## Who is our Interviewee?

The IT professional we interviewed is named Russell Garner. Garner is the ICT (Information Communication Technology) Operations Manager at Crest Education where there are 2 colleges, Hillcrest Christian College, and Rivercrest Christian College. Garner “manage[s] the day-to-day operations of the college’s, IT infrastructure, and contribute[s] to the strategic and future planning of the equipment and infrastructure” for both colleges. Garner is in his fifth year at Crest Education; however, he has worked in the IT industry for 30 years. Due to Garner being in the IT industry for so long, he is full of knowledge and wisdom in regard to the IT industry which made him the perfect IT professional to interview. Garner helped us gain a valuable perspective and great insight into this area.

Most of Garner’s time is taken up by “the day-to-day IT operations” where he performs “administration functions and [works on] system projects” which he describes as “keeping the lights running”. Garner is also “continually seeing where we can improve and streamlining infrastructure and systems”. When Garner is focusing on big picture projects and infrastructure like this, he works in collaboration with the IT Manager, his superior. By having two IT related managers at Crest Education, there are always two sets of ideas, experience, knowledge, and thinking. This creates an IT strategy at Crest Education that has more than one perspective, making it well rounded and well thought out. This is something we aim to embody when collaborating.

Garner interacts with a wide range of stakeholders, “from executive principle through department heads, through the teachers, and also at times students and parents as well”. Due to the nature of his position, these stakeholders often “contribute their time, sometimes their budget and the knowledge of their areas that we’re dealing with”, opposed to technical input. Contrastingly, in addition to the tasks mentioned earlier, part of Garner’s role is to manage a team of IT professionals. This gives Garner ample interaction with other IT staff who do give technical input into his role.

## Change in the IT industry

Drawing on Garner’s extensive experience, we asked him about the changes he has seen throughout his career. Garner says that due to IT being a “constantly changing field”, “everything is changing”; “IT [has been] changing from 30 years ago to now”. More specifically, he said “cloud computing and data analytics” are the “most current [changes in the IT industry]”. Garner also “[doesn’t] see any reason why it would not continue to change”. Broadly, IT has changed in they by growing to be more than just the PC, “it used to be very specific to a particular IT system where now it's everything from AV to security to cameras”. Garner says that “what [IT professionals] have to look after” is “getting broader and broader and broader”. When Garner said this, we asked if being in IT entails a consistently expanding knowledge base of the area, and he responded with “absolutely yes”. When asked if he likes that aspect, Garner said, “I like that, I like change, I like new things”.

Schreiber (2019, p. 373) argues that “technological advancements like artificial intelligence, machine learning, and blockchain have the potential to redefine organizational structures in the future”, and it seems that Garner agrees, at least in relation to artificial intelligence. Garner states, “AI (Artificial Intelligence) is starting to impact how we do things”, and that “they'll be less reliance on people doing things, and more AI coming into things to make lives easier”. Garner believes that “[AI] will be the biggest change [in the IT industry]”. More specifically, Garner talked about how “a lot of [their] firewalling now is becoming AI driven in the background”. The way that this is done is by having “AI develop rules to determine [how to protect against] attack vectors coming in”. Amazingly, Garner says “there's no longer a person or a team of people having to do that, it's just an AI robot in the background”. This exploration of AI has really brought an awareness to the team of how crucial AI is and will be in coming years. Upon further discussion of AI in our team meeting (post interview), we have been eager to use investigate its possible use in our project.

## Positives and negatives of the IT profession

Garner is passionate about “making lives easier” by “providing skills and resources”. An example of how he does this in his job is: cutting a large data manipulation job down from “five hours everyday” to “a button click”. Garner says, he “gets a buzz out of” “seeing how happy [people] are when they don’t have to spend 5 hours doing that job”. It is really wholesome to see an IT worker excited about helping people opposed to just being enthused by the computers. This has also brought a perspective shift to us as a team as now we understand that the applications we produce, should be about helping people, not just for the endless pursuit of revenue and profit. Following this, we asked Garner about the most challenging aspect of his role, he talked about the multitude of tasks that he needs to be aware of and “keep on top of”. Garner describes this by saying that “IT system are no longer this tiny little black box in the corner that one or two people use. It touches everyone, people rely on it 24/7 and if it doesn’t work then they can’t do the job properly”. This highlights the breadth of IT as a whole and again, touches on how much IT has changed over time.

## Conclusion

Russell Garner is an experience IT professional who has many insights into the IT industry. Our short conversation with Garner has given us a window into the business of IT and what it is like. This has empowered us to further explore what IT has to offer and where it can take us. With the knowledge garnered from Garner, we are better prepared to take on our project and feel that we have all learned valuable lessons that we will hopefully take into the field of IT.