IT Professional Interview

#### “A day in the life of an IT Professional”

Interview Questions for **Stephen Simpson from Thales Australia**

What kind of work is done by the IT professional?

I am a team lead of a team of highly skilled network engineers. The team consists of contractors and permanent staff. I manage them from a planning and work load perspective. I manage the permanent team members career and development, plus I do scheduling, project management, planning and provide support to other teams within our business.

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

Other IT professionals ranging from design, support / troubleshooting, technical team members, systems engineers, planners, project managers, senior management.

I have occasional exposure to the client and end user, but it is not common.

Where does the IT professional spend most of their time?

It can vary. No two days are the same. I can be in meetings, with the team, at my desk. I do spend a lot of my time liaising with managers of other teams too.

It depends on what is happening at a given time

What aspect of their position is most challenging?

We are working in a complex project environment, so priorities can change quickly. It can be hard to keep up with an ever evolving new list of priorities.

People management is also an eternally challenging part of being a manager.

What are your main responsibilities as a...?

I am responsible for managing the work load for my team of 9. We need to deliver to our own objectives, while making sure we are responsive and reactive to work that comes in from other teams, plus priority support work.

I perform scheduling to make sure we align with the wider program priorities

I liaise with other managers to make sure the teams work cohesively and any interdependencies are fully understood

I work with our security team to make sure we are security compliant at all times (not optional)

I manage up and ensure our reporting is up to date

What is a typical day (or week) like for you?

No two days are the same, but every day is chaotic due to the nature of our environment

What do you like most about your work?

It is fulfilling work and we are delivering a solution that our end user (and many others) will benefit from. It will improve the lives of our end users whilst delivering meaningful and cutting edge solutions.

What do you like least about your work?

The never ending priority shift.

What kinds of problems do you deal with?

Complex engineering problems for a highly specialist product, using very niche pieces of software and tools.

Integration of these various pieces can be very challenging.

As a people manager, I deal with different personalities and people every day.

How does your position fit within the organization/career field/industry?

I am a frontline manager within my organisation, so am at the coalface of delivery.

How does your job affect your general lifestyle?

I have a fairly demanding job and I do have to dedicate a component of my personal life to ensure that I am always on top of what is occurring. I do log on most nights and work late a lot to ensure that I am always across what is happening.

What are some common career paths in this field?

The field is very broad and my workplace employs people from entry level techs, systems administrators, mid-level engineers and all the way up to specialist SME’s that are the very best in their field. We employ IT architects and managers at all levels.

In this market there are opportunities for people work full time for an organisation or as a contractor.

What kinds of accomplishments tend to be valued and rewarded in this field?

It would depend on the industry, but there are many technical certifications that can be attained, depending on what products you are working with. Technical certifications are always valuable.

There are ITIL certifications that are valued

As a manager, I value anyone who is competent and approachable. Someone who is willing and able to perform a task is a valuable asset in any business.

How did you become interested in this field?

I have always had an interest in technology and computers and was always fairly component. When it came to getting a job one thing led to another and it just sort of happened.

How did you begin your career?

I got a job in IT working for a very small company with about 10 users. As the company grew, I became exposed to more technology and eventually moved from doing level 1 helpdesk to workstation builds, to windows server builds, to managing an exchange environment, AD, a citrix farm and then eventually project work.

How do most people get into this field? What are common entry-level jobs?

In my experience, most people start on a service desk and move up from there

What steps would you recommend I take to prepare to enter this field?

A basic understanding of computers and technology, combined with an entry level certification, like a cert 4 in IT would be a great starting point, or a degree in a related field is very common.

For me, a willingness and a drive are two very important things I would look for in a team member

What kind of education, training, or background does your job require?

I was a tech in the hardware and infrastructure field and managed the acquisition, build and installation of several data centres. I started as a network team lead as it was similar to the work that I was doing, so my background was similar from a technical perspective, but I did not have any management experience.

Usually people go from being technical leads to managers, but this is a big step.

I would recommend some kind of management training before taking a team lead role.

A tech could work their way up through the ranks of a service desk, or study at Tafe of Uni to get exposure in their field.

How relevant to your work is your post graduate degree?

My post graduate degree has no relevance to my work.

The person who hired me was impressed by my masters degree from Sydney Uni, even though it had nothing to do with my field.