is right for you, now you can move on to more complicated cloud technologies and start your cloud career. I've had people read this book and come back to me months later and tell me they landed a job or got a certification. That really warms my heart and I think to myself, 'why didn't I write this book sooner?'"

> What inspired you to write this book?

"I kind of want to say that I inspired myself. By that I mean a lack of knowledge inspired me. When I first joined Microsoft I was working on devices. I was building prototypes and applications for mixed-reality devices. We had an open office space so I could hear other people's conversations. I could hear other people talking about Cloud, Azure, Kubernetes and I had no idea what they were talking about. I knew the basics, but I didn't know anything that went further into virtualization infrastructure, the core of DevOps, and other things that exist in the cloud.

So after hearing those other people in my office talk about the cloud, I promis myself that I was going to learn this whole Cloud thing."

> Now that you have this basis of understanding of cloud engineering, are you more interested in the topic?

"Yes, my current role is in cloud engineering, and I have never been more interested in it. It's definitely the direction every business is going in terms of how they think about resourcing and computing power.

I see the cloud as being an important part of most businesses and its potential is constantly growing. I'm excited to be in this space and contributing in whatever capacity I can."

> Do you also write courses?

"Yes, I have written a few. I have a course on infrastructure automation and I have a course coming out shortly on Educative. The course on Educative will mimic my book and discuss Cloud Engineering for beginners. The course is still a work in progress and will probably go live sometime next year."

> You recently partnered with Eduative Answers to host a Technical Writing Workshop. What interested you about collaborating with the Answers team on this workshop?

"It's important to me to help people go as far in their careers as they can. I'm always looking for new ways to help the community and contribute to the tech community in Nigeria and Africa. I've already been doing things with the Educative team for a while so I just started the conversation to see if there was a way to bring the workshop to my community.

Once the conversation started so many ideas flew around! And it is a great way to expose the company to this enthusiastic community and to expose my community to Educative's technology and platform. So it is valuable both ways. I'm always happy to connect people and create these kinds of relationships. I'm here to see healthy ecosystems grow."

> You have done so much writing in your career, what is it about writing that is important in your opinion?

"The fact that I get to share when I write is a major thing for me. So, if you notice, I don't only write, I also make videos and create communities that help people learn. So it's not just about the writing itself, but the fact that writing is an avenue to creatively express myself and share things that others can benefit from."

> Could you tell me about your blog and YouTube channel, AdoraHack?

"I wanted to create a personal brand that encompassed 'Adora the engineer' but also 'Adora the person.' When people think about me, I don't want them to just think about tech, but also DJing (one of my hobbies) and traveling. I want them to think about the many different parts of me.

So I have a blog where I write and also a YouTube channel where I talk about career growth, productivity in my life, software engineering, and also lifestyle

content. AdoraHack is also a community where no matter how stupid people may feel their question is, someone is definitely going to respond to them. Think of it as an intimate version of StackOverflow. AdoraHack is the entity that I use for all of my tech-related stuff.

I recently found out that some people even meet weekly on Google meet and form smaller groups to learn because they met in this community. That's why I created the AdoraHack study group; because I wanted people to get their technical questions answered and learn and share together."

> What are the benefits of creating a personal brand for yourself?

"Thought leadership is the main benefit. If you are someone who wants to be a thought leader, creating a personal brand is a great way to achieve this. Recently I've seen a lot of people trying to create brands by copying and sharing content such as retweeting things or posting information. But a personal brand isn't going to help your career grow by itself. I would advise people to focus on learning and building a network of people. It's not enough to just reshare information or even to build a brand.

What matters more than a brand is your network, because once it's time to find your next role, you will have people to reach out to. If you are only a brand, out of popularity and you don't have a network or even the technical skills, then the substance will be lacking and it will become obvious with time."

> What inspired you to create AdoraHack?

"It's like every other thing in life- a light bulb in my head!

I got a blog because I wanted to write and share, but then I wanted to separate the things that I was writing and sharing from my person, like from Adora herself. So, I chose a name that wasn't very far away from who I am so that people could tie it back to me, while at the same time not using my real name. I was thinking of "Adora Tech" or "Adora Code" but I didn't like those that much. AdoraHack worked best for me. And it's been that way ever since."

> What kind of content do you get the most excited about to share on AdoraHack?

"Well, I wrote a whole book about one of them! I love to share about the Cloud. I've written a lot of articles recently around the cloud and have given a few cloud technical talks. So the cloud-on-demand service is definitely one of my favorite things to talk about at the moment. That might change soon, I don't know."

> How do you measure success as a content creator?

"Impact.

When I first began my YouTube channel, my metric for success was reach. But I wasn't getting as much reach as I would have liked. I didn't want to put myself under unnecessary pressure to start creating content that would give me more reach. In my opinion, that would be creating content for the wrong reasons. So now I focus on impact.

Basically, even if only 2 people watch a video, I want to know if the video adds value to their lives in some way. Did the video motivate them to try to work on this thing I talked about? I started thinking about impact and my metric for success became how what I create impacts someone else to either create, learn, start a new career, or just step outside of their comfort zone."

> When are you pleased by the impact you've had?

"Most of the time it's when I get testimonials from people. People will come into my DMs and tell me, "hey I read what you created and it motivated me to go ahead and try it myself."

Another example is that there was a conference last week that I went to and I met a woman who told me about the impact I had made in her life because of something I gave her. It's things like that which actually motivate me to create more content, contribute to the community, and do as many giveaways as I do. It's the fact that I know that I am changing someone's life."

> What does coding and tech as a career choice mean to you?

"It means being able to create and have ideas. And it means being able to write things to bring ideas to life.

As a career choice, you can use technology to impact people's lives and expose people to new things. You can build on what already exists and make the world easier for lots of people by creating things."

Let's take a sneak peek at one of Adora's Answers

> If you would like to read the full Answer, head to Concurrency for Kotliners on Educative Answers.

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