# The Interview

The interview with Phil was very beneficial for the whole group as most of us have similar goals of becoming developers. As a senior front-end developer, Phill plays a big part in the company. He mainly focuses on developing websites and is highly involved in new projects like the new IGA e-commerce solution. Currently, Phil is working on a new priority shop, one of the government’s solutions in helping people who are not close to big supermarkets like Coles or Woolworths, but they are closer to an IGA. This is where e-commerce comes in. This helps people order essential needs online without having to travel too far. As a front-end developer, Phil works primarily on building websites. This is currently the most challenging part, as Phil described; it’s like making Woolworths from the ground up. Still, he also has another task that includes providing the onboarding team with statistics and dashboards to show retailers what web services they offer and how to integrate the systems that might help them. Phil is very good at what he’s doing. We can see that a big part of his success is the developing part itself and communicating with the whole team from the back end, front end, and the marketing and onboarding team that goes directly on site.

We understand now that having the skill and knowing what you are doing is not everything but communicating with the team and sharing your ideas can help others from your team move in the right direction. This is an excellent example of good teamwork, as Phil’s company grew exponentially during covid and expanded and let people work from home anytime they like. This interview has helped us know more about the roles we were pursuing and perhaps also motivated some of us even more. As Phil is very busy with his work, I was able to have this interview with him during his lunch break, which we highly appreciated for such a dynamic IT professional.

**Interviewer name**: Nikola Djordjevic, group 15

**Interviewee**: Phil Sylvester, senior front-end developer at Metcash

**Date:** 05/04/2022

**Nikola Djordjevic**:  
Firstly, I would like to thank you for this opportunity. I appreciate that you agreed to this interview with me today, as this will help my team and me with our Uni project. I’m also glad to be here as I admire what you do for work.

**Phil Sylvester**  
It's my pleasure.

**Nikola Djordjevic**  
1. Uh, yes. Please tell me about your IT work. What exactly do you do?

**Phil Sylvester**  
Yeah. So, I am a senior front-end web developer for Metcash. I've been there for about almost three years now.

**Phil Sylvester**  
So yeah, Metcash is the parent company of IGA. Yeah. And so basically as a front-end Web developer, I make the websites that you see, you know, and we got the IGA rewards, we got the new IGA shop coming up online like the E-Commerce solution.

**Nikola Djordjevic**  
Right, I remember seeing that, and now I see the creator!

**Phil Sylvester**  
Uh, and yeah, so that's what I'm currently doing right now. It’s a bit busy, especially during COVID, because our main priority is IGA and IGA since they're independent; that’s what the I stand for, Independent, you know.

**Nikola Djordjevic**

Oh, really? I never thought about the meaning behind the name.

**Phil Sylvester**  
Yeah, cause they all want to do their own thing. It was hard to have an online shop, to begin with. Uh, we started up with IGA rewards. So, think of like, you know, the points system with Woolworths and Coles.

**Nikola Djordjevic**  
Oh yeah, most supermarkets have a reward system, I think.

**Phil Sylvester**  
But yes, when COVID hit us. The Government came to us and said that we needed a priority shop.

**Phil Sylvester**  
For people in locations where they don't really have Coles or Woolworths, but they're closer to an IGA shop and need, you know, food or essentials delivered to them. So that's where the whole e-commerce solution began as an idea from the priority shop

**Phil Sylvester**  
Uhm, so yeah, I'm just working on that right now.

**Nikola Djordjevic**  
That is cool. So, you've been doing this for three years now? Wow.

**Phil Sylvester**  
Yeah.

**Nikola Djordjevic**  
2. You answered my second question as well, about your industry. So this is what IGA is. I didn't even know that “I” stands for independence. What about GA?

**Phil Sylvester**  
Yeah, hahaha even though, I don't even know what the other two letters are, haha I mean I should know, but yeah.

**Nikola Djordjevic**  
hahaha I feel like not many people think about what it stands for. For the consumer, it’s a brand.

**Phil Sylvester**  
I should know.

**Nikola Djordjevic**  
That's alright.

**Phil Sylvester**  
Hold on. Let me just quickly Google it hahaha.

**Phil Sylvester**  
Independent Grocers Alliance. That's it. I knew it was that. It's just like a mental block ‘cause.

**Nikola Djordjevic**  
Yeah, that happens to all of us.

**Phil Sylvester**  
I've been working a lot, this project has been taking a while, yeah.

**Nikola Djordjevic**  
That's alright.

**Nikola Djordjevic**  
3. What other kinds of work do you have to do?

**Phil Sylvester**  
Yeah. So, with the front-end stuff, it's mostly just developing the websites and stuff like that, but also, we have our clients that are the retailers, you know the retailers of each store and we have to, communicate with them. We have a team that they communicate with, to onboard these retailers into our website and our services, because again with IGA, not every store wants to be part of our solution. You know, they have their own IGA online shop that kind of thing.

**Phil Sylvester**  
So you know, we have a team that goes out all over Australia to go to these retailers and say, hey, like we have a new shop coming up and would you like to onboard and stuff like that.

**Phil Sylvester**  
My other task is with helping that team help onboard them by like you know, providing them with the statistics and dashboards and ways to integrate their services into our services. So, things like, transactional information product scanning.

**Nikola Djordjevic**  
Right.

**Phil Sylvester**  
Yeah, 'cause, like every IGA is different, right? So, like an IGA that's next door to me, might have a special cheese from France or something like that. Whereas an IGA closer to you is more situated in a community that's more you know, like European, for example, and they might have cheese from Switzerland. You know what I mean.

**Nikola Djordjevic**  
I understand what you mean, yeah.

**Phil Sylvester**  
Yeah. So, that's why you have to have these systems in place to sort of read these products and show them in the shop differently if that makes sense. You know, like it can't be similar to, Woolworths, so you if you type in milk, you get all the results of milk.

**Nikola Djordjevic**  
Oh yeah, and 100 options appear for different kinds of milk.

**Phil Sylvester**  
Because not all the stores might have that kind of milk kind of thing, you know. So that's why you need those back end services to work together with the retailers. I would say that's pretty much that like summarized it's more complicated than that but yeah that's sort of work that I do you know communicate with the back-end team and then the team that goes on-site.

**Nikola Djordjevic**  
Click match.

**Nikola Djordjevic**  
4. So those are the main IT professionals you interact with.

**Phil Sylvester**  
Yeah.

**Nikola Djordjevic**  
It looks like a lot of the back-end developers you work with?

**Phil Sylvester**  
Yeah, yeah. So, I would say about 70% to 65% per cent of my time is communicating with my team. The front end team.

**Phil Sylvester**  
Uh, and then the other, you know, 30% is shared between the back-end team and the rest of the team because there are other teams and not only on board, but they do marketing as well.

**Nikola Djordjevic**  
I see that communication is most important so that everyone understands what everyone is doing.

**Phil Sylvester**  
Uh, yeah, 'cause like, when you sign up to the website, you say hey, do you want notifications or not about products, right. So, there's a marketing team that has to do that and that also has to come back to me to say like how you want those marketing items to be displayed or how those emails are being sent that kind of thing. So yeah, it's like a lot of teams that I have to interact with, but mostly just the front-end and back-end.

**Nikola Djordjevic**  
6. Do you also interact with the clients and investors?

**Phil Sylvester**  
There have been some situations where I have communicated with retailers directly, but not as much as others. Usually, the other teams relay their concerns back to us like the front or the back-end team. The only other interactions with clients, I wouldn't say that they are clients 'cause they provide us with their services is like a company from Island that provides us with sort of e-commerce solutions that we built on top of IGA shop, but yea that's about it.

**Nikola Djordjevic**  
 Yeah, I see. So, do you also have to present the website to your clients?

**Phil Sylvester**  
Yeah, I've built dashboards that are presented to clients because they need to see like, yeah, they need to see more orders are coming in and how much revenue they are making and how many people come to the website and stuff like that. So yeah, any concerns they have with that, that goes back to me, so that’s that.

**Nikola Djordjevic**  
7. What aspects of your work do you spend most time on?

**Phil Sylvester**  
Yeah, currently the main priority is the new IGA shop, so right now with the current IGA shop, you know new IGA.com.au that whole website is provided by that company in Island, right. So, the whole looks of it and stuff like that. So that’s us currently to rebuild that with the same sort of image as in, like using their sort of services to build the front end again. But at this time, we have more control over it because there are some issues with the website where we don't have control of it, and we can't make any changes. So, we rebuild that front end to, you know, uh, replace their version. That was, that took a lot like a year and a half of work. And now that that's almost being pushed to live in the next month or two. We're rebuilding it from the ground up, right? That is more user-accessible and stuff like that.

**Phil Sylvester**  
So yeah, the reason why we didn't just go with the new design straight away is because there would be perhaps a resistance to change to users, because if we release the dev version like MI 9 version or that company in Islands version and then all of a sudden provided a new look they'll be like, well, this in one month, there's a complete redesign, so there might be a bit of user backlash, right. So that's why we sort of phasing in the new design. So yeah, that's my current task at the moment.

**Nikola Djordjevic**

8. What are the most challenging parts?

**Phil Sylvester**  
Uh, yeah, that is the most challenging part, 'cause, it's a whole e-commerce solution. So, it's like building Woolworths from the ground up.

**Phil Sylvester**  
There's a lot of gotchas you have to keep mind of because you're also dealing with not only user customer data like where they live or something like that to authorize and like where to get delivered. There are items or stuff like that, but also you know you're dealing with their credit card or like their PayPal or whatever to make payments. So, security is a huge concern when making this whole shop. So yeah, authentication and payments and stuff like that. It's probably the most challenging task we have currently when building this new shop. Everything else is OK, you know, we throw it out there like a user experience of how the shop should work and then if the user finds any difficulties we come back and then change that. So yeah, I would probably say authentication, authorization and dealing with payments and payment gateways is probably the most challenging task along with the security of it.

**Nikola Djordjevic**  
9. Right. Security is always the first concern when it comes to the user’s information. Thank you for sharing this information with me. Also, I wanted to ask if you feel like it’s more challenging working from home during the pandemic?

**Phil Sylvester**  
Yes, so ever since COVID, I've been working at home pretty much full time. So yeah, the past, I don't know how Long's it been? Time is flying.

**Nikola Djordjevic**  
Yeah, I can’t believe it’s been like 2 years.

**Phil Sylvester**  
2 years now or 2 and a half, but when I first started it was working from the office would be like, you know, the opportunity to work from home once a week or something like that, but yeah, now it's sort of shifted complete 180 where you know I work from home and then I have the choice to work from the office on some days and that's because our team, not only our team, but the whole company has grown exponentially during COVID and especially for this new e-commerce shop and we just don't have enough office space to cater to all these people. So now we've implemented, you know, hot-desking and registering to come into a specific day in the office for a table, you know? So that's why our team has the luxury to work from home because.

**Phil Sylvester**  
Yeah.

**Nikola Djordjevic**  
The company can afford it?

**Phil Sylvester**  
We're good. Yeah, hahaha we're good. We're good at what we do, yeah.

**Nikola Djordjevic**  
hahaha we good, I like that.

**Nikola Djordjevic**  
That's great, Phil. Thank you so much. You’ve answered all of my questions and given me an insight into what it is to be a front-end developer. Enjoy the rest of your lunch break.

**Phil Sylvester**  
Alright. No problems

**Nikola Djordjevic**  
I learned something new today as well, so that's great. And again, I really appreciate this interview. Thank you.

**Phil Sylvester**  
Yeah, my pleasure.

**Nikola Djordjevic**  
I hope one day I'll get there as well. It's something I would like to do in the future, so fingers crossed!

**Phil Sylvester**  
Yes. You’ll get there it’s a growing field.

**Nikola Djordjevic**

One day!

**Phil Sylvester**

Good luck with everything.

**Questions asked during the interview:**

1. Please tell us about your IT work. What exactly do you do?

2. Please tell us about the industry you work in.

3. What other kinds of work do you have to do?

4. Who are all the different people you interact with within your work? Please tell us about them.

5. Please tell us about your interactions with other IT professionals.

6. What about your interactions with clients or investors?

7. What aspects of your work do you spend the most time on? Please tell us about these.

8. Which aspects of your work do you find most challenging?

9. What are the challenges when it comes to working from home as a front-end developer?