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[00:00:00] **Brian Dean:** [00:00:00] Mr. Tighe, thank you for taking time out of your very busy schedule to share some insights into your daily work. It is very much appreciated. Now we would like your permission to record this interview so that other team members not present today. Can appreciate your reflections. The audio and transcript may be reviewed by an RMIT tutor for the purpose of our assignment and a copy of both will be made available to you should you wish it. Do you give your permission to record this interview.

**Tom Tighe:** [00:00:45] Absolutely.

**Brian Dean:** [00:00:47] Thank you so much. Alright, so we're moving on to the questions. Could you please tell us a little bit about, your work in the it industry? What, is it [00:01:00] exactly that you do.

**Tom Tighe:** [00:01:02] So I'm currently the director of operations for the Shiji Group, and Shiji Group are a supplier for hospitality based solutions for food and beverage, property management systems for the front desk of hotels and a number of other applications as well on the area that I look after is actually integrated payments with all of the various other applications.

So we work very closely with a number of partners around the world, and provide the ability to hotels to have payments which they take from their customers integrated and have those transactions flow back through into their property management system or point of sale system.

**Brian Dean:** [00:01:55] So quite quite a broad spectrum of [00:02:00] activity.

**Tom Tighe:** [00:02:02] Absolutely.

**Brian Dean:** [00:02:06] Would you say then that your field is more integration with existing systems or new technologies.

**Tom Tighe:** [00:02:21] It's a little bit of both, in the sense that we have a, so we've got a set of integrated solutions that we provide to customers already. But as we continue to go into more and more countries around the world, we are partnering with more and more financial institutions for the purposes of them processing transactions from customers. and we basically build new solutions as we need to based on customer requirements and also [00:03:00] certain banking partners wanting to take solutions that we have into other countries. So, yeah, it's a bit of a two pronged approach, there's the existing stuff but then I also work with our sales team our development team, and coordinate new products to be build as well, source supply to our customers.

**Brian Dean:** [00:03:26] Are the various parts of the Shiji Group, based in a particular location or is it spread out around the globe?

**Tom Tighe:** [00:03:38] It's spread out around the globe. So that the division that I work in, there's myself here in Australia, and I've just recently had two additional team members start with me here. And then we've got a big team in the U S and that's a mixture of developers, QA people, and [00:04:00] another five people who I'm responsible for, from an operations perspective. Then we've also got development that takes place in Copenhagen in Europe. We have sales people in Germany, Singapore, Australia and then we've got a massive development team in China because we, the business originated in China, that's where it really grew from. And it's probably been in the last 12 to 18 months that there's been a real expansion into other countries, including Europe and the U S and we're opening up new offices constantly and bringing on new people constantly as well.

**Brian Dean:** [00:04:48] That's fantastic. As I mentioned in the lead up, you are probably, one of the most successful, [00:05:00] I.T. Professionals, that I know. So, well, well done. Well done to you. As part of what you are doing in your day to day work, are there elements of marketing and client liaising or strategic planning that come into play? Or is it more management of the team and the resources.

**Tom Tighe:** [00:05:31] Uh, again, it's a bit of all of that to be honest.

So from a marketing perspective, once a product is handled over to my Team and is ready to be deployed, either on mass or in sort of a pilot situation, you know, from a marketing perspective, really like all I do in relation to that is take information that we have stored in various other applications like confluence and [00:06:00] Jira, which are the two main products that we use to manage the development phase. I take that information and I'll put it into things like PowerPoint. So there's client facing documentation that can be used by the sales people to go out and actually sell the product or that solution, client liaison or liaising is a, is a big part of what I have to do so again.

I get involved in many in numerous projects when they are ready to go. So we're dealing with projects at the moment. For example, in Vietnam, Macau for one of the big casino groups up there and as we bring on more and more solutions, we're also doing more and more hotels and then a big part of our business in the U S for example, is dealing with big sporting stadiums.

So currently client liaison kind of slants my work [00:07:00] and yeah, I guess at the end of the day, the team that I manage are probably for our area of the business at least the most client facing team in the business, because they do the implementations, they have to troubleshoot and support the product when it goes live, et cetera, et cetera.

Um, and yeah, there is a little bit of strategic planning, although that's primarily done by the sales people, but I do get involved with, planning sessions we've got two coming up actually next week, laying out a roadmap for 2020 and that will be various members of our business unit will be involved in that.

So there will be the sales team , there'll be me from an operations perspective and our head of development. And then the gentleman that kind of oversees our whole business unit as well. He's based up in China. He'll be heavily involved in that or in those [00:08:00] discussions.

**Brian Dean:** [00:08:06] So the different people that you interact with in your work, you've mentioned a few of them. the, internal, clients particularly, and also, suppliers and partners is there much to be done with regulatory authorities and investors in the business?

**Tom Tighe:** [00:08:34] Uh, in my position currently, no well you know, we do have a number of investors in the business. Our biggest backer actually is Alibaba in China, which is kind of a, I guess the Chinese equivalent of eBay. They gave us quite a big cash injection about eighteen months ago, which has helped us to [00:09:00] expand quickly and enter many markets around the world. But yeah, I don't really get involved with dealing with that side of the business kind of day to day, or even on a weekly or monthly basis, that's kind of handled by people higher up the food chain, so to speak.

**Brian Dean:** [00:09:19] Right. So can you tell me a little bit about your interactions with other I.T. Professionals? Um, you know, are you part of professional organizations or do you use social media for networking with other I.T. Professionals?

**Tom Tighe:** [00:09:39] Yeah, sure. Networking with other it professionals via things like social media is quite a big thing that I try and do. I'm not always successful at it, but I do try and do it. obviously, you know, I follow a number of different, businesses and people via things like LinkedIn.

[00:10:00] And particularly businesses, sorry, people that are in the same, uh, same industry from the perspective of same market, I guess is for one, for a better term. So people that are servicing the hospitality industry, be that, it might be directors of I.T. that work in hotels. It might be a equivalent people to myself that are working for other organizations.

I'm a member of an organization called HFCP, which is again, a global organization that's for hospitality's financial technology professionals. I think, from memory thats what it stands for, so it's a bit of a mix actually, of, both I.T. Professionals and people that work in the finance kind of industry servicing hotels so they have chapter meetings once every couple of months, and it's quite loose at the moment you know, [00:11:00] it's not particularly structured in terms of getting together and sitting down and somebody getting up and doing a showcase, for example you know, I think that as that particular chapter of that organization grows here in Australia they'll start looking at how they can make it happen on a more regular basis and have guest speakers and that kind of stuff.

So the moment is kind of a social opportunity for people to get together and talk about what's going on in the industry. Um. And for me it's great because I, I quite often get to meet new people that I don't know or don't associate with otherwise. And in a couple of cases that has led to us being able to expand our business further in the country because, you know, some good opportunities come up through those types of events.

**Brian Dean:** [00:11:57] Yes, Networking can't be [00:12:00] undervalued. I don't think whether it's you know, in the social interaction, in a professional interaction or in a, business sense, or I guess even just, in social interactions generally,

yeah.

**Tom Tighe:** [00:12:17] Yeah, you're welcome. I think definitely social kind of events, where it's not strictly speaking, turning up to pitch a product and try and gain new business. but for me, I don't know, over the years I've found that building a relationship with somebody is 50% of the battle or even more than 50% of the battle in actually winning their business. So just having a normal conversation with somebody like you and I are at the moment goes a long way to making that happen.

**Brian Dean:** [00:12:51] Yes quite understand. What aspects of your work do you think [00:13:00] you spend the most time on.

**Tom Tighe:** [00:13:02] Well, definitely the moment it's in relation to organizing the release of new product, so as mentioned previously, you know, we're expanding very rapidly we're working right across the globe and my role is a global role, so I have full responsibility for the release and deployment of solutions in virtually every country you can think of and yeah, that's probably the most, the thing that I would spend most of my time on.

That and managing a remote team based out of Atlanta. By not being able to see everything that's going on with that team on a day to day basis has its challenges, but it does mean that I probably focus more time on that than I normally would if there was a team based here in Australia, that I saw everyday in the office, for example.

**Brian Dean:** [00:13:57] Yes. that's coming to light [00:14:00] for our team as well whilst currently, it's only a four and three of them are in Australia, but one's actually doing the course from Moscow. So that's, that's a whole different timezone. Trying to coordinate, you know, these kinds of chats,using zoom or whatever it puts some constraints on when it can be done.

So, that, leads us very nicely into the next question, which was, which aspects of your work do you find most challenging? But, I'm, I'm thinking you, you've partially answered that already.

**Tom Tighe:** [00:14:50] Yeah, there's a couple of aspects, I guess. like I said, trying to manage a team of five people, who are based on the other side of the world and has a [00:15:00] 16 hour time difference, you know, I end up spending quite a lot of time late at night on conference calls and that type of thing and, and you know, we've got a number of large clients that are also based in the U S so I do not only team meetings in God awful hours I also tend to do meetings with customers at rather unpleasant hours as well. So that's one big challenge you know, I think the other one is just due to the rate at which we've been expanding and the rate at which we're releasing new solutions in the market making sure that, you know, everybody involved in that process from development through to QA my team delivering the products to a customer, or actually even one step back from that with the sales guys being able to sell that product.

Um, you know, just making sure that we're following processes [00:16:00] and procedures to make that whole, that whole process as seamless as possible and as painless as possible not only for ourselves internally but more importantly for the costumer. At the end of the day,. We're quite often given pretty lean time frames in relation to the release of a lot of this stuff.So yeah, that produces challenges for sure and then making sure that my team is on the same page with regards to how the deployment of that solution, needs to take place. They're probably the most challenging things.

**Brian Dean:** [00:16:40] And I guess also if you're developing new solutions than that method of deployment it is not just templated, you know, it's going to have its own little differences and challenges and perhaps different technologies and such that will need to be [00:17:00] learned and factored in,for the project.

**Tom Tighe:** [00:17:05] Absolutely. and you know you've also got the problem of particular solutions having been developed with a certain architecture and that architecture flows through into upgrades of those particular solutions as well. And then we've got a whole range of other solutions that have probably been released, in the last kind of six months where the architecture is totally different the terminology and configuration of those solutions is totally different it involves AWS, us hosting stuff in the cloud and for new people. And this is one thing I'm finding at the moment because we've got two new people that have just started with the team in our Sydney office you know, the terminology that's used with the old applications and the architecture that's used for those and the architecture iand terminology that's used for the new applications can cause a little bit of [00:18:00] confusion when a new person starts with the business. You show them an old technology, for example, first up, and they get their head around that and unfortunately in some cases, they think that that translates directly into, into the new world, so to speak, when it doesn't necessarily happen that way.

**Brian Dean:** [00:18:23] Always the problem when there's legacy applications floating around, isn't it?

**Tom Tighe:** [00:18:28] Yeah, absolutely. And you know, the U S for example, where we've got a quite a big portion of the business, as I mentioned earlier, is with sporting stadiums. You know, there's, there's one customer in particular at the moment who has a completely unique solution that nobody else on the face of the planet is running. So from a support perspective, for that particular customer my guys are kind of flying blind a little bit. and in most cases when they do require support, we need to go back to [00:19:00] the development team who thankfully were basically all around at the time of this solution got developed about three years ago and they need to basically pick up the support and work out a solution to whatever the problem might be for the customer.

**Brian Dean:** [00:19:19] That sounds very much like what you alluded to before about documentation, how important it is as far as your procedures for your roll outs and all the rest of it.

But it sounds like vital also forunderstanding the workings of the code. you know, if some of you, some of those guys had departed, that would, be difficult. Most developers can read code. But it takes a bit to understand someone else's code. I think.

**Tom Tighe:** [00:19:54] Absolutely. And then to understand the workflows of how that code interacts [00:20:00] with all the other various pieces that it needs. to Uh, you know, that's a big challenge. And I think in some cases it's just, uh. You know, keeping on top of the documentation has at times, uh, not been so successful and I think that can be slightly attributed to the fact that, you know, we've got so many solutions that are beingreleased at the moment that people are finding it a little bit hard on occasions to just bring their head above water re focus and make sure those things are in place.

**Brian Dean:** [00:20:39] Yeah. Yeah. Documentation is one of those things that tends to, be left particularly with very tight deadlines. When you've got to deliver a working solution, you know, you can always, well, the mindset is you can always come back and do the documentation later. Um.

**Tom Tighe:** [00:20:56] Quite often you don't get the opportunity to go back?

**Brian Dean:** [00:20:59] No [00:21:00] No there's another project looming tomorrow. So thank you, Tom. Finally, could you share an example of the work that you do? I guess that best captures the essence of the I.T. Industry.

**Tom Tighe:** [00:21:15] I think really at the end of the day our, our business, not just in relation to what I do, but in the, in the broader scheme of things, it's really about providing the ability to customers to have fully integrated products across their business so that everything is streamlined and that's through various API's that have been developed. So rather than just having, you know, a PMS that works independently of point of sale application, which works independently of a customer loyalty program that works independently of a financial you know, profit and loss kind of system, that kind of stuff. [00:22:00] We actually work with our customers to bring all of those things together so that all of those applications talk to one another and the relevant data gets shared. Basically. So we take a very consultative approach, and I think that's really important.

And in some cases, a lot of businesses kind of lose sight of that. And they'll go in and just go, okay, so we've got this fantastic product. This is what it does, this is how it works. this is how the support functions, blahdy, blahdy, blah. And they don't necessarily really sit back and listen to what the requirements are for the customer.

Um, so we kind of approach it in the reverse order almost where we go in in a lot of cases to customers and go, okay, so what is it that you're trying to achieve? And we get feedback from a customer and then we go back with a proposed solution. So we try and work out what their pain points are, and then develop something that will address those [00:23:00] pain points.

Um, so yeah, . I think that's really important in I.T. to be honest. And then also keeping up with the latest technologies, the latest applications that can actually help us internally, so I mentioned before, you know, we're running JIRA and confluence. Um, you know, we're bringing on products all the time internally there's a new help desk application, new HR applications, et cetera, et cetera.

Um. That really helped us to drive and run our business on a day to day basis as well. Um, so yeah.

**Brian Dean:** [00:23:37] Sorry. I was just going to say, using that same, analogy, where you guys are trying to create for your customers a very integrated solution that. talks to all the various bits and pieces. Are you're [00:24:00] having much success in, your own internal systems. So, you know, your new HR system, your JIRA, your Confluence, or are you facing the problem that many customers. would have.

**Tom Tighe:** [00:24:15] Uh, definitely from the JIRA, Confluence kind of standpoint those things are quite tightly integrated obviously being from the same vendor makes it a little bit easier. Um, I guess from an HR CRM. Help desk perspective, uh, CRM and help desk is very much tightly integrated. And again, I guess that was primarily because we chose the same vendor, so both of those products, um, but we don't actually have any, there's a disconnect when you start with, you know what are we trying to do about. Um, you know, all the good documentation, et cetera, that is stored in confluence. How do we get that across? Maybe [00:25:00] into our ticketing systems so that when a customer has an issue and they raise a ticket, um, they have the ability to then search a knowledge base for arguments sake and try and find a solution for themselves rather than being reliant on us.

Um, that talk of integration is not there. So in essence, we're taking stuff out of confluence. Reworking it manually and then importing it into our ticketing system. I'm sure, again, as we continue to grow, particularly as we go into more and more countries with some of the challenges that I'm currently facing will probably be faced by others where there's disparately geographically, uh, placed teams that they've got to manage. Um, then, you know, I think we'll, we'll, we'll stop looking at that kind of thing more closely. So we have management systems and the lack of moment that, um, yeah, as far as integrating all those things together, um. [00:26:00] Where it's the same vendor is quite easy.

Um, the, where there's software from two different vendors that you want to try and bring together. Again, there's challenges with that. Uh, you know, I'm sure, I'm sure it will be something that we focus on over the next. couple of years.

**Brian Dean:** [00:26:16] Thank you. Thank you again. Mr Tighe we've certainly learned a great deal about, the kinds of tasks and interactions and challenges that being a I.T. professional can bring. It's been great getting your perspective and on behalf of the whole team, we very much appreciate you taking the time out of your day to to speak with us. So thank you very much. I'll stop this recording now.