

Interview with Mathew McKernan

The following is a transcript of an interview conducted by Team #101 for Assignment 2. Team members Luke Byrnes, Nicholas Mpantellis, and Isaac Ambrosio, interviewed Mathew McKernan, Professional Services Manager at Rauland Australia. This interview was recorded with permission from Mr McKernan, and transcribed using [Otter AI](#).

Luke Byrnes 0:07

Good evening, Mr McKernan!

Mathew McKernan 0:13

That's all good. I should have unmuted myself. How are you going?

Luke Byrnes 0:16

Good mate, good. So, Matty, we have Nicholas and Isaac, a part of my RMIT Assignment Two team, and we've left it to the last minute to get this assignment done. So thank you very much for saving us having to watch 10 YouTube videos and giving us half an hour of your time this evening instead.

Mathew McKernan 0:34

No worries, that's cool.

Luke Byrnes 0:38

We've got four questions that we've emailed you that we'd like to go through, if that's right with yourself and they may have some other questions that I'm sure you'll be more than capable of being able to respond to. So I think Nicholas is going to start with the first one. So if you want to go ahead, Nick,

Nicholas Mpantellis 0:52

So, as an information technology professional, what work is done by you in that role.

Mathew McKernan 0:58

So in my current role at work I'm a Professional Services Manager. So I've transitioned a lot from being operational in what I do every day into something more of a management perspective. So I look after our service delivery to customers under the ITIL model, or ITSM model, so IT Service Management. In essence, our company services about 300 hospitals around Australia, and supply them emergency response systems. So if you hit an emergency button in a hospital or a nurse call system button, and you're looking for your nurse to come and attend, or there's a patient entertainment system terminal and things in your facility, it's a high likelihood that it's one of our systems. We're in a lot of the big facilities and things like that and at the moment, it's like crazy busy as you can imagine. So you may have noticed, in a couple of locations, there's COVID hospitals being re fitted out and all that sort of thing where where doing a lot of that for that work. And so my role day to day is the delivery of ongoing service in the ICT space, we have a lot of computing based integrations going on, we got hardware equipment in the field, and then the servers in the middle and various different technologies at play. We support things like video conferencing, and a whole bunch of stuff. And my role is to lead the team of it integrators. So people who go out and configure stuff, the kinds of things you'd see for systems admins, and also the people who go and get two systems to talk to each other and existing hospital system and our systems together. And I lead that space. My background is Bachelor of Computer Science (Application Programming), so from RMIT as well, and finished that back in, I got it above my desk here we go, apparently, 2009. Basically what my role now entails is leading that team, so there's a real mix between managing people managing customer expectations while at the same time providing that technical expertise because I've been there and done that, essentially. I've been the guy sitting on a milk crate server and configuring stuff, right through to the software engine, you know, doing software engineering works, writing, application code and all that sort of thing. So that's the sort of work that I the work that I do day to day is very management oriented and no two days are the same. So yesterday, I spent a whole day dealing with priority one issues, resulting in, you know, risks of commercial issues of you know, \$40-\$50 grand, because of abatements in contracts all the way through to today, we were troubleshooting a phone system that wasn't working properly. So good fun.

Nicholas Mpantellis 3:45

Yeah. Sounds it.

Mathew McKernan 3:50

Did I answer your question? always hold me to account on that. If I haven't answered your question. I asked me to re-clarify something. So don't feel too bad.

Nicholas Mpantellis 3:58

To a very high extent!

Luke Byrnes 4:02

Fortunately, I'm used to how you tend to respond to queries, Matty, I've already got a mental check on that as my contribution to this little exercise this evening, so, no, certainly appreciate your response to that one, very thorough. I think Isaac's got our next one there for us.

Isaac Ambrosio 4:20

What kind of what kind of people do you interact with as an IT professional? Are they IT professionals as well, like your clients, investors, and general public? I'm pretty sure you already mentioned some of them, but if you can give us more information about it.

Mathew McKernan 4:34

Yeah, absolutely. And I'll probably only give you a small subset. So the kinds of people I interact in my role is, I've got a wide range of other IT people, it could be our product team, which will be software engineers, Product Management, team leaders within our product space. So they're the people who are doing the coding the software writing, the design of products, that sort of thing. So essentially, I originally came from that space. So that whole team there that writes, you know, all the all of the things that we sell our product. I then deal with the people who implement it within my team along with the project managers who are managing the project for delivery. And then we go to operations managers within the business who worry about the client relationship long term and all that sort of stuff. In terms of customer facing side of things I deal with, all the way from board level people so people who are who are Chief Executives, Chief Health Offices, Chief Info Officers...

TECHNICAL ISSUES 5:54

[Technical issues, interview resumes...]

Mathew McKernan 6:08

Yeah, so I spent a lot. So I have to operate at an executive level. So be able to have a conversation where I can't just technobabble to people, and I need to be able to bring a level of a professional business-like approach, explaining a technical problem, and trying to use analogies and a whole wide range of things and generate that trust with people. And then consequently, the other end is I need to be able to deal with an IT administrator at a facility who wants to know the ins and outs and might in one, in the first half of my day might be talking to us to a Chief Information Officer about how a solution that we're going to deploy is going to solve a whole bunch of trouble and then go "Cool, this technical problem that we're fixing...", I can't tell them about how it works under the hood and the detail of it, but I need to talk about what things that brings to the table. So we've got a video conferencing solution that allows us to video conference to patient bedside terminals. The reality for that for Chief Executive Officer and Chief Info Officer and Chief Medical Officer in a hospital at the moment. It's got nothing to do with the technology and how it works. I don't I can't talk about that its SIP video, I can't explain that it uses Web RTC for staff, and that it will work with most people's web browsers. What I do need to explain to them though, is that it's going to reduce the amount of personal protective equipment they're going to need. They don't need... so if a patient places a nurse call currently, a staff member will walk into a room and go, "cool, what do you need?" Meanwhile, at the moment, they have to gown up, they have to put gloves on, they have to put a mask on and all that, then they have to throw it all in the bin, because you've asked for a glass of water, head out of the room, get a glass of water, gown up again, hand you the glass of water and do that all again. And it's costing, like cost is not an issue at the moment, but it will be eventually when you're using thousands of those items, but it's going to, it's a big issue because we've got a supply chain problem. We can reduce that because we can put you through to the staff members wireless phone or you can have a video conference with someone at their desk and then get that detail, sorry, get the information you need, and only use one wad of PPE. So I can talk through all that wonderful business process. But in the afternoon, I'm going to go and sit down with an IT guy is like, what do you need me to change on the firewalls and why? Why do you need that port

open? Why do you need that configured? So you've got this really different attitude sort of view and you have to almost bring/drag them to the table and say, "Hey, this is the bigger picture we're trying to fix here, we're trying to fix some people say issue. But on aged openness, net firewall board..." it's very, very wide range is quite a span of knowledge you get to work with. Do we deal much with the general public? Not always, but you will when you go and work in patient rooms and stuff. So not as much things like investors and the like, generally not. We're a privately owned company, so we don't, I don't have to go and stand in Keynote speak in front of a bunch of shareholders fortunately. So that's a good deal.

Luke Byrnes 9:00

Not yet, anyway.

Mathew McKernan 9:02

Not yet, maybe one day. Who knows? Does that answer your question, Isaac?

Isaac Ambrosio 9:10

Yep.

Luke Byrnes 9:14

Fantastic. Thanks, Matty. That gives us a bit more insight as to how you, you know, what your role actually ends up being beyond the world of just the IT area.

Mathew McKernan 9:24

Yep.

Nicholas Mpantellis 9:29

Now, I know you sort of went over this a bit, but where do you spend most of your time as an IT professional?

Mathew McKernan 9:38

Physically or in terms of more of a topic area?

Nicholas Mpantellis 9:41

I guess you would go over a bit of both.

Mathew McKernan 9:44

Yep. At the moment, there's a lot of time behind my desk, and a lot of time behind my desk at work and time in the lab and things like that playing with gear and troubleshooting stuff. One of the things is while being in a leadership role, I also provide a lot of technical leadership too, technical experience. So I end up having to problem solve issues for my colleagues and with my colleagues. So I spent a lot of time in the office at the moment, which is a positive thing. I'm not stuck in my study like I am at the moment on the teleconference, but I'm spending a lot of time on teleconferences and stuff. However, that said, I reckon maybe one to two weeks a month, I'm often Interstate, doing customer visits, site visits, so you get to see, you get to see the country. That's one of the benefits and I actually quite enjoy that to get to drive places and things like that I had to last month during the brief period before we ended the back up in Stage Three restrictions, I was up in northern New South Wales, in the Hunter Valley. So had to go do a, worked with a presentation and did some workshops there. So you know, two and a half thousand kilometres driving from Melbourne to up there and back again. Good fun. I enjoyed it. But yeah, so it takes me a lot of places. If you haven't been out much, and you want to see that space, go and work for a national company, because if you're good at what you do, you'll get the opportunity to go and visit people and get out and about and if you like the outdoors and like that concept of traveling, and be it on the boss's dime, and the boss's timelines. It's great.

Nicholas Mpantellis 11:26

Yeah, awesome.

Isaac Ambrosio 11:32

That was very interesting. So we've got another question for you.

Mathew McKernan 11:38

Yep

Isaac Ambrosio 11:41

I think you said it depends right on what you're doing. If it's work, what aspect of your position is more challenging that you find the more challenging?

Mathew McKernan 11:52

I would say probably the component of my role that's the most challenging is the context switching, and the ability to have a plan for a day and be happy to throw it in the bin after the first 20 minutes. I went to work yesterday with a plan - it fell apart within minutes of getting to work because we had some priority issues to deal with and then I got dragged into phone calls and it's like "Oh Matty, can you jump on another meeting tomorrow afternoon to sort out this", all that sort of stuff or "help us with this, that or the other." So the most challenging part of my role is the fact that no five minutes is the same as the next, and the need to be able to context switch quite a lot. So it's essentially a form of multitasking but not at the same time. So you know, right now I'm talking to you guys and in two minutes after this, I need to go jump on another meeting or another call or whatever that might be. So the whole idea is the... not the whole idea, sorry, that's the wrong phrase. The requirement on me and my role is that I can't be stuck on one particular task for 10 hours or five hours or whatever it might be. When I first started my career in this space, when I was a doing product engineering work, yes, I could spend a whole day on a particular product or a particular task. As time has gone on, I'm expected to be able to work in, you know, work 30 seconds on a task and move to the next. And some of those things, move that quickly or work on two things at once, you know, start something and go "cool, I can't do anything about that. Now I've got that with somebody else." They're going to come back to me in 20 minutes, I got a 20 minute window to get on to the next job. So the most challenging part of my job is to be able to work on a lot of things at once and have, and basically juggle, have a lot of balls in the air and try and figure out what to do from the other side. So that that that is the hardest part of my job.

Isaac Ambrosio 13:53

It all depends on priority, right?

Mathew McKernan 13:56

Yep. Some of some of it is prioritization, some of it is that It's all high priority. Everyone wants everything yesterday. So if you're good at what you do, everyone will want everything yesterday. In some ways, I think one of the other things that I found to be a bit of a challenge was being able to recognize and read an audience and understand the right thing to say to the right people at the right time. So, and how to conduct yourself. So I'm pretty relaxed in this conversation with you guys. But I'm a little bit guarded in what I'll say, what I'll say and what I'll do. I was on a phone call a little earlier this evening with a colleague and we're talking to an organization overseas, one of our suppliers, and it was not a positive conversation. We were trying to sort out a bunch of stuff and they've not entirely delivered on what I would have expected them to. So it wasn't a great discussion. I had a colleague on there with me and it went for two hours and it was really hard to pay attention by about an hour and 10 minutes, like brain's melted, everyone's done, we're finished. "Zoomed out" would be a way to put it. And it was a pretty critical question that the customer asked us. And it was long and drawn out. And I found that hard to sort of pay attention to. And I listen to it. And I grasped it all I answered my response to it and all that, and I threw to my colleague to put in his five cents to give him a chance to speak up and highlight what I know what his point of view would have been on it. And he goes, "Oh, oh, I sort of just..." I've forgotten the exact words, "I just, I just blazed out, I just wasn't paying attention." And he said this to the with the supplier on the phone and I'm like, "Ooh, ooh, this is not a good look", like this is... it's like what he should have said was "my zoom cut out for a second, can you say it again?", like "My connection dropped out" and you can do that, but it's all about being able to think on your feet really quickly because that's the whole stakeholder management piece. So a lot of us get into, put it this way, if you had a sense when I was I eighteen years old, it was 2005 and I was starting my Computer Science degree, if you had a said to me, you know, in 15 years time you'll be on a teleconference sorting out major commercial issues for a project using your IT skills for it. Are you ready for that? I would have been like, "Oh, no, I never, I wouldn't even do that. It's not what I want to do." You know, I've ended up dragging myself - not dragging myself, I've ended up landing here. So yeah, so that's the main thing is that ability to evolve and work with stakeholders and work with different people.

Isaac Ambrosio 16:37

Okay, thank you, sir.

Luke Byrnes 16:42

Fantastic. Either of you guys have any further questions for Matty while we've got the opportunity to ask him some questions?

Nicholas Mpantellis 16:49

Not to me.

Luke Byrnes 16:53

Isaac, anything else from you? You good?

Isaac Ambrosio 16:55

Nah, not really.

Luke Byrnes 16:57

No worries, sorry. The only one I will ask you Matty, is what's the best thing about your role? What do you get out of it most?

Mathew McKernan 17:07

Uh, that's a good question.

Luke Byrnes 17:11

This is this is thinking-on-the-feet part that I am that I'm throwing at you, and I will actually put a little caveat on to that - Apart from a paycheck, what about the role is it that you that you get the most out of?

Mathew McKernan 17:23

No two days are probably the same, and I enjoy turbulence, with my, like... turbulence motivates me and if I'm stuck doing the same thing day in day out, I'll generally not... I generally find that pretty mundane. So that's the key thing is, if you're motivated by variety, there are jobs within the IT profession that allows you to carry variety. And there's a demand for people who are committed and can put in the long hours and will get the outcome. There's so many people within IT that can tie you up in bureaucracy and tie up a process to take so long, and if you're someone who can cut through that and get the outcome and you're outcome focused, you're not worried about how... sorry... it's important to you how you get there but you're, but you're willing to work with others to get the result. You'll get to their, but yeah, so that's what I get out of it, I get a lot of fulfilment of the fact that we set out to achieve something and we can get out to the other end and you've got to fight your way through bureaucracy and people who like to make things difficult, but at the same time, you build some pretty incredible teams along the way and problem solve some stuff to a standard that's pretty fantastic.

Luke Byrnes 18:43

Great to hear. That's quite inspiring ending to our interview this evening. Matty, thanks very much for your time. I'm sure we'll chat later.

Mathew McKernan 18:52

No worries, sounds good. All righty. Have a good night everyone.

INTERVIEWERS 18:55

Thanks Matty!

Mathew McKernan 18:57

And best of luck with your course and all that sort of stuff too, so, yeah, it's uh, hopefully you'll get a lot out of it, and yeah, you enjoy.

Nicholas Mpantellis 19:09

Awesome.

Isaac Ambrosio 19:10

Thanks, man.

Mathew McKernan 19:12

No worries. Have a good one. See you!

Luke Byrnes 19:13

Take it easy, Matty. Thanks for your time.

Mathew McKernan 19:15

No worries. You're welcome, see ya!

Luke Byrnes 19:18

aaaand he's gone. I'm going to stop the recording here, and we can have a bit of a chat...

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