

ICT Executive Profile

Alexandra Thomas: VP Managed Services, Optus Business



What is your current role and what is your scope?

My current role is VP Managed Services and Delivery within Optus Business. I look after managed services annuity and services revenue stream, and I also have accountability for the delivery for all products.

What attracted you to a career in ICT?

IT was never an area I thought I'd get involved in – more of a necessary evil! I consider myself to be deployment and transformation practitioner, which are probably good skills to have in this industry! At Optus I work with some incredibly smart and knowledgeable people who know how the technology works – down to the circuit board in many cases. I'm in a position where I can leverage this pool of talent and knowledge to benefit and enable some of Australia's biggest and most successful organisations. I can witness and be party to technology revolutionising business in this country – what a gift!

Tell us about the highpoints and lowpoints of your career?

I've been very fortunate throughout my career at Optus and it is true to say that much of my time in the company has been thoroughly enjoyable and rewarding – even if to outside ears that sounds a little trite. Most Optus folks would share similar sentiment. With the Telco industry being what it is, and Optus very much driving the vanguard of revolution and

innovation within the sector in this country, I've been able to get involved with a diverse and challenging portfolio of projects and developments.

From very small niche developments to whole of company, sector-first initiatives. A truly fortunate position to be in, and with some hindsight, a record of achievement I take pride in.

Embedding LEAN/Six-Sigma across the company – irrespective of what you did at Optus you had a chance to be part of this initiative – and seeing it become the bedrock of Customer Experience and continuous improvement within the company changed the landscape of the industry in Australia.

'Project Reitz' – implementing a new billing and customer care system with minimal impact to customers, employees and the business is another initiative that demonstrated what a talented, energetic and thoroughly professional group of people Optus had to call on at the time. Such Projects are often viewed in the industry as potential poison-chalice moments. I'm proud that in this instance too, the team rose to the challenge and not without setbacks and bumps along the way, arrived at a successful outcome.

More recently with Optus Business I've had the distinct pleasure to work with some of Australia's biggest and most successful organisations – both public and private sector – and partner with them in delivering material and beneficial change to their operations.

This is not to say it has all been plain-sailing. Optus is a business like any other and when faced with real and significant market pressures workforce and company change is inevitable. Recent restructures within the business illustrate this point. During these times I do feel the burden that business decisions have on our people's lives. It is hard in these instances to maintain a dispassionate business focus and in a perfect world such change would never be necessary.

What does work life balance mean to you?

Knowing when to stop and smell the roses and not lose perspective on what is important. The telecommunications industry more or less invented the 24x7 dynamic and it is easy to be inundated by the demands this can place upon you. Everyone needs their own time and it is not a failing to guard this time jealously. For me, jogging 4 mornings a week helps me focus and keep focused on my responsibilities – but again I'm fortunate in that Optus is the kind of organisation that enables



me to make those special times in family life, those precious performances at school assemblies and moments of happiness that I can share with my family.

What attracted and kept you in the ICT industry throughout your career?

As I mentioned before, that process of awakening the potential in people, businesses and organisations is a constant thrill. Securing benefits for the customer that perhaps they'd never thought of – enabling innovation and success are all things I can be part of in my role.

There are no real limits in this industry – no one has really got around to writing the rule book just yet...in many cases it's yours to write. I'm very lucky to be so unencumbered by rules and convention found in some more traditional sectors and be in the position where decisions really do matter and the slate is your own to write upon.

What ambitions personal or professional do you still want to achieve?

Professionally I have so much to learn and master – there's never a dull moment, which is genuinely true in my case.

Personally, I'd like to run a half marathon by start of next year and perhaps even see the day again when we can win an Ashes Test.

What's the one piece of advice you'd give to yourself starting out on your career?

Never be afraid to ask a question, learn from those you respect and don't forget who you are, after all no one on their death bed wishes they'd spent more time at work.

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