**Interviewing an IT Professional**

1. **How is your work life balance affected when working in the IT industry? Are there any noticeable benefits or disadvantages working in your field?**

This depends entirely on the role you are in.

I’ve been employed in several roles as a Midrange Engineer where for a two year period, due to the nature of the engagement, I was on call 365 days a year, it was difficult to get days off-duty until I was able to justify (by taking on additional work & contracts) a second staff member.

Bearing in mind, this was on a Defence contract where the support base is huge, which paints a picture clearly that no matter how large the client, you can in some instances be on your own or in a very small regional team.

In the current role, I have an excellent work / life balance.

While I do often work 10hr days as a Midrange Team Lead, this is entirely by choice and I am able to utilize those additional hours worked to claim TOIL later, in effect giving myself the opportunity to work hard in the short term and be rewarded with additional time off in the future.

What you get out of these roles, is often as much as you put in.

1. **What advice can you give to people interested in entering the IT industry?**

Don’t shy away from self-improvement outside of business hours.

The degree you are doing now, the study you might do outside of this, such as a VMware VCP, a Microsoft MCP, a Cisco CCNA, or any other certification will do you wonders as you progress your career.

Not only do you gain a practical understanding of the items you may support, but you show to a potential employer you are willing to learn.

Granted, a lot can be learnt on the job too, so don’t shy away from ‘shadowing’ a more senior member of staff – asking ‘stupid’ questions is the best way to learn.

That said, something I learnt the hard way was this:

* If you don’t know, read the knowledge base.
* If you don’t have a knowledge base, google the vendor knowledge base
* Google a reddit post on the product and look up experiences from other technicians
* NOW you refer to your senior tech in the team
* Escalate to an appropriate technical internal resource (or Team Lead)
* Engage the vendor through a support agreement if you have one
* Document the fix in the teams knowledge base – if they don’t have one, start one.

Don’t go asking for help the first sign you don’t know the answer, the best way to self-improve, is to start searching for the answers yourself.

The best lessons you will learn are the ones you find the answers for yourself.

1. **What kind of environment are you surrounded in, in your profession? How do the people in this environment positively or negatively affect you?**

As a Midrange Team Lead, supporting a Federal client, I am surrounded by both staff and our contracted client.

In this position, I can be positively affected by the efforts of my own staff in their self-development activities and in many cases, this positive effect is passed on to our client in our ability to service them – this gains us a positive working relationship with our client and is a fundamental part of ensuring that a contract renewal can also occur.

Positive outcomes from proactive staff are only one of many ways in which this can take place.

Positive engagements with our client are something as a Team Lead I continue to strive for – as not only is it our role to support the client to our contract SLA’s, but it is the wider userbase who see the benefits of this effort.

Negative engagements can and do occur.

If an issue arises with a supported technology, or an ongoing project the impact can be felt across the entire support base.

These can have seriously adverse effects on the team as well, in that when these do happen, the workload for the team is increased dramatically.

Some of the metrics that will see serious downturn are; client happiness, staff happiness (due to additional workload, especially in instances out of hours work), staff fatigue (burnout is real and more common than you think)

These events have the potential to impact any future opportunities such as additional project engagements.

1. **What is the most challenging part of your job and how do you overcome these challenges?**

No day is ever the same.

While this is incidentally the most rewarding part of the job, it also means that you will continually face a new challenge.

To overcome these challenges, I often find myself reading vendor articles on common faults, known issues, or even an emerging technology as we attempt to provide a solution to a question that has only just been raised as the world shifts to another method of working.

The current crisis is a prime example – answering the question of how to get 1500 users from desktop’s, our to access remotely, either from a device with a VPN tunnel back in to the domain, or Citrix – which as you consider your own phases of planning to respond to a request from a client, will have a flow on impact on your support footprint.

1. **What kind of work is done by the IT professional?**

The IT Professional that has been interviewed, is called Joel. He is currently Midrange Server Team Lead for a Federal Government Department. Some of his day to day activities include:

* Coordinating a Team
* Liaising with the client
* Standard Incidents & Changes
* Infrastructure Projects

1. **What kinds of people does the IT professional interact with? Are they other IT professionals? Clients? Investors? The general public?**

* As Joel is a Sever Team Lead on a client site, he interacts with lots of staff, both his own and the clients. These include:
  + Team Members (Midrange, Desktop, Service Desk)
  + Service Delivery Managers
  + External Services Providers (Microsoft, Mobile Iron, Content Keeper etc)
  + Lawyers (Requests for Information – Legal proceeding requirements gathering)
  + The Client (CIO’s, Directors, general staff)

1. **Where does the IT professional spend most of their time?**

Joel spends most of his time at the client site, however with the current crisis ongoing, this work is now completed from the home. Resulting from working at home, he is very much thrilled in the increase in teleconferencing activities or video conferences.

1. **What aspect of their position is most challenging?**

The most challenging part of Joel’s job is managing the many moving projects in a very agile environment while ensuring service continuity. He noted that changes can create their own form of chaos, though it is important to never be change averse in these roles.