**Lifestyle is an IT job bonus**

**Working it out**

IQ follows graduates into the workplace

Name: Steven Thornton

Job: I’m a computer support officer for the Department of Education and Training Information Technology Support Unit (DET ITSU). The school support unit is assigned with assisting and managing an estimated 91,000 users in 229 public schools and four regional offices with all their IT requirements.

My duties are hard to describe as every day is different. One day I might be under a desk installing a computer and the next in an executive meeting discussing a change to internet services impacting every public school in NSW.

**Age:** 24

**Qualifications:** Bachelor of Information and Communications Technology (Network Management) from the University of Wollongong (UOW), 2005.

**Pay:** $45,000 + benefits. For me it’s not about the big dollars, it’s about the unbeatable lifestyle.

**Hours:** I work a standard 35-hour week based on the Government’s flexi-time agreement. There are no specified start and stop times for work. As long as I’m within the agreement I can work any times I wish. This allows me to accrue overtime if I desire and take time off on full pay withexisting sick or annual leave.

**Best part of your job:** By far the best part of my position is the variety. No two days are the same. I apply my knowledge in a diverse range of activities encompassing almost everything IT related.

I also love not being stuck in an office all day. I get to cruise around Sydney with small teams in government cars which really makes the day interesting.

Out of the so many other positive points I could talk about, I just want to say that seeing students smile when everything is working is priceless. I go home each day feeling like I have made a difference.

**Worst part:** There is always so much to do. Sometimes it seems no matter how hard you work, there is always something waiting to be done. Once I got used to the public service in such a fast-paced role, I realised we do get to everything eventually.

**The scariest thought for me is getting my head around the enormous size of the network we support. It can be very daunting to think about the network as a whole and that the decisions you make could potentially affect thousands of users.**

**What did you want to be when you were a kid?** A computer support officer, supporting IT needs.

**What do you want to be doing in five years?** I’m going to go around the world doing what I’m doing now and put some big dollars in my pocket.

**How did you land your job?** By working for a government IT support service and having previously been employed as a computer support officer for 24 months I was the lead systems administrator for two schools.

Later I was asked if I would like to join the DET ITSU to assist in a project. That project finished last year, I just never left and I keep showing up to work each day.

**Advice for young students:** The best advice I can give students is that the ‘soft skills’ you’ll learn while completing your degree are more important than marks.

**Deadline is drawing near**

**Leadership diary**

IQ follows 10 university students as they plan a national conference.

When Charles Dickens wrote, ‘It was the best of times, it was the worst of times’, he could have been foretelling the journey of our team as we plan our first Students 4 Students National Leadership Conference next month.

With the September 23 start date drawing near, the pressure is on everyone to do their assigned tasks while supporting the rest of the group.

While we are approaching the stressful time of the semester (and our timeline) we’re all working well together and are continuing to have fun along the way.

And it seems that everyone is getting into the spirit of our conference, with Illawarra graphic design company N-vision Studio volunteering their services, and Australia’s Local Hero of 2007, Shanaka Fernando confirmed as our opening keynote speaker. Fernando runs several not-for-profit restaurants in Melbourne, called Lentil As Anything, where customers choose how much they want to pay for their meal.

**The best advice I can give students is that the ‘soft skills’ you’ll learn while completing your degree are more important than marks.’**

**What do you want to be doing in five years?** I started off as an assistant systems administrator at a single school. After three months I was the lead systems administrator for two schools.

Later I was asked if I would like to join the DET ITSU to assist in a project. That project finished last year, I just never left and I keep showing up to work each day.

**Advice for young students:** The best advice I can give students is that the “soft skills” you’ll learn while completing your degree are more important than marks.

I have never once regretted choosing not to do honours and a thesis.

What I do use every day and can’t do without are my interpersonal skills and ability to act without fear at any level. Whether it’s saying “hi” to students as I walk past or participating in an executive meeting, I know my time at UOW has prepared me for anything.

Do you need a particular kind of personality to succeed? There is no single personality that is best for IT. The rare beauty of the information and communications platform is that, it’s so diverse there is a position to suit any personality.

Your personality will indicate which fields you will succeed in.

Every personality can succeed in IT, understand yourself and use that to your advantage.

**Shanaka Fernando, who started Lentil As Anything, a not-for-profit restaurant in Melbourne, will be one of the inspirational speakers at next month’s Students 4 Students National Leadership Conference. Picture: MICHAEL CLAYTON-JONES, Fairfax**