

Interview with Mr. Adrian Beck

[00:00:00] **Viktor:** [00:00:00] Okay. Over to you, Daniella.

[00:00:05] **Daniela:** [00:00:05] Okay. So, uh, once again, thank you so much for agreeing to be interviewed for our group assignment. Um, we just want to go through, I believe you've already received the interview questions. We're just going to go through and take turns, um, asking, please feel free to elaborate, or if you want for the clarification, let us know.

[00:00:24] Okay. So, I'll just start off. If you could please give us a bit more information and tell us about what you do with at work. So, tell us about your actual IT role.

[00:00:35] **Adrian:** [00:00:35] Okay. So, it's all encompassing in terms of the school it's, uh, anything to do with IT sort of falls under, uh, under my belt. Um, the, uh, probably the most important aspect is dealing with people and, and their expectations and their needs, et cetera. So, um, really for everywhere, everywhere from students, students, and their parents, to the staff, [00:01:00] to my IT team itself, to the school executive. I'm a member of the school executive here. There's I think there's 11 of us on the executive board. So, we effectively run the school under the guidance of the school principal. Um, so a lot of my time actually is spent in terms of, uh, communications, uh, or communicating, I should say. Um, Ah, look, one of the other things that just referring to my notes here, because I scribbled a few things down this morning. One of the important aspects is to, um, uh, keep the school's business alignment, matched him with the IT as well.

[00:01:36] So I will meet once every two weeks with our, we call it. Um, our business manager, the director of business operations. So, I meet with her, um, once every couple of weeks and we go through various things cause it looks like it's, um, I spend a lot of money and we hope that, um, the money we spend is actually very, um, very useful for [00:02:00] the school. Shall we say, rather than being any great waste. So that's the importance to us indeed. Um, that that's probably it isn't. In a nutshell sort of budget management projects are always on the go matter of fact, I've just had to race across here. I was getting ready for the meeting and, um, we're doing, um, uh, I think 31 classrooms are being upgraded in terms of audio visual over, over the Christmas break. And I have, I've got contractors in here doing some work now. So, I'm sort of keeping an eye on all of that. Um, yeah, it's probably a brief. Introduction, shall we say to what I do.

[00:02:36] **Daniela:** [00:02:36] Excellent. Thank you. And are you able to let us know what your educational background is and how you actually got to the position that you are now?

[00:02:45] **Adrian:** [00:02:45] Okay. In a very strange way. Um, I started off life as a physics and mathematics teacher. Um, I got my diploma of teaching back in 1979, uh, Bachelor of Education in 1981. Um, but [00:03:00] at, at my school, um, the. I had a couple of teachers at school who were interested in computers at the time. Now, back in, this is back in '73, '74.

[00:03:10] Now in those days they were mainframes. They're a big, main gear like you see in the old movies, you know, by the spinning tapes and colored lights. And that was about it. So, we had, um, we had a. Timeshare access to the university of Western Australia is

mainframe. And back when I was in year nine and year 10, I was programming the mainframes.

[00:03:33] They're using a very old language called Fortran. So, look, I started back then just as a bit of a hobby. Um, and I kept it up through my tertiary studies. Uh, I did computer assisted. I did various. Assignments and projects on computer assist learning. And I wrote the, wrote all the programs for them at that time.

[00:03:54] Um, then I started teaching in 1980 now and 1980. Um, there was [00:04:00] no personal computer, but the personal computer hit the world ran about 82 or 83. And suddenly schools found that they needed. Um, someone no longer teach the students, but also teach the staff about, uh, about computers, what they could do, et cetera.

[00:04:16] Now it's about the only one, um, anywhere in schools who had any experience at all. So basically, from that point onwards, continue your, my postgraduate, um, uh, Instruction has always been in, in computer science. And I did a, a master's in, um, uh, business administration, MBA, which I finished, I think in about 2005 or so.

[00:04:41] And I specialize in information systems with that. So, I've come from a very broad teaching background and gradually over the years done further qualifications up to a master's level in information systems. Um, and yeah, look, it was really a, a chance of fate in [00:05:00] terms of finding me in the IT industry area.

[00:05:03] Start off life as a teacher, but other opportunities came up.

[00:05:07] **Daniela:** [00:05:07] So just to recap, so you started off as a teacher and then at what point did you move into the, IT was before you went to do

[00:05:17] **Adrian:** [00:05:17] while I was teaching back then. In schools, you, there were no specialist. IT people at all, they just didn't exist. So, you were a teacher, and you did it.

[00:05:29] Um, so I really S. I really dropped the teaching load of my career back in, uh, ran about 95 or so, and then went, uh, wholeheartedly into IT and didn't do any more teaching after that. Um, so it was more of a gradual change then, um, then just suddenly moving into IT.

[00:05:51] **Daniela:** [00:05:51] Okay, excellent. Thank you. Um, Joe, if you'd like to.

[00:05:57] **Joe:** [00:05:57] Sure. Um, hi, Mr. [00:06:00] Beck, you mentioned Fortran before, sorry for the polite introduction. Would you say that's how you became interested in the field of IT?

[00:06:07] **Adrian:** [00:06:07] Yeah. You nailed it, Joe it's. Um, yeah, that was certainly it. Uh, we, we were shown, um, Sort of basic Fortran language and doing calculations, et cetera, with Fortran on punch cards. Let me add, we had to punch these stupid cards out and send them to the uni. And a week later we get them back saying there was Syntech Tierra in line 52. So, I pull out card number 52 to fix that. Put the new card back in, send it back to uni and next week we'd get the CA the, um, the run back again. So, it was long and tedious, but I, uh,

I must admit when I started looking at, I thought it was very interesting because I was trying to get the computers to do different things.

[00:06:44] I didn't want to just do, you know, chemical equations or physics equations as they were then. Um, I got them to draw pictures and things like that just, you know, just kept with characters and yeah, and that sort of got me interested and I maintained that interest from there on.

[00:07:00] [00:07:00] **Joe:** [00:07:00] Nice. Very good. Um, what does a typical day in your current job look like for you?

[00:07:06] **Adrian:** [00:07:06] Um, I'm an early starter, Joe, so I tend to be at work at 6:00 AM every day. Um, and there's a couple of benefits in doing that. And that is often in terms of environments like ours. We have people who work. Back late at night. So, if there's any real, shall we say, short-term system maintenance that needs to happen like rebooting servers or doing, um, uh, security updates or whatever.

[00:07:33] It's a good time to actually do it early in the morning. So, if there's any need to actually reboot or fix things, or actually just spot things have gone, gone awry over the night. If you spot it early and before people turn up, you have a lot less headaches. Shall we say? The last thing you want to do is turn up at work at nine o'clock in the morning and have about 20 people waiting outside your door to say, you know, this doesn't work and this doesn't work and this doesn't work.

[00:07:59] If you can see it [00:08:00] first, so much, the better. Um, so look early start. Um, most of our time during the day is meetings, uh, managing people, many team, the teams, uh, keeping our overview on what's going on throughout the school at that's actually a really important aspect. It's I often talk about, um, uh, our team as being generalists, rather than specialists.

[00:08:22] We don't have, um, any, while we do have people with specialist skills, but we tend to know. A little about a lot, if you know what I mean. So, um, uh, if I need to get in a, let's say an exchange specialist for argument's sake, I just hire them. I get them in, get them in for two hours, three hours or so pay them and send them on their way.

[00:08:45] But what we try and do is sit down with those specialists that they're doing their work, see what they're doing, learn from them. So, if the same thing pops up next time, we don't have to pay them. Um, what else we got going on? Um, Oh, look, I've mentioned, I've got [00:09:00] fortnightly meetings with the business manager.

[00:09:03] Um, we have executive meetings, every fortnight, um, but really the day-to-day stuff is really the, the overview of the systems within the school. Um, Yeah, look, it's, there's always the odd thing that pops up. Like, um, we've got one help desk officer here at the school, um, and we all share in terms of taking on roles, et cetera.

[00:09:25] So if the help desk guy's sick, then you know, I'll do two hours in the morning and Victor will come in and do two hours after that. Another technician will come in and do two hours after that. So, we really do try and share our roles as much as we can. Um, what else

did we do during the day, your communications with teachers, heads of departments, a lot of problem solving.

[00:09:44] There's always things that pop up and we try and work out the best way to, um, to solve these issues. Um, um, we do it very collaboratively in terms of that. Um, if someone's got a. If something has occurred and we're trying to work out the best way to solve it, we [00:10:00] really do try and talk it through with a number of people. Um, I've got a number of people. My team are great at solving problems. Uh, really good. Um, yeah, that's, that's generally the day-to-day stuff, I guess.

[00:10:13] **Joe:** [00:10:13] Okay. Cool. Thank you very much for that answer. I'll pass you on to Victor now, then it's up.

[00:10:18] **Viktor:** [00:10:18] Thanks, Adrian. Um, so looking at the day to day, um, that that's obviously very clear. Is there any other types of jobs that you do that's outside the scope of what your day-to-day tasks are?

[00:10:31] **Adrian:** [00:10:31] Um, yeah, look the, um, we used to, I don't think it's, I don't think you're allowed to have it anymore, but in, on my last contract that I signed, the principal had the very last sentence in my job description as saying, and anything else as, um, as specified by the principal.

[00:10:49] So, um, although I'm in IT, the, um, I, I also do proofreading of our academic reports cause my English is, is reasonably good. [00:11:00] Um, I do, um, I actually manage a lot of the, uh, academic reports as well. Just certainly doesn't fit into the IT role if they replaced me that that job will need to be picked up by somebody else.

[00:11:11] Um, Proofreading it, um, yeah, academic reports, um, our look, data analysis. Um, I certainly do a fair amount of, um, sorry, extracting data notably from sequel databases and um, every now and then we've got, we were looking for various trends and things aren't from the economic side from students records, et cetera.

[00:11:33] And we'll do a fair amount of that. Um, Yeah, there's fair amount of data. I shouldn't actually say that's, um, that's out of the scope of my job. I should have mentioned. It's something that I do every day, to be honest. But anyway, um, and I also said, uh, before I was talking to Joe in terms of, um, um, the day-to-day stuff, there's always something will pop up and we try and help each other. So, I might end up sitting on the help desk or [00:12:00] couple of hours, or so just see what happens.

[00:12:02] **Viktor:** [00:12:02] And I assume that you keep up to date with the latest technologies and see what could be suitable for the school. And then look at, um, getting those implemented in the future. Maybe as a suggestion.

[00:12:13] **Adrian:** [00:12:13] Yeah. Look, one of the things that, uh, is difficult to manage is the, um, Love the staff seeing really great innovations or new technologies, or they have a great idea, but they've really got no idea of cost, uh, and get, and getting it and getting it in and getting it passed because I have a set budget every year and, and someone might come to me in June or so-and-so Adrian really liked to do that.

[00:12:41] Yeah. Great. \$23,000. Where are we going to get that from? Um, so yeah, innovation is always interesting, especially in terms of timing because we have a really rigid budget timeline, and our budgets have to be submitted in September. Um, but they don't get approved until November, December, and they'll [00:13:00] take effect from January through to December.

[00:13:02] So. It's very hard to do in terms of it, to knock someone back. If someone comes up a really good idea, that's going to make my teaching better, or students going to learn better with this, or it's going to increase efficiencies in the office, and we haven't got the money for it. Uh, yeah, it's, it can be a little bit disheartening, not only for me, but for the people coming up with the ideas.

[00:13:23] Um, but yeah, staying abreast and I have lots of people who, who give me ideas, but yeah. I guess one of the things I always do first thing in the morning is read the news. I've got a number of news feeds and every morning when I come into work at six o'clock, I must admit the first thing I'd do is not work related.

[00:13:40] I've got about 20 comics I read every morning. Um, it just gets, gets the day off to a good start, brings a smile. But, uh, after that, I go through all the news feeds and see what's going on there. See what Trump's done locally. Um, yeah.

[00:13:55] **Viktor:** [00:13:55] Well, thank you. And, um, so who are the main people that you interact with [00:14:00] day-to-day in your job? So you briefly mentioned that a little bit in your day to day running, but who are the main constituents? So,

[00:14:07] **Adrian:** [00:14:07] Oh, look them, the main people are the school executive and my IT team they're, they're the, they're the, you know, 90% of the day is spent with either of those two. Um, so, um, they're the main ones, other ones, uh, you know, heads of departments, um, uh, contractors, like right now, I've got a number of contractors in I've got.

[00:14:29] People doing, uh, putting in new, uh, um, uh, printer fleet for me. So, I've got those working. I've got the AAV people in as well. Um, so different times of the year, obviously there's different people to talk to about the main one, absolutely executive and my ID too.

[00:14:45] **Viktor:** [00:14:45] Okay. Thank you very much. I'll pass you on to Brandon.

[00:14:50] **Brandon:** [00:14:50] Um, would you be able to tell us about, um, your interactions with other IT professionals outside of your work? If any.

[00:14:59] **Adrian:** [00:14:59] Yeah, look, it's [00:15:00] we, we set up, um, probably about 20 years ago, Brandon, a, a loose affiliation of, of what we call 'em IT managers, um, uh, different schools. So as much as I work at a big private school, there are lots of other private schools around the place.

[00:15:16] And we often share ideas in that regard with that. Um, we started off with just a, um, a mailing list, an email list. And so, you know, for example, I've got a technician short, uh, part-time technician job coming up, um, for the next six months. And I'll let the other

schools know. And we'll actually, they might say, Oh, look, we just advertised for, you know, a technician and someone who came close, but really could be.

[00:15:42] Good for you school, um, uh, they'd suggest their name to us and that type of thing in terms of just sharing ideas and sharing communication between, um, between schools is really valuable because we all have similar problems. So, you know, I talked about the budget things. Everyone has the same problem.

[00:15:58] It's not just me. [00:16:00] Um, but uh, we talk about security. Um, Um, yeah. When, uh, when now we're first sort of started hitting, hitting the, um, uh, so we say that the general public would probably about 10 years or so ago now. Um, ransomware, I should say, not malware. Um, you know, we did a lot of sharing there about, uh, what was the best way to, um, um, stay on top of that in terms of, uh, schools, because schools tend not to have a lot of money that they can ever find quickly.

[00:16:30] Um, so yeah. We do share a lot of ideas around between it. And if we have, you know, if we do have problems, we're pretty good in terms of, I'll say, look, I've, you know, I've got this particular problem. They don't go around sharing it around other people on bad mouthing us. We've really had, um, good group going in terms of supporting each other.

[00:16:52] **Brandon:** [00:16:52] Um, and what aspects of your work do you spend most time on?

[00:16:58] **Adrian:** [00:16:58] To be honest. It depends on the [00:17:00] time of the year. Um, like I mentioned before in terms of our budget time, um, um, probably September, October, I'm spending just about two thirds of the day doing budgets or preparing the budget. Um, at the end of the school year, I'm spending just about my whole day working on academic reports, um, right now, and spending a lot of time working with contractors.

[00:17:23] So it really let's say it's seasonal. It depends on what time of the year we're talking about. Um, if we went back to say, I don't know, uh, for April and aspects, April on May in a normal year, this year was very different. One past year, it was very different in a normal year, April and may would be. Yeah, pretty reasonably quiet.

[00:17:43] And we could, uh, we could work on various projects, ideas, and we wanted to put in place it wasn't of course, issue with COVID hitting us. And we were doing a lot of work with, uh, remote learning at that time. I'm trying to think what else I've scribbled down some notes. Let me have a quick look. [00:18:00] Yeah.

[00:18:07] Yeah, look, the day-to-day stuff is system maintenance, system development. Um, that that's my bread and butter.

[00:18:15] **Brandon:** [00:18:15] Yeah. Awesome. Yeah. I'll pass you onto Varshan.

[00:18:22] **Varshan:** [00:18:22] Hi Beck, Mr. Back. Yeah. Uh, just like to check a few. So, because you sit about, uh, actually you say the cost is a challenge. Uh, is there anything else that you actually find it more challenging and really, you know, on your daily work and stuff,

like, uh, usually find it challenging in a rain racking, you know, uh, you have to do some lost, a lot of obstacles and challenges that you face in your day-to-day work.

[00:18:49] **Adrian:** [00:18:49] Yeah. Varshan the, the thing that worries me, the thing I lose sleep over at night is the stuff that I don't know. I don't know. [00:19:00] If, you know what I mean? You know, it's, what's happening in the security world. What's happening with malware going and what's the current threats that, um, that's actually taking place while I'm, while I'm asleep.

[00:19:12] Um, it's yeah, it's, that's the stuff that I lose sleep over it is. Um, because I worry if we've got enough protection, if our, um, if our staff are suitably skilled because of the weakest point now security is our staff. And it's probably the same with any organization. Um, but it's yeah, it's and our staff do dumb stuff, you know, and I, and, and I'm sure all staff do, you know, no matter how many times you tell them, don't click on that link because you don't know where it's coming from and they still do it.

[00:19:46] You know, you beat your head against the wall over things like that. Um, but look, the, probably the. Day to day. The hardest thing to do is to keep everybody happy and you can't do it. You know, we've got, as I [00:20:00] say, um, uh, 1500 students, so probably two and a half thousand parents, there's going to be one.

[00:20:06] There's going to be a number of parents who are grumpy with me for one reason or another, um, 300 odd staff. And I can guarantee you, not all the staff love me as well, because I've said no to them on various things. So, trying to. Trying to make people understand the, uh, not just the regulations, the policies we have in place, the restrictions we've got in place.

[00:20:27] Um, that can be hard at times because everyone has, um, uh, has the, the good of the organization. Um, in their mind and then don't like being knocked back and, and sometimes you just have to knock them back.

[00:20:42] **Varshan:** [00:20:42] Yeah, I agree. Yeah. It's definitely a lot of people and stuff you have to managing. Yeah. It's not easy.

[00:20:49] **Adrian:** [00:20:49] I haven't talked to my team in terms of, we can have some problem staff. And I said, look, you've got to remember, we've got 300 staff, 297 of them are brilliant. It's just, [00:21:00] just, you know, put up with a three, you know, who, who give you a hard time. Uh, but the rest of them are really good.

[00:21:05] **Varshan:** [00:21:05] Cool. And yeah, there was also a mention about cyber security and the security of, uh, whatever around you. Can I know like, uh, what changes you'd like to see in the future? Uh, you know, what place in terms of cybersecurity?

[00:21:19] **Adrian:** [00:21:19] Yeah, that's very topical version because I've been speaking to our executive team about taking a stronger, um, security posture. As far as the school is concerned. I mentioned before that we tend to be generalists in our role rather than specialists.

[00:21:34] Um, But, uh, I'm really keen to actually have someone to be our cyber security officer here at the school and have that as their fundamental role. Um, because currently we tend to be very reactive rather than proactive, and I'm trying to get a lot more proactive now. Um, because we haven't in the past, we'd been, we have been reactive.

[00:21:55] If something would happen, we'd go out and fix it. So, I really want to get more on the front foot with that. [00:22:00] Um, so we have, for example, we've signed up. Um, suit to some additional Microsoft licenses, um, which have given us a lot more capabilities in terms of analyzing threats, um, doing tests, uh, penetration testing.

[00:22:15] Um, I actually just ran a couple of days ago, a, um, a password spray. Um, uh, Testa overall, the staff members of the school, and I've got a dictionary attack underway at present, um, simulation of course, to, um, to see our vulnerabilities. I keep that one off on Friday. Um, so those types of things we weren't doing in the past, but we're trying to do more of now trying to get more on the front foot and transport, uh, spot problems before they occur.

[00:22:44] **Varshan:** [00:22:44] Oh, that's really cool. Yeah. That's a lot of changes and stuff. Uh, yeah, now, it passed on to Ben.

[00:22:49] **Adrian:** [00:22:49] Yeah, sure.

[00:22:53] **Ben:** [00:22:53] Hi, Mr. Becks. So, um, if it was my first day on the job and I was, uh, I say graduate, what kind of advice would you like to give me?

[00:23:00] [00:23:00] **Adrian:** [00:23:00] Ah, look the, I think the fundamental thing you've got to remember in terms of going into any organization is that you're, you're in that you're in that job to make that organization, right.

[00:23:11] That that's your role. I don't care what title you've given yourself. Your job is to make that organization better. Um, first as you are coming into the role, um, your first days, that'd be telling you to sort of, to listen, to think. Uh, observe and talk, do all those things, but you, you really have to see how the organization works.

[00:23:36] And I expect you to come up with ideas on how we can improve. So, if you, my employee, I'd be saying, look, Ben, you've been here for a month or two. Now, what do you think about this? What do you think about that? How can we do this better? And you should be thinking about those first steps. You really should be thinking about them.

[00:23:54] Um, sometimes it may will be, then we're doing something, uh, using plan [00:24:00] a where you really think we should be using plan D. That might be a matter of matter of opinion, but you still should be looking at those various options, your jobs to make the organization better. I don't care whether you're in marketing, you're in IT anywhere.

[00:24:13] That's your role. You should be thinking about what we can do better all the time. I think that's a great response actually. Um, you know, I think a lot of organizations don't take that approach, you know, especially some type of leadership styles. Don't kind of foster

that environment where they think it's okay to, you know, individuals to kind of, especially new individuals to give back to the team so early.

[00:24:34] **Ben:** [00:24:34] Um, but I think that's great that you, you would applaud that. Um, I've just got one final question. Uh, if you had your time over again, what would you like to do? Or would you have done anything differently or would you choose a different career path?

[00:24:45] **Adrian:** [00:24:45] Look, I, I did something smart, uh, back in the early two thousands.

[00:24:51] I had, I told you before I basically had, um, education degrees and post-graduate, um, stuff. Um, [00:25:00] but it was all, it's all based around teaching and learning and. I need, I realized I needed a harder business aid. So, I went and did the MBA, and that was really useful at all. So prolonged my career because frankly, the people who started off like me in schools or got pushed aside because they didn't have the hard business side.

[00:25:22] So reflecting, I think that was smart for me to do. Um, but if I had the time over again, um, Yeah, the, it was interesting for me. When I, when I sort of left school, I would have really liked to have been an architect. But back in, back in 1976, when I finished school, please don't laugh in 1976. When I finished school, there was no kid there.

[00:25:50] Everything was drawn by hand and I'm a terrible artist. Um, awful, awful over. And, you know, I, I would not have got, got through architecture, [00:26:00] but it was only about eight or 10 years later or so everything just changed completely. Um, so, um, yeah, if technology was different, if I was leaving school now, yeah. I would have loved to have done architecture.

[00:26:10] I really, I liked that side of thing. I liked the creative aspect, but also, it's still based around physics and rules basically. Um, so yeah, for me, Yeah, that's always been a bit of a dream, but, um, um, so be it that's all right.

[00:26:28] **Ben:** [00:26:28] Thanks mate. Um, Mr. Becks, I'll hand back to, uh, Danielle and now I'm just going to just kind of close off from it. Thank you for your time.

[00:26:35] **Adrian:** [00:26:35] Pleasure.

[00:26:37] **Daniela:** [00:26:37] Uh, yeah. So thank you again. Um, that's been some great insight. I work in recruitment at the moment and as Ben already pointed out the fact that you would actually encourage people to acknowledge. That they're there to make the business better, but also observe and come up with ideas for improvement.

[00:26:57] That's um, that's not very common, [00:27:00] so that's brilliant. That was good to hear, at least from my point of view, from the recruitment side of things, because if people aren't prepared to innovate and take on feedback, the business can stagnate. It's really important. Obviously, if we're coming in as graduates, we don't have a wealth of experience in this particular field, but it doesn't mean that, you know, our managers might not feel that our opinions, because it's the first set of eyes aren't valid.

[00:27:25] **Adrian:** [00:27:25] Well, it's interesting, Danielle I've, I've got a, um, a person on board now is really in their first IT role, but, um, Um, they've got friends and they, and I can't remember where his, um, friends from, I think he saying works in M w a water or something like that, but, um, he said, Oh, my friend's been doing it this, and that's great.

[00:27:46] It's not just the new person coming in, but it's people they know its people you study with. And so, you've got those various connections. So just because you haven't been working in the field doesn't mean that you don't have good connections with good ideas, or [00:28:00] even if you poach some from somebody else.

[00:28:03] **Daniela:** [00:28:03] Yeah, that's great. No, it's been, um, we really do appreciate your time today. It's been great to hear your perspective, um, and your journey as well is really interesting. Victor did mention that. Um, so that's why we put a few questions in there asking for more information, because. It's great to hear that even if it's not, you know, your initial interest or initial skill base, there are still opportunities within the industry, um, that are available for those who are able to take advantage of it.

[00:28:31] So thank you again. We really do appreciate it.

[00:28:34] **Adrian:** [00:28:34] Good luck everyone with your studies.

[00:28:37] **Viktor:** [00:28:37] Thank you. Thank you, Adrian. I'm going to stop the recorder. Just hang on one second.