Interview with IT Professional – Jason White

**Hermanto Surjani**  
So thank you everybody for joining in to this interview. We've got our guest here, Jason White, who's the Lead of Infrastructure for the Asia Pacific Region. His company is Fresenius Medical Care. And what I might do is ask each of my colleagues to introduce themselves.

**Craig Scofield**  
Hi I’m Craig Scofield, I’m 47, live in Central Queensland and enjoying this course so far. So far so good.

**Hermanto Surjani**  
Yep, Yep. Adam please.

**Adam Greenwood**  
Hi my name’s Adam Greenwood I’m 33. I live in Melbourne and the course is going really good so far, really enjoying it.

**Hermanto Surjani**  
Sounds good.

**Leigh White**  
My name’s Leigh White, I am 25, live in Melbourne and I recently just started a career in web hosting.

**Hermanto Surjani**  
That's great, yeah, I think Leigh did you start this week or last week?

**Leigh White**  
Started yesterday so it's very fresh.

**Hermanto Surjani**

Now my name is Hermanto Surjani, I work with Jason, not directly within his team but I’m a part of the clinical information systems team. My team hierarchy is also within the Asia Pacific as well. And I’ve been here for just over 6 and a half years. I live in Sydney and I’m happy to host everybody here. So again I start off with thanking Jason for being a part of this interview.

Excellent. So this scenario is for our assessment for our Bachelor of Information Technology.

I’m also really enthusiastic in interviewing you, as some of my cohorts aren’t as well experienced or versed in the IT space. So it’s going to be interesting looking at your history and your education. So that they can perhaps form their own path in the IT space.

So Jason if you can introduce yourself formally please.

**Jason White**  
Sure, so as Hermanto said, I’m Jason White, I'm the lead of the infrastructure team in Asia Pacific here, working for Fresenius Medical Care. I've been working here for 22 years now. So it is my first job out of the study and I moved up from working in the help desks all through different ranks into where I see myself now I lead the team that's geographically dispersed all over Asia Pacific. Now, which is actually a pretty fresh role. I did already lead a team that was geographically dispersed over three different countries now. I don't even know how many countries, it is, but it's at least seven different countries in Asia Pacific I've got staff members totalling, 23 underneath me. We look after the core infrastructure services, for our company in Asia Pacific region, including I think it's around about 400 actual service. We look after these are virtualized servers primarily.

We’re in migrations to the cloud and so forth as well.

**Hermanto Surjani**  
Sounds are very expansive, your role, so thank you for that introduction.

So the first of the interview questions per se is what was your educational path? How did you end up into the role that you are now from an educational perspective?

**Jason White**  
That's an interesting one actually.

So, the real big interesting part about all of this is my parents actually worked for IBM and I got a bit of a good start into IT because of that. You think about the first PC that came out. We were had one of those sitting on our desk at home, so the first ever PC that came out. IBM did this thing where they gave all of their senior management. This PC and said take it home. You're gonna be more productive, they took it home turned it on.

Bought it up to the little DOS prompt and then quickly turned it off because I had no idea what they were doing with it. We had one of them.

But that helped me out because I was into computers at a very, very young age.

Following through with that when I did work experiences.

I went into work experience in IBM doing a couple of different roles there and realistically. I knew I wanted to do IT from quite, quite young. Either that or be an auto electrician So one of them pays the bills a bit more I thought.

So I went into a year when I was going into year 12 at school. I started off in a TAFE course there did the 1st, first sort of six months of a diploma of a TAFE course while I was going to school and then that meant a year and half later. I actually finished the diploma in my TAFE course realized the greatest thing was, I came out of TAFE in year 2000 not the best time to be trying to apply for jobs so because there was a surplus of junior IT people out in the world after the Y2K bug. So I went off and did further studies and did the MCSE at the time.

Which was quite quite straightforward when you’ve got nothing else to do so I studied for that I did self learning and studied and went through to do the MCSE finished that, and that's when I actually got my resume, got a bit more looked at put it that way.

So that's really where my background comes from.

**Hermanto Surjani**  
Thank you. Thank you for that really informative answer so it really shows that you don't have to take a straightforward path - you can go through your own journey.

The next question is, have you had any other roles in IT prior to this one? How did you get to your current role?.

**Jason White**  
Yeah, and I mean that's a very interesting question as to the path that it takes that I took to get to this role.

So I guess my first job was literally called IT Help Desk for Australia, and well it was literally called Australia. It was Australia and New Zealand. At the time I was at working for the finance director for South Asia. Pacific now so I went into that role I was a solo IT person, fresh out of fresh out of TAFE with my diploma. In 2000 never worked in the IT and all of a sudden, I'm dealt with a heap of users as a solo role, but there was one other person. Guiding me, who worked in an Asia Pacific Role. Really, he was focused on SAP which is our ERP system.

And a few other core services which existed as yeah, our SAP system and and our Lotus Notes e-mail system at the time so I went into that, well.

And soon sort of realized that there was other countries that didn't have an IT person that there was a local contract. That's working there and in those local contractors. They didn't know what they'll do and they had no guidance. They were being guided by finance people or by any sort of local person there, so that was about a year into the role.

And I went over to the my boss at the time and the South Asian Pacific finance person and said, who's looking after them and he goes oh I don't know. And so I put up my hand to kind of start to guide that so this is where a sort of sub region was formed for it. Hermanto knows it quite well South AP IT department is that I put up my hand for that.

And we started to form that.

That then started to grow, our company grew and so you could say I did a lot of organic growth with inside the company there I took on a, My let me think.

Yeah, and then I took on another role being the Asia Pacific, one after the person that was looking after SAP systems and.

The Lotus note system moved on, so I took on that, well and so that developed from there in needing more people because our company was keeping on growing and then it was more about just growing with the company so as you heard we kinda had two central services that well, 2 central servers before and then it grew up into what it is now been the 400 odd servers that we host today.

And it was also about trying to look at other countries look at what they're doing, and to kind of make sure that we provide some guidance over the top of them so it's kind of how my job will always grew is trying to find the holes. What are not been actually filled at the moment and kind of just putting your hand up to fill those positions and sometimes it means that you're working extremely late hours. Long hours and doing a lot more than what you…

What you have kind of signed up for but it's a way of just saying you know what you're committed to trying to help and.

Yeah, you just keep on filling those gaps and filling those holes and then all of a sudden, it's like well. We need people to actually assist to do all these other tasks, so it's kind of like bringing things in from certain countries or certain places that need improvement and then the processes that were, running quite well, the process is where I needed to bring people in to sort of start to handle those off so I did move into an SAP basis well. When I did the Asia Pacific Role. So we took on SAP basis. We took on EDI.

We took on a ohh so we put up a wiki system based on conference and that's when we started duo as well. And so forth, then we moved into.

We did things like a data center migrations, so I've done two data center migrations now underneath me and I'm doing one more right now.

So as you kind of hear it's a bit of a mix of a lot of things. It's a bit of a mix between actually trying to find where there were gaps with inside.

The organization in IT, and a lot of it has been organic growth with inside the company.

**Hermanto Surjani**  
Jason, there’s so much detail in that, but from what I could grasp and summarize.

Uh is that you basically saw the gap saw the opportunities and put your hand up for the work and did it and basically grew with the role you experience and.

You know grew with the business. I would say so, yeah, so that's a a lesson for all of us, I would say.

**Hermanto Surjani (asking David Lardner’s question)**  
What does a normal work day look like for you?

**Jason White**  
This is a very interesting question.

My boss is based in Boston. So my boss is based in Boston I have people all around Asia Pacific and I work with Germany a lot as well so that being said.

My day can look like anything, so normal work day is not a normal work day for me.

There are days where I started at 5:00 AM. And there are days where I finish at 2:00 AM. But it's extremely my job you would say is extremely dynamic. Now I would say flexible, but it's flexible to some point, so a lot of my days do start with early morning meetings, then I look, I mix my personal life with work quite a bit so it started off with a very early meetings. Getting my kids ready. They go off to school. Then then I have a bit of a gap before Asia Pacific comes online Asia Pacific, so that comes online and I have that I work with the team there.

And so forth so I would say I work with North America, primarily early mornings and this is where a lot of my directions are coming from and.

Yeah, like this morning I had a meeting with A. The project manager for infrastructure globally to align on our project and then we had talks around permanently round. Our data center migrations, which are going on at the moment with my internal staff. We had some networking items that came through there were some one there's a staff member that is leaving and it was a handover opportunity, there as well. So we will focus on that handover opportunity trying to see and make sure that that's all in check.

And then there was a lot of there went them. There was an activity without going into it in more detail but there was an activity where our needed to shift the direction of a few different colleagues of mine so on the on the more senior management level to try and shift the direction of where we're focusing our attentions.

And honestly there's meetings tonight as well with Germany going on and so forth worth.

**Hermanto Surjani**  
Even after this interview?

**Jason White**  
Yeah, in other words, my work day, never ends is what I'm trying to say by this one. So there's no normal work day for me now but my work day never ends but there's more about.

Trying to gather the information from both my team.

And from the global representatives in other in both the US and in Germany to try and make sure that everybody is on the same page is really where my job is.

**Craig Scofield**  
OK, so one of my questions. I had was what impact has education had on your success in your career.

**Jason White**  
Good question.

My TAFE diploma really that.

And that I think we're just got my foot through the door. The education aspects that I would really see beneficial are more around the certifications.

And those certifications are where I said, I went out and got my MCSE and that actually got my foot in the door. A lot more than what my diploma did, the diploma was necessary.

And any degrees or so forth are actually just necessary, but what actually puts you above everybody else is these so certifications and they're the ones that are pinpointing you to a path in your career and when you're going along. Those certifications, you'll learn a lot about the specific product or service or whatever. You're doing or whatever you're focused on and so a lot a lot of people are looking for.

ITIL certifications at the moment that's fantastic. Every IT company, basically or any company that you're working for uses ITIL?

And as a framework so that's and that's a definite one to sort of have and once you start speaking ITIL it really helps in terms, especially when you're working with a global organization.

Even down to change management what's considered a standard change if everybody knows what an item or standard change is it makes a big difference, whereas if every Tom \*\*\*\* and Harry are actually inventing what the standard change is it's really frustrating.

So these are and I mean that was a simple example. But this is a examples where professional training and learning actually and education comes into play and just makes it a lot more simple in the workplace.

**Craig Scofield**  
OK thanks for that.

**Hermanto Surjani**  
Adam did you want to ask one of your questions please.

**Adam Greenwood**  
What do you like mostly about working with IT?

**Jason White**  
So working with IT is it's almost like it's definitive.

You can't blame anyone for something that's broken because it's just there's an object so working with our TV is, it is definitive. But it's also constantly changing so the the world around us is always changing in IT. Another quick pace. So you have to keep up and I like that. There's always multiple ways of solving a problem is especially working in an organization.

You always get stuck you go this is the way we're doing, it, but it never works. Because somebody along the lines has done something to say. No, we can't do it. That way and it might not even be an actual technical thing. It might be just a limitation from a a policy or something like that that they've got in place. They just won't do it and then you have to find another way around so there's certain aspects to that what I just mentioned there. One is it's always sort of definitive that you know that there's a, that is either a yes or no answer. Now either you can or you can't do something.

But then the aspects of with IT is it's so vastly changing all the time and you just have to keep up and I love the idea of always keeping on learning about what's up and coming and keeping on keeping on top of that and there's something's. A no that definitive no six months ago, it can be yesterday.

So this is also the things that are going on there.

**Hermanto Surjani**OK, Leigh.

**Leigh White**  
Yeah.

**Hermanto Surjani**  
Did you want ask one of your questions please?

**Leigh White**  
Yeah, so now you spoken about how you interact a lot with the other regions.

So you spend a lot of your time in meetings.

Do you deal with any clients or investors or have you had to do that at all in your career?

**Jason White**  
I've had to deal with customers. Yes, in the past. Hermanto, I think Hermanto has actually been here when I've had to deal directly with customers.

But not so much definitely not investors, but customers yes and our customers are in hospitals. And so forth so it's a It's an interesting environment to walk into.

**Leigh White**  
Yeah, I can imagine.

Uh and then another question I have is.

What aspects of your work do you find the most challenging?

**Jason White**  
People but yeah, that that's the thing that I love and I hate because yeah, it's the most challenging aspect.

Mmm people are complex and a good being a good manager is actually understanding that complexity so if you don't realize that that's a challenge, then you actually not taking on that responsibility properly because everybody reacts and works differently and you've gotta actually lend yourself to understand people and understand what drives people so.

Every person that reports to me is slightly different and some want to get acknowledged for some things that they've done. Other people actually don't care. They don't want it. Some people kind of need more interaction to sort of put together a few details put together more details and other people wanna be left alone and bit more so that's probably the most complex part, but it's not even just people that work for me, it's all.

Everybody that surrounds you as well so even when you walk into a project.

The project team is a mini organization. You've gotta be able to figure everybody out and place people in and it works also with colleagues overseas. We’ve got a sister company that we've been getting services off. It works for them as well. You've got to understand what drives the people that are delivering you services so then you can get the best out of that service and best out of them.

**Leigh White**  
Thanks for that.

**Craig Scofield**  
What kind of accomplishments tend to be valued and rewarded in this industry.

**Jason White**  
The best accomplishments here is where you can see value for the end patients in my in our industry specifically but I think it would go along hand with any organization is that what you wanna see is you need to see value back to the focus of the company so if the focus of the company is as ours is on Healthcare. You need to be delivering back to the patient something.

And if that means that we can deliver some time of the nurses, meaning that if we make the nurses life easier. It means that they can spend more time with their patients something similar to that we use it where where you see the most value and the most recognition is aspects that really deliver on the companies core values and some of those core values might not be what I said about delivering time back or something so visible, but it can also be about security so if you find something and you go well - this is really going to increase your our patient security inside. Inside the industry of healthcare and we increase that security that's really valued by the company. So it's more about finding out what the company core values are and if you can focus on those values and link them back to something that you're doing, it will really get a get some good feedback.

**Craig Scofield**  
OK, thank you.

**Hermanto Surjani**  
Now, sorry Craig if you had another question. I don't want to short-change you if we've got a few minutes..

**Craig Scofield**  
OK, OK, if Jason doesn't mind.

**Jason White**  
No at all.

**Craig Scofield**  
How do you organize your time because you'll be very   
Busy and hectic during a lot of your time. How do you organise that so that you make sure that you meet the priorities?

**Jason White**  
So the first and foremost my priorities, you're gonna have some priorities about your personal life.

And so uh that's my number one. I actually block out time in my calendar. And so now but workwise priorities. You have to look at the impacts and what other people can do versus what you need to do yourself and so this is where.

This is where I've had to prioritize a lot of things based on.

The idea that I Know and I can trust that this aspect is being looked after and then I move on from that, and so as I said, before a lot of my time is used up by trying to gather information about from other people and making sure that we're on the correct path and so, if I see something that's more about trying to supply a direction that is exactly where I'm going to spend my time.

Versus natural process or task that's happening right then and there.

So it can be very dynamic what's happening because sometimes things just pop up and it's about fighting making sure you're fighting. Those fires because before they come be the massive thing and and so something will come up and you can kind of see it starting to similar away. And if you can reach reach that as a priority. That's exactly where I like to spend my time.

Because if you don't that's where it really cascades.

**Craig Scofield**  
Yeah, good one alright Thanks Jason.

**Adam Greenwood**  
Do you like your job like do you like working where you are now?

**Jason White**  
Yeah, most certainly.

I mean, there's many aspects that I like and one of the key aspects here that I, I like is the flexibility that I can basically.

I do have this dynamic time period that I'm working but it's also.

As much as I said that people are challenging is actually the bit that I like the most about my job is that I do like working with different people. I do like their intensity about trying to figure out what people how people take and to making sure that I can try and get the best out of my staff and now that the people that are surrounding me. The other aspects are really like is the analytical part of my job where you look.

At a situation and other problem and there are many as I said, before there are many ways to combat the task or problem and sometimes I find people get blinkers on and it can be quite numbing to try and see outside that and to be able to try and get people to say ohh? What about this and you get a brainstorming session and around people to try and get to a different end result and that's what I'm I do really like and enjoy.

Getting multiple people together and getting the best out of a certain situation to try and get the feedback from everybody and see an end result and at the end. That's kind of what drives me. I want to see an end end result. I want to start something finish something but I always always want. That next thing to go to yeah, and in a company like ours. There is always something more to do and that's what I really do like.

**Leigh White**  
I've only got one more question.

Just want to know can you share an example of the work that you do that best captures the essence of IT as an industry?

**Jason White**  
Mm-hmm.

So one of the things that we do, and quite a successful project that we did, probably ohh. It's been a journey. We started many years ago, where we introduced a networking system, which is based on the template approach.

It's a cloud managed networking system and I can't name names, but it's a cloud based networking system that we started off just on the wireless setup and that worked extremely well because as soon as we put in one device. We rolled out Next One and so forth and then we could just roll out that wireless to every single clinic every single office that we had, and then we moved on, and did that for switching and networking.

Sorry switching and Firewalls and so forth all throughout the region.

Now why I mention this one is capturing the essence behind. IT is because, as I said it's a cloud managed platform. It's based on templates. We manage 500 Firewalls. It's 2000 switches and around about I think it's 800 access points - with a team of three people.

**Leigh White**  
Wow.

**Craig Scofield**  
Yeah.

**Hermanto Surjani**  
Amazing.

**Leigh White**  
Yeah, that's pretty big.

**Hermanto Surjani**  
Ok, if I can ask the last question, if you had your time over would you change anything or would you go through the same path?

**Jason White**  
That's a good question. What are changing the thing we always like to say that we would do things differently.

There's always lessons learned along the way there's certainly projects I would do differently.

Umm but that's just hindsight in actual fact with my career and how it went forward and so forth. I wouldn't change a thing.

I liked where I started I liked with the graduates that came from with knowing the end users and so forth. I kind of missed that to be completely honest with you. I miss being talking to everybody knowing everybody. And so forth on the business side. Knowing these nurses, so they're dealing with patients and walking walking into clinics with, we're patients hooked into hooked up to our machines and so forth.

But having that background behind from the Help desk side into the server operations and network operations into an EDI system background where you got to deal with many different systems and Hermanto works with our health information systems. I actually know that system very well because of the integration that we did. But if I didn't do the integration. I wouldn't know that system as well as I did.

Or do and so forth so there wouldn't be anything that I would really wanna change in my career path, put that that way.

**Hermanto Surjani**  
OK, thank you for that response, Jason and I can definitely attest that Jason knows his stuff and even the applications that I'm responsible for he definitely knows it and knows it well, especially from that different perspective from the EDI side.

So I think we'll call it there. Thank you for your time. Thank you to Jason and thank you to my colleagues for being part of this interview. Cheers.