As we are in the early stages of our learnings of Information Technology it is invaluable to gain insight from individuals working within the IT sector on what their job looks like day-to-day and the challenges they face. I had the pleasure of interviewing Grant, a Senior Solutions Engineer.

**Can you tell me about the industry you work in?**

I work in the accounting industry, making one of the most popular cloud accounting products for small businesses.

**What does the job of a Senior Solutions Engineer look like?**

I perform customer research and get involved in the design of solutions and their implementation. I also regularly present to clients and produce materials to help educate them on emerging technologies, industry trends and how our company is working with these to stay at the forefront in our industry.

*“Collaborating with other IT professionals is essential to working efficiently”*

**What other kinds of work do you have to do?**

A part of my job is customer facing. I regularly work with clients to understand their needs better and develop solutions to help make them more efficient at their day to day jobs. I also represent the business at events, speaking about technology and the trends that are impacting the accounting industry. I also get involved in projects that are not IT centric, such as the development of training materials.

**What aspects of your work do you spend most time on?**

Currently I am working mostly in project and development work. This involves meeting with customers, understanding their needs and then making decisions around product directions. From there I work with a team to implement changes and deploy them back to customers in the shortest timeframe possible.

**So where would you spend most of your time whilst working on projects?**

It depends on what phase of a project I am in. In the planning phases, I spend the most time interviewing clients and consolidating research. When it comes to implementing a solution, I will spend a lot of time alone programming with regular short meetings with other engineers. I also interact with my colleagues (predominantly software engineers, but also designers, product managers, sales managers, and others) to collaborate on solutions.

*“This really exemplifies how IT has transformed not just rapidly, but also in a direction from a more isolated role to a role that requires much more collaboration and teamwork”*

**Do you interact with other IT professionals?**

Collaborating with other IT professionals is essential to working efficiently. Many times in software development you will encounter hard to solve problems that can take you many days to solve, but if you know someone who has solved a similar problem they can save you a great deal of time. I also get involved in development projects that have multiple engineers working on them and I need to collaborate with the others closely (meeting at least once per day) to make sure we are not wasting our time working on the same things.

**What do your interactions with clients look like?**

I deal with clients regularly for research purposes. I spend a lot of time interacting with clients to understand their needs and capture their feedback on newly developed features. I have also been involved in the sales process for some clients and provided technical demonstrations of our product. I also sometimes get involved in customer service issues when there is a technical problem concerning something closely related to projects I have been involved in.

**What aspect of IT do you think is most challenging?**

Keeping up to speed on the latest technologies has become more difficult as my career has progressed. There are a lot more frameworks available now and while they provide great efficiencies, they require a big commitment to learn. The pace of change has become so fast that it is very difficult to stay on top of everything new.

***“****The one thing that is really important is to never stop learning*

*– it’s important to stay up to date****”***

**Which aspects of your work as a Solutions Engineer do you find most challenging?**

I have never liked dealing with office politics and this has always been a burden to me. In IT, many people are logically minded and the best ideas tend to win more often than they do in other parts of business. When other stakeholders involved in decision making, they may want to make decisions without having a deep technical understanding of the problem or any proposed solutions. Part of my job is to work with these people so that they are better informed on such aspects and less inclined to make decisions based purely off personal biases or a desire to gain political favour with others. Unfortunately, I’m not always successful!

**Can you share an example of the work you do that best captures the essence of the IT industry?**

One feature I developed recently really highlighted the ways that working in the IT industry have changed so much in just the past 10 years. I created an export functionality. Ten years ago this would have involved me working primarily by myself – I would have made code changes to a monolithic code structure and they would have gone into the next release cycle, which may have been once every 3-12 months. Today, a large web product is usually written in a containerised fashion, so I had to find an existing plugin where I could have my code hosted. Once I discovered a suitable plugin, I had to pitch my work to the team that owned it to make sure they were happy for me to extend their work to include my new functionality. Once I started building the code, I was able to get new releases out every two weeks, so I could start testing changes with beta testers and get feedback very rapidly. None of this would have been possible if we didn’t have a large team that oversaw our deployments and infrastructure using Kubernetes services. This really exemplifies how IT has transformed not just rapidly, but also in a direction from a more isolated role to a role that requires much more collaboration and teamwork.

***“****The pace of change has become so fast that it is very difficult to stay on top of everything new****”***

**Do you have any advice for graduates?**

There are so many opportunities in IT. I was worried early in my career that I was tiring of it, but it is so easy to pivot and get involved in different areas. The one thing that is really important is to never stop learning – it’s important to stay up to date, so if you find you’re not passionate enough about something you’re working on, see how you can pivot to be learning about things that do interest you.

As a Senior Solutions Engineer, Grants, work is ever-changing dependent on the project being worked on as well as other requirements throughout the business. Grant has the advantage of working directly with the end-user to understand what’s working and what’s not working. Grant’s role is essential to the business as he works to improve the overall experience and effectiveness of the software based on the research obtained from clients.

Throughout the interview with Grant it became apparent that the progression of the IT sector impacts all IT professionals significantly and that it is of utmost importance to continuously stay up to date with current trends and to never stop learning.