

Our 'Week in the Life' series gives you an insight into the type of work that is completed by our technical staff in a typical working week...

## Gary Jensen - Cloud/Hybrid Consultant

I'm a cloud/hybrid consultant working primarily in the legacy on-premises and Azure technologies, although 95% of our work is cloud-focused these days. My role is focused on pre-sales engagements, some technical design authority work and supporting my expert colleagues on projects they are delivering. The thing I love about my job is the wide variety of experiences that I have.



One day I'll be working with a major corporate, the next I might be working with a smaller client which has very different requirements and considerations. I particularly enjoy working directly with our customers contacts. We have a many clients that we have long-term relationships with and, consequently, have a great social relationship with. So, we have meetings, have a chat about the football or whatever and then complete our meeting, having a bit of a laugh along the way.

Unsurprisingly, the story of my working week starts on a Monday...

### Monday

Today, I've got a meeting in London with a power distribution company. They are two years into a modernisation programme, taking them from legacy on-premises applications to Office 365. They've already completed an email migration and are now moving onto replacing their legacy collaboration platform with SharePoint Online.

I'm with one of our SharePoint architects and we're meeting with a number of the organisation's architects to give them an overview of the art of the possible and to help them understand the process of a SharePoint implementation and migration. We've been working with this company for a long time so we know all the architects very well and the meeting is relaxed and fun.

We're finished after about four hours, which is perfect timing for lunch. A few of us walk round the corner to a sandwich bar where Gary Lineker once filmed a Walker's crisps advert. After lunch, we head back on the train. There is no formal output from this meeting because the customer needs to have a think about where they really want to start with this project and how that will intersect with other projects that are ongoing.

### Tuesday

Tuesday is an office day. Once I've got my morning cup of tea, I sit down and go through my emails, Yammer posts and Teams updates. It takes about half an hour. There are the usual sorts of things – messages from colleagues asking for assistance, emails from customer asking for assistance and one from a Nigerian prince asking for assistance to get \$20m out of the country. I've sent him the \$1,000 he needs to get the transfer in progress so I'm just waiting for the transaction to be completed now.

My calendar today is fairly light. There a

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re a couple of internal project status review meetings, one for an Azure implementation for one of our high street retail customers and the other for a device management project we are running for one of our smaller, local customers.

In addition, I have a mentoring meeting with one of my newer colleagues, who is on our professional development programme. We discuss what he's been up to, review one of his design documents and I provide some advice about how he can improve this. The professional development programme is a great way for us experienced consultants to share our wit and wisdom in a structured way with our less-experienced colleagues. I think having a professional development programme is a great benefit to our staff, the company and, ultimately, our customers.

After finishing these meetings, I don't have anything else specific to do, at least from a customer/project point of view, so I catch up with some blogs and Channel 9 videos as part of my continuous learning. Sometimes I yearn for the days of the three-year application lifecycle, but then there wouldn't be the excitement of seeing what new features have been released this week.

I also do a little bit of prep for a pre-sales meeting with a new customer in Bristol, which is tomorrow morning. In this case, prepping means finding out a bit about the company from its website, speaking to the account manager and making sure my slide deck is good to go.

## Wednesday

I meet the account manager at a local pub, and then he drives the rest of the way to Bristol, so I can relax.

Like many new customers, this company is running mostly legacy, on-premises platforms. They are coming up to a refresh period and are wanting to understand what their options are. We start by discussing the relative merits of staying with an on-premises platform or moving to a cloud or hybrid environment. I take them through a presentation about Microsoft Azure, which blows their mind. They had some knowledge of what Azure is but they had no idea it could do everything that it does (and I only scratched the surface). They are so enthused that they want to take it to next level, which means that I need to create a proposal.

Cleverly, again we finish the meeting around lunchtime so we can pop into their lovely on-site restaurant for a nice bit of Shepherd's pie.

After lunch, it's a pleasant drive back to pick up my car and then, since it's not worth going into the office, on home. There's still an hour and half of the working day left so I get the laptop out and start crafting the proposal. This will be a large project and it is not possible to define exactly what it is at this stage so there will need to be an analysis and discovery phase first. We need to know what they have so that we can define the most appropriate path forward.

I don't quite finish the proposal today, but I can do that tomorrow, on the train to a meeting with one of our university customers.

There's no sign of any money from the Nigerian prince yet, by the way, but I'm sure it'll be in my bank soon. I sent him a message to ask what is happening but there has been no reply. I think he must be busy with his royal duties and stuff.

## Thursday

I'm on the 7:35 train from Bournemouth today so that's not too bad! I'm travelling up with a project manager and one of our Azure specialists.

I use the journey to complete yesterday's proposal. I also do a bit of other admin on the way although it's pretty difficult on this line because of the very variable phone signal and the even more variable train wifi. I say even more variable but it's actually more binary than that. The bandwidth is great in Bournemouth station and then disappears just after departure, never to return. We can put a man on the moon, etc., etc.

The day at the university is very pleasurable. I'm a technical design authority on this project, which means I'm the authority on any technical design matters. I also make the tea and supply the biscuits and cakes, which the uni team very much likes. We have a great relationship with these guys so we really enjoy working with them.

We're migrating them from their legacy on-premises systems to Azure. It's a mixture of as-is and re-factoring, primarily driven by a desire to save costs and make the systems easier to manage. Which it does.

The return journey is delayed by an hour at Southampton. Cow on the line. Silly moo.

## Friday

First thing today, after getting my cup of tea, of course, I push the recently completed proposal through to one of my colleagues for a peer review and then put it into our pre-sales management system for the account manager to finalise.

The rest of the morning is then taken up with some internal meetings, providing some guidance to one of our support engineers and other bits & bobs. Not many people can do bits & bobs. I've got many years' experience that allows me to accomplish this quietly but effectively.

At lunch time we have a celebration for one of our staff, who has reached 10 years' service. We have a nice buffet, there's a speech and he's given a cheque for a grand, tax paid. Not bad. These celebrations happen every five years of service and we have quite a few people that have made 10, 15, 20 and even 25 years.

After lunch I have a project status call with one of our charity customers, which is straightforward, and then I have another call with a customer who wants us to review the access management solution they implemented using Intune and Azure. I notice a couple of flaws in their rule set so we advise them what they need to do to fix it.

On Friday we finish at four, which is great, particularly in the summer when it's nice to pop down the beach or something. Today, though, I've got to go to Tesco, as we haven't got enough food to support the extreme calorific needs of our teenage son. If you've got a teenage son, you'll know what I mean.

At this point, I've still not heard from the Nigerian prince. I'm beginning to think it might be a scam...

Author's Note:

Although still at Silversands, I no longer work in the consultancy team, having moved into internal projects and human resources.