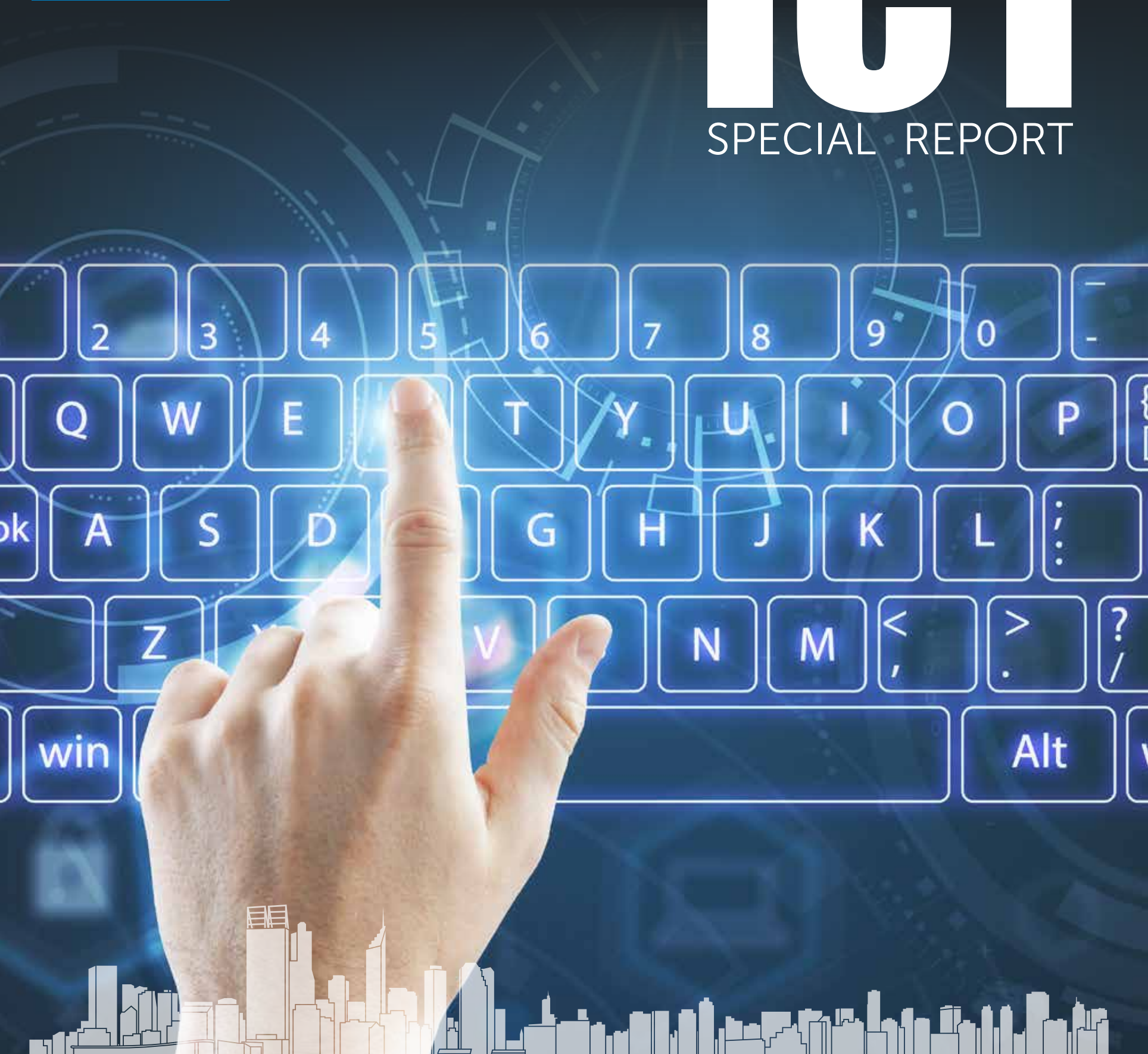




ICT

SPECIAL REPORT



Rapid tech changes create challenges

Staying abreast of rapidly changing business technologies is a growing challenge for many SMEs.



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STEVE Richards always makes sure he takes the conversation back to basics when discussing customers' IT requirements.

Rather than asking IT questions at the start, Mr Richards told *Business News* it was important to begin with pure business questions.

"What are your plans and needs as a business? You need to understand that first," he said.

As general manager of IT firm Frontline Services, he has seen that the array of technology choices is bewildering for many businesses.

"Every business we talk to has IT dependencies and this presents many challenges," Mr Richards said.

"There has never been such a rapid pace of change in the world, you have disruption in many industries."

Two recent surveys confirm his impression that many businesses are battling to stay up to speed.

Cisco's Asia Pacific Digital Maturity Index found that 39 per cent of small-and-medium enterprises (SMEs) do not have any digital efforts in place.

In addition, 43 per cent of SMEs are fighting to keep up with the rapid pace of transformation and are digitising just to survive.

An ANZ Bank report, titled 'The Digital Economy: Transforming Australian Businesses', also found a mixed take-up of digital technology.

It ranked 44 per cent of SMEs as either 'digitally confident' or 'advanced', with many of these businesses using digital tools to grow their client base or increase efficiencies.

This was outweighed by the 56 per cent who were either 'digitally dismissive' or 'tentative'.

These businesses did not value digital tools or lacked internal capabilities needed to use digital tools effectively.

The two surveys also shed light on the main challenges faced by SMEs in Australia.



CLIENTS: Steve Richards says much of Frontline's recent growth has come from mining and

The Cisco survey found the lack of IT talent was the single biggest issue, followed by lack of budget or management commitment, and the lack of a robust IT platform.

In a similar vein, the ANZ report said the top digital implementation challenges were costs, and a lack of knowledge about how to start.

Cisco's SME segment leader in Australia Nykaj Nair said 'fear of IT' was a phrase he had heard from small business advisers.

"Fear of IT is not having a trusted adviser to go to so they can start their digitisation journey," he said.

Of the Australian SMEs to have embraced a digital future, there were some clear trends, according to Mr Nair.

"Two things that came out loud and clear from the

550 KINETIC IT STAFF IN PERTH

Australian SMEs were, number one, they are investing in security, and the reason they are doing that is that they are also investing in the cloud," Mr Nair said.

"The third thing they are investing in is mobility; by that I mean technologies that allow them to connect, communicate, collaborate within their internal ecosystems and with their customer base."

The Cisco survey, which covered the Asia Pacific, found Australia leads the region in mobility and use of mobile devices.

That finding accords with the experience of Jawid Dadarkar, who runs South Perth-based IT consulting firm Lindentech.

"Nowadays businesses just expect every application we deploy will be accessible by every device everywhere," Mr Dadarkar said.

He cited Microsoft Teams and Cisco's Webex application as products that work across the globe.

Mr Dadarkar has found that size is a good indicator of how prepared businesses are for digital change.

In his experience, small businesses with fewer than 20 people typically are not mature in their IT thinking.

"When they come to us, they don't really know what they want or what to expect," he said.

"On the flipside, we have



oil and gas companies. Photo: Gabriel Oliveira

clients with 20-plus users who come to us with strategic plans and say: 'This is where we are headed, we need technology to match our business plan'.

Mr Richards agrees that business plans and technology plans need to be linked.

"When you talk about digital transformation, it's essential to have a roadmap or a plan so there are clear linkages between the business and IT plans," he said.

"We help clients objectively look at their business and help them plan for what they need."

Frontline was established in 2016 by three experienced IT executives, including Empired co-founder Greg Leach.

Mr Richards said the business has achieved rapid growth over the past year, working for a range of clients across multiple

sectors, but particularly mining and oil and gas.

"It's been a very exciting year," he said.

Frontline's growth means it is now ranked among the 25 largest ICT firms in WA, according to the BNiQ database.

The sector ranking is still headed by privately owned Perth-based firm Kinetic IT, which has about 550 ICT staff in WA.

That puts it just ahead of international firm Modis, followed by ASX-listed Empired and another big international player, DXC Technology (see page 27).

Frontline's major projects have included designing, procuring and implementing the entire IT system for a large underground coalmine in Queensland after a change of ownership.

“ When you talk about digital transformation, it's essential to have a roadmap or a plan so there are clear linkages between the business and IT plans - Steve Richards

"Our approach is about bringing the experience and disciplines of enterprise-scale IT support and applying it in a fit-for-purpose, agile way to a range of organisations," Mr Richards said.

To support future growth, Frontline has established partnerships with Telstra and other service providers, implemented a manned 24-7 service desk,

and bolstered its management strength.

"We've built a fit-for-purpose management structure. Our engineering and service delivery team has grown to around 45 people," Mr Richards said.

One trend that nearly all businesses are keen to learn more about is cloud computing.

"It's accepted as an option that everybody should look at," Mr Richards said.

However, he cautioned that cloud-only services did not suit all businesses.

"Organisations often assume they should put everything in the cloud. But if, for example, they operate remote sites using satellite links with limited bandwidth, it isn't going to work," he said.

Mr Richards added that cloud solutions had many advantages but were not always cost effective.

"It's been touted as a cheap solution, and it is up to a point, but isn't necessarily so," he said.

"The trick is to select the right mix of platforms to meet each business's specific needs."

Mr Dadarkar said he still met business people who were wary of cloud storage, but that most people came around.

"They are realising their offices are far more unsafe than storing in the cloud," he said.

"People are now more educated on who can and can't access their data."

Mr Dadarkar said the major providers of cloud services – Microsoft Azure, AWS and Google, among others – were often interchangeable.

"The choice of product depends on the applications clients have and the storage and bandwidth they will need," he said.

Mr Dadarkar said small-to-medium business customers were generally after the most secure, agile way of running their technology.

"We do that by providing services from Cisco, Microsoft Azure and Office 365 and taking that enterprise level security and the suite of applications normally installed in an enterprise level environment," he said.

"We can make the two ends meet."

"We've bundled it all together and made it very simple for small businesses to have enterprise level security in their offices."

BNiQ SEARCH Empired



There are **957** results from our index of **98,096** articles, **9,769** companies and **35,859** people



SECURE: Steve Schupp (right) with fellow Asterisk directors David Taylor (left) and Greg Roberts. Photo: Gabriel Oliveira

Cyber security a key risk

Low awareness of cyber security risks remains a key issue for the business sector.

Mark Beyer

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OF all the topics that IT consultant Jawid Dadarkar raises with customers, cyber security is among the most common.

"This is one of my main topics of discussion," Mr Dadarkar told *Business News*.

"A lot of small businesses are unaware of just what cyber risk is, and how much risk they face."

As managing director of South Perth-based Lindentech, Mr Dadarkar has helped many small-to-medium enterprises deal with the issue.

"I tell clients 95 per cent of your hacks are going to come from your own people; most hacks are caused by people with a loose password or clicking on a malicious link," he said.

"I start by saying 'you need to educate the people you've got'."

Lack of awareness of cyber risk was one of the findings of an ANZ Bank research report, 'The Digital Economy: Transforming Australian Businesses'.

It found 55 per cent of businesses have little or no knowledge about cyber attacks.

It also found 5 per cent of SMEs had experienced a cyber attack in the past 12 months, with the average financial impact at almost \$3,000.

Asterisk Information Security is a boutique consultancy established eight years ago with a specialist focus on cyber security.

"We saw a need in WA," managing director Steve Schupp said.

"In our previous jobs we were frustrated by our inability to get the capability we needed.

"The traditional IT providers didn't have a specialised focus in this area."

He said the sector had grown rapidly, as reflected in the emergence of competitors such as Diamond Cyber, chaired by iiNet founder Michael Malone.

Other players in the sector include Edith Cowan University spin-out Sapien Cyber, which is backed by Woodside Petroleum, and specialist testing firms such as Seamless Intelligence.

Asterisk offers multiple services, including specialist testing, for its customers, which are mostly larger businesses.

"When we do penetration testing we're acting like an internet

attacker and we're testing a client's technical security controls, but also their ability to detect and respond a compromise or a breach," Mr Schupp said.

"When we do a vulnerability assessment we're taking a wide look at a customer's environment and reporting on all the vulnerabilities we find."

Asterisk also has a consulting arm, providing advice on what controls a customer might need.

"We're seeing a lot more demand, especially with small digital businesses looking to sell to a big telco or a bank or other big companies," Mr Schupp said.

"They are asked: 'What is your security policy and how do you maintain cyber security?'"

Mr Schupp told *Business News* there were common issues facing businesses of all sizes.

"One of the problems is that people use one password everywhere," he said.

"They've got lots of websites to log into so they use one password."

Mr Schupp said hackers were very quick to use email and password data breaches.

"They will send in fraudulent invoices or they will get access to

“ I have a unique password for every website I access - Steve Schupp

internet banking, and change destinations or change transaction details after they've been posted."

Another common risk was ransomware attacks, where hackers drop malware onto workstations after a user clicks on an email link.

The hacker will encrypt the file server and then hold the business to ransom.

To address these risks, Mr Schupp suggested increased use of multi-factor authentication, such as an SMS code in addition to user name and password.

"Especially on Office 365, that gives you a lot more protection against inbox attacks," Mr Schupp said.

He also suggested moving away from a single password with the help of password manager software.

"I have a unique password for every website I access but I only have to remember my master password to unlock the password manager," Mr Schupp said.

"The effort of remembering all these passwords is taken off my hands."

Mr Dadarkar also recommends the use of a password manager such as Last Pass, which encrypts passwords, so that clients don't store passwords on an Excel spreadsheet, for example.

Mr Schupp said all businesses are at risk.

"The hackers aren't selective. It's not about your business particularly," he said.

"For them it's a volume game. The more inboxes they can compromise, the better chance they have of making money."

Cisco Asia Pacific vice-president, commercial and small business, Bastiaan Toeset, supported this view.

"It is a bit of misconception that small businesses are less vulnerable to security; they are actually more vulnerable because the impact on their business when they are disrupted is much more significant for them," Mr Toeset said.

Rank	Change from previous year	Company	Senior executive and title	Year est. in WA	Total staff in WA	No. of ICT & technical professional staff in WA	Offices a) WA b) Inter-state	Specialties	Notable clients
1	—	Kinetic IT	Mr Michael North Chief Executive & Executive Director	1995	640	552	a) 1 b) 4	Enterprise technology strategy, transformation, customer service and "end to end" security, application and infrastructure management.	Department of Education, WA Police, Department of Communities, GovNext, BHP, Qantas, INPEX, NT Government, Victoria Police.
2	—	Modis	Mr Peter Hawkins Executive General Manager	1998	572	531	a) 1 b) 5	Systems integration, staffing, managed services, mobile and cloud solutions, business analytics and business consulting.	WA Police, Department of Justice (WA), BHP Billiton, Rio Tinto, Roy Hill, Woodside, Inpex, Landgate, Department of Health (WA), Chevron, Department of Fire & Emergency Services (WA), Department of Justice & Attorney-General (QLD).
3	—	Empired	Mr Russell Baskerville Managing Director	1999	370	330	a) 1 b) 4	Managed services, technical solutions, business solutions, business strategy, business intelligence, application development and support, spatial systems, systems integration, internet of things, cloud solutions, data insights, ERP, CRM, Microsoft.	Rio Tinto, BHP, Main Roads, Conoco Phillips, Western Power, Horizon Power, NRW, HBF, ENI, Karara Mining, TSA Telco.
4	↓	DXC Technology	Mr Chris Upstone National Mining and Energy Lead	1970	330	330	a) 1 b) 20	Consulting, workplace and mobility, security, cloud and platform services, enterprise and cloud apps, application services, analytics, business process services, industry software and solutions	Chevron, Department of Justice, WA Police, Department of Defence, South32, Citic Pacific Mining, Department of Fire & Emergency Services, Public Transport Authority, WesTrac
5	—	ASG Group	Mr Geoff Lewis Managing Director	1996	350	320	a) 2 b) 5	Innovation and emerging technologies; Strategy and advisory; Program Delivery; Business Analysis and Change; Security; Applications Development; Enterprise Applications; Data and Analytics; Cloud and Integration; and Managed IT Services	Department of Education, Western Power, Main Roads, Edith Cowan University, BHP, INPEX, Rio Tinto, Roy Hill, CP Mining, UWA, St John of God, Department of Health, Synergy, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development
6	↑	IBM Australia	Mr Garry D'Orazio WA Location Executive	1956	NFP	NFP	a) 1 b) 12	Cloud, cognitive, IT services, business consulting, complex systems integration, application development and support outsourcing services, software, storage, systems and servers and asset recovery.	Woodside, Inpex, Western Power, Water Corporation, Bankwest, Rio Tinto, Chevron.
7	↓	Telstra	Mr Andrew Penn Chief Executive	1993	1,700	298			BHP, Commonwealth Bank, Wesfarmers, Seven Group, Westpac, Department of Defence, Department of Human Services, Qantas.
8	—	Vocus Group	Mr Adam Gardner General Manager, Data Centres	2008	204	NFP	a) 2 b) 20	Supplier of telecommunications and data centre services to internet service providers in Australia and New Zealand.	
9	—	Fujitsu Australia	Mr Ron Costanzo State Manager WA & NT	1981	NFP	NFP	a) 4 b) 27	Business and application services, managed infrastructure services, data centre services, professional project services, regional and remote field and deployment services. Supply of enterprise products and solutions including public and hybrid cloud.	WA Health Support Services, WA Police, Lotterywest, Department of Communities, Woolworths, Australia Post, Qantas, BP, Caltex, Horizon Power, Rio Tinto
10	—	Datatel Electrical & Communications	Mr Paul Johnson Managing Director	1998	200	175	a) 1 b) 3	Optical fibre, NBN, structured cabling, data centres.	
11	—	Accenture	Mr Christophe Bourdeau Managing Director, Upstream Operational Excellence Lead	2007	191	NFP	a) 1 b) 5	Strategy, systems integration, ERP & operations systems implementation, analytics, mobility, Cloud, IoT, user experience (UX), infrastructure, security, learning, engineering data management, managed services, AO & BPO.	
12	—	Zetta	Mr Nathan Harman Managing Director, CEO	2004	149	141	a) 1 b) 1	ICT Infrastructure services, IaaS, secure networking, VoIP, application hosting	Western Power, Woodside, NOPTA, WA Super, AEMO, Mitsubishi, Murdoch University, Scitech
13	↑	Velrada	Mr Rob Evans Chief Executive	2009	140	140	a) 1 b) 4	Microsoft Dynamics 365, O365, Data & AI, Azure Cloud Services, Business management consulting and systems integration with strong practices in enterprise services, risk, strategic IM, digital intelligence, integrated operating centres, infrastructure.	BHP Billiton, Department of Planning, Lands & Heritage, WA Police, Woodside Energy, Rio Tinto, Dept of Finance, Venues West, SA Health, WA Treasury Commission, South 32, Downer, Department of Health, Monadelphous.
14	↓	NEC Australia	Mr Marcus Ashby State Manager, WA	1983	150	124	a) 1 b) 10	IT services, unified communications, UC services, contact centre solutions, infrastructure solutions, digital signage, public safety & security.	Bankwest, BHP, Chevron, Department of Justice, Department of Health, Department of Water & Environmental Regulation, Iluka, Royal Flying Doctor Service, Rio Tinto, Synergy, Woodside.
15	↓	Deloitte	Mr Michael McNulty Managing Partner, Western Australia	1891	570	110	a) 1 b) 17	Technology advisory (IT strategy, enterprise architecture, sourcing/selection), online strategy design and implementation, enterprise information management strategy.	
16	↑	Diversus	Mr Dien Tang Director, Principal	2006	92	86	a) 1 b) 4	Enterprise architecture, solution architecture, program and project management, change management, business analysis, business process optimisation, application development and support, testing, technology implementation.	
17	↑	Atos	Mr Peter Robertson Managing Director, Australia and New Zealand	2013	80	80	a) 1 b) 2	Infrastructure and Data Managed Services, Business and Platform Solutions, Big Data and Security	
18	↓	Sage Software Australia	Mr Jamie Knight WA State Manager		75	75	a) 1 b) 4	Business management, accounting and human capital management software	
19	↓	Datacom Systems AU	Mr Keith Morrison General Manager, GovNext	2007	95	70	a) 1 b) 7	IT solutions and services provider.	WA Government, Bunnings, BHP, Chervon, AHG
20	—	IT Vision	Mr Nigel Lutton Chief Executive Officer	1982	76	68	a) 1 b) 3	ERP software, BI & analytics software, Enterprise Content Management, Corporate Performance Management software, Low Code & Rapid Application Development platforms, Business Process Management, Cloud, SaaS, Mobility	WA Local Government Association (WALGA) preferred supplier. 84% of all WA Local Government (Councils). SilverChain. WA Port Authorities, SA Local Government, WA Public Transport Authority (PTA).

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RANKED BY NO. OF ICT & TECHNICAL PROFESSIONAL STAFF IN WA
155

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