Interview with an IT Professional

**Name:** Matthew

**What do you do for work?**

Applications Analyst

I support a whole range of different software products, the main system is SharePoint which is a document collaboration tool. Which companies can use to collaborate on documents, similar to Nextcloud. I support the programs use within the company and help with development or customised solutions.

For example, we might have a customer that needs to complete a specific task. So I will work with the customer and develop a custom solution. Afterwards I would then   
run in it an enclosed environment to see if it works on our system and the implement it assuming all has gone well.

**What type of tasks to you complete each day?**

We work on a rotation, so one day we will look at the call stack. This is where our clients will raise tickets, you’ll check the queue and assign some tickets to yourself. You’ll work through those tickets and liaise with the customers to ensure everything is functioning as it’s meant to be. Once you resolve a ticket you move onto the next in the queue.

If not on call stack then we do some project work, this might include updating servers, or other tasks that are directly related to servicing the clients. Maintenance and software upgrades for example. At the moment we are upgrading to a newer version of SharePoint so we are going through and doing an analysis against the current SharePoint system to see what we need to change to make it compatible with the new version.

**How did you get into your position?**

I entered the Australian Defence Force through the Army, I was specialising in the communications field. Eventually I became involved in a defence project which was related to SharePoint, I was deployed overseas to work on the software and hardware on site. While I was doing this, I ended up working with the company that was contracted to help support the system we were using. They approached me and when my service with the ADF finished I eventually went on to work directly for that company which still contracts support to the defence force.

**What kind of people do you interact with? Clients, customers etc**

I work with all stake-holders, we have a meeting each day with my peers and workout the direction for each day. We will talk with the product owner and work with the team that uses the share-point software. I also may have to deal with Microsoft or other vendors of software that we use.

**Where do you spend most of your time?**

I work from home these days and log into a system using a VPN that allows me to work as though I’m at the office. My role is support and software maintenance so everything can be done from the laptop provided by the company. Occasionally I will need to make a trip to the office as I am on call.

**What aspect of your position do you find most challenging?**

Probably dealing with old products that are no longer actively developed by vendors. We may have some old software that is still needed for a business function but it’s no longer actively developed so it becomes difficult if we ever need to troubleshoot it or integrate it into to new hardware and software. In some cases, we may even need to investigate the code and try patch things ourselves to create a custom solution. The software may have been discontinued, or the company has paid a lot of money for it and they aren’t ready to upgrade it. This can happen as soon as 4 or 5 years into its lifecycle, so it can become a common problem.

**Would you change your career path if you could or are you happy with where you are?**

I would have always liked to move more in to a software development path. My career has taken me to a point where its more software support than development. Having said that I am happy with where I am as I still get to work with some development. I have learnt where my strengths are taking this path though, I’ve learned that I can pick up new products and software packages very quickly.

I’ve just accepted a new role in which I will work as a stack technology consultant, this allows me to look at an entire system of software as opposed to specific software. I’ve learnt many skills which have shaped and refined over my career so far. I wouldn’t really change anything, but I’ve learned where I want to slowly move my career over time.

**Do you do anything outside of your daily job to further your skills into your chosen career path?**

One thing I’ve done is setup a lab in my home using enterprise grade gear. I use this to learn the hardware we use at my job, I also setup virtual environments to install software and test out functions and modifications before implementing them at work.

As a side project I use this hardware, to practice skills in other areas that aren’t related to my job such as other programming tasks and hosting gaming servers.