

Weston Morris:

Welcome to the Digital Workplace Deep Dive. I'm your host, Weston Morris.

Weston Morris:

You know, in the middle of the pandemic, you may have recalled that I did a series of three episodes focusing on the digital workplace trends in Australia. And I thought it would be a great time to return to the ANZ region and see what's going on with the digital workplace trends. So what's hot, what might be of interest, actually even what might be, if there's some trends going on, it might be of interest in the rest of the world. And to help me with that, I have two great guests, one of the esteemed partners at Beacon Field Partners, Mr. Tom Reilly, and a colleague of mine, Dr. Tony Parsons, the Senior Director of Service Management here at Unisys. Welcome gentlemen.

Tom Reilly:

Thank you Weston. Great to be here. Thanks.

Tony Parsons:

Weston. Yeah, it's great to be here.

Weston Morris:

So Tom, I mean, the first thing I think our listeners have noticed, even with that "hello," that short "hello." I think we need to address this before we go a little bit further. That's right. We're asking you to talk about what's going on in Australia, but man, I'm hearing a distinct U.S. accent. So what is your background? Oh, yeah. In the APAC region?

Tom Reilly:

Yeah. Don't, don't let the accent throw you. I'm I, I've been out of New York for a long time, but I, but still have the accent. I've been in Australia, well, I've been in Asia-PAC since '97 and always working in tech services in Australia during that period. And then I've been in, my family is Australian, my wife's Australian. I'm a, I'm a dual citizen, but I've really been working in technology in Australia for the last 30 years. So the, the accent does throw people from time to time, and I get that look, especially when I'm speaking to an Australian audience. So I typically have to explain it.

Weston Morris:

Every time, probably. Right. Well, thanks for clarifying that. I'm glad to get that out of the way. First, let's just jump right into this topic. I mean, maybe Tom, I could start with you. What is it that you're seeing in, in terms of requirements maybe that's unique in the ANZ region, maybe with government agencies or enterprises, especially when they're thinking about a digital workplace? What makes ANZ unique?

Tom Reilly:

Where I think there are some really unique challenges here is just the size of Australia and the population. So we kind of, kind of joke about the tyranny of distance and how far away Australia is from the rest of the world. But there's kind of a new tyranny of distance, which is that Australia is almost the same size as the U.S. just to put it in perspective. And it has one-tenth or one-twelfth of the population. So you're, you're talking about a much, much bigger piece of geography to cover when you're supporting people. And you know, when, when that translates into our customers, we do a lot of work

with the governments, with the state governments they have an enormous area to cover when they're supporting their, their staff. So there, there are still those rising expectations, but there are some major hurdles in achieving them. You know, I think that's one, there's, there's a few other differences, but that's probably the main one Weston.

Weston Morris:

Yeah. And I can just as we were talking earlier before we started the recording, you being in Melbourne and Tony being in Sydney and how helping me appreciate how far apart that is a thousand kilometers, eight, nine hours of, of driving. That kind of does highlight it now, maybe Tony, I'm gonna do the flip side with you here. When, when I hear Tom, you describing these requirements and what makes ANZ unique, I'm thinking now about challenges. What might be some of the challenges that you're seeing in Australia regarding the workplace? And probably I'd like to compare that against what I'm seeing here in the United States. So I'm curious, does, does ANZ face any of the same problems as enterprises that we have here in North America, Tony?

Tony Parsons:

Weston, I think they do. Australia and New Zealand went through the pandemic in the same way that North America and Europe went through it. So we've got that challenge of the workforce settling back into a hybrid work workplace environment, working from home, combined with working in the office and also Australia. New Zealand's got that aging workforce that's looking to retire soon. And the challenge with that is that workforce with a lot of operational knowledge around a lot of these key legacy systems, they're gonna take that knowledge with them as they start retiring, as they start planning to go out sailing on Sydney Harbor and not coming into the office anymore. Capturing that knowledge, storing or maintaining that operational legacy systems, that is a challenge that we are seeing in Australia and New Zealand that I think is very similar to what you're seeing in North America and Europe for that matter as well.

Weston Morris:

Yeah, it's reminding me of a statistic that I saw fairly recently regarding public sector here in the U.S. that something like 40% of the public sector workforce on average is eligible for retirement, which means at any moment they could leave, right? And, and out, out the door walks that knowledge. And how do you, how do you then operate <laugh>? How do you then do what you need to? Let's look at a couple of trends that we talk about a lot in the, in the podcast here. Experience management, service integration management (SIAM). These are things that we continue to hear as being important. In fact, SIAM was supposed to fix all of our IT problems, right? Right. Tom and Tony. But I think from 2019 on, I haven't read too much about this in the ANZ market is, is, is SIAM dead? Has it gone that far?

Tom Reilly:

You know, there's a lot that's been going on that has been stealing the limelight from some trends like SIAM. The skill shortage is one that people are grappling with. What's happened over the last 24 months is really everything's been put on the back burner. We have the skill shortage going on and you know, and all these kind of things.

Tom Reilly:

So I think what we had been seeing before the limelight was kind of redirected was that move back to SIAM. And I certainly think what's happening with the average IT department over here is the, the

world's getting much more complex. It is getting far more complicated. There's a lot more business-led IT initiatives. It's not that you can just keep it within the nice tidy purview of the IT department. Then you have the skill shortage, then you have these things coming up. So the average IT organization here, whether it's public or private sector, is definitely moving to that multi-vendor environment with higher expectations, higher expectations in terms of user experience. And you know, the answer that a lot of CIOs are looking for is SIAM. And just to take a step back to me the key aspect of SIAM is really this multi-vendor approach where you treat internal vendors and external vendors or internal service providers and external service providers in the same way.

Tom Reilly:

That was something that a decade ago was gaining some ground in Australia, but frankly, most IT organizations didn't have that complex of an IT environment, and now they do. So I think the reason you may not be hearing so much about it is there are a few things that are grabbing the limelight. There's a few things that are taking the attention of procurement leads and CIOs. And by the way, there's an acute shortage in procurement as well. So I think what's happening is there's a few trends that are being masked by the bigger immediate, more immediate problems.

Tony Parsons:

And I think one of those trends is to Tom's point is almost what I call stealthy SIAM or stealthy service integration management. A very narrow band of SIAM rather than the full-blown SIAM. And we have seen a couple of federal government agencies in the last year or so go to market with the full-blown traditional RFP around the enterprise service management and SIAM and all the components. But to be honest, it's far more common for a lot of the accounts I've seen where SIAM was being introduced without it being really called SIAM. Although it really is SIAM what they're asking for, particularly in areas, very visible areas like major incident management, they want the service provider to manage all the major incidents end-to-end. To Tom's point, that means managing the internal delivery teams as well as all their vendors. So even, there's one case— Unisys won a new client earlier this year, we are delivering traditional digital workplace services, service desk, but in the service management space, we are delivering major incident management across all the vendors, including their internal suppliers in that organization.

Tony Parsons:

That is SIAM. Now it's a very narrow band, a very niche band of SIAM, but it's still the beginning of SIAM. And you can see problem management coming along as part of that, you can then see the config management and the critical business services being built out from that. And that's typically how we see SIAM growing, not coming in as a big bang, but coming in almost by stealth and then expanding or growing from there. One of the other things I'm seeing in service management generally is a much tighter integration between the major incident management and the escalation and comms management teams and the security operations center, the SOC teams, a much tighter correlation between those sort of activities. A lot of the processes would be exactly the same as if you're running a normal major incident. We're seeing a lot more interest in integrating more tightly the idle or service management teams with the security management teams.

Weston Morris:

I wonder if the same trend that you described here where SIAM is, is actually even more important than ever in ANZ as well as the rest of the world. It's just not getting the noise <laugh> because it is not

getting the audience or the, we're not hearing about it as much because of other hotter topics that are, that are going on right, right now in the region, but it is still super important. And I'm wondering if the same thing might be happening with experience management. I mean, that's, that is just half of my podcasts are dealing with employee experience management and XLAs, and it's, it's super big in Europe and growing in the U.S. So I'm really curious gentlemen, how are you seeing experience management in ANZ?

Tom Reilly:

What I think is happening is the bigger picture is when COVID hit, we just shut the borders here in Australia. And essentially in some ways, we went back to the get what you get and you like it, and the fact that we have a skill shortage going on at the same time made that a bit worse. But I think that was a temporary pause from my perspective. There's no question that expectations are only going one way. And you know, again, when we're dealing with even state government organizations like the police, who you wouldn't expect to be the most employee experience-, customer experience-related people, they have major programs in those areas. So they want to talk about not just IT service management, they wanna talk about enterprise service management. They have questions about how do we implement XLAs, experience levels? How do we track that? And I can think of a dozen organizations now that have some form of push to digital experience, employee experience, customer experience in the wake of the pandemic trying to get back on track with an initiative.

Tony Parsons:

And I think, Tom, you're spot on on that. I, I think Australia-New Zealand was a bit behind Europe in this space, but in the last 12, 18 months, I've seen a lot of responses to a lot of RFPs where the XLAs are becoming ubiquitous. It's, it's nearly always now. Two years ago, it was still a rarity to see that in an RFP. Now you're surprised if there's no reference to the whole, how you're gonna support XLAs, how you're gonna establish your experience management office, what's your protocols, what's your methodology? How do you deliver that? How do you integrate the tooling and the processes around that as part of the whole customer or the whole digital experience? It's becoming a lot more common to see that in the RFPs. Let's see the white papers and let's see the follow-on the next couple of years on the success stories and the achievements over those RFPs as they come to fruition.

Tom Reilly:

You're right, Tony, it's like, it's almost like overnight everybody's there, right? Everybody's at the same spot where they see it as a necessity. And maybe it is those expectations, right? Because again, those expectations, if we were back three years ago talking to organizations, they were sort of interested, but they didn't really feel the pressure. But I think now everybody has seen these rising expectations from their employees, from their customers, and they've made the leap. So there's, there's no question we're seeing that people's mindsets are there now.

Weston Morris:

So we've talked about two key trends that globally have been important, but in ANZ, it sounds like, are also drawing a lot of attention: SIAM and EX, or experience management, employee experience. Tony, I've heard you use an expression as you invented another acronym, SIAM-X. I'd like to connect— I think you're connecting the dots between SIAM <laugh> and experience management. Can you shed some light on that?

Tony Parsons:

Yeah, sure. In Unisys, that is, we've deliberately came up with that term. I coined that term, SIAM-X. There's still some discussion among several of us in Unisys who actually came up with the term to try and get the credit for it since we've seen it repeated or reported by analysts now. So we're all trying to take the credit, but putting that to one side for the moment, it is Unisys and it's our view of how to bring that together, how you can bake experience management and XLAs into the whole SIAM framework, or remember that you need to have that as part of the SIAM framework. That includes, as I mentioned before, the experience management office. It also means things like the experience governance board. You have service governance, typically service management, service governance. You have SIAM governance, you have this XGB or experience governance board that needs to be factored in or integrated into this environment.

Tony Parsons:

It also helps people focus on the end-to-end view. What is the end-user experience? What are the critical business services they're consuming, not just on the desktop, but what are the critical applications or business services they're using? What are the components that make them up? All the classic things you need to put together to deliver an end-to-end SIAM experience across the whole digital workplace. So the Unisys SIAM framework was deliberately expanded to be SIAM-X, to focus or draw attention to this experience management component or element that's important. Just like the SLA frameworks, the business service mappings, the config management or all of the service intelligence dashboards. They're all critical elements of a SIAM framework. But the experience management is another critical element. Another element in the mix as part of SIAM-X.

Weston Morris:

You know, as you've described that, it just reminded me of something that our XMO shared with us just recently about an actual client where the, the XMO that is watching XLAs, and they're primarily focused on digital workplace experience. But the thing is, if we're collecting employee experience and we're hearing what they're feeling about their technology, it's not just the workplace, it's the cloud it's other towers. And so the XMO is able to, even though they're only responsible for the digital workplace, they were able to collect experience data handed over to the SIAM organization and say, Hey, we've got actual data here that says that security thing that team just deployed is actually causing a real problem for our sales force. And that needs to be addressed. Then now the SIAM organization has a hammer to say, yeah, you need to fix that. So it just occurred to me how, how this could actually work. That SIAM-X is actually a real thing.

Tony Parsons:

You're spot on. It's like we saw XLAs grow from the end-user digital workplace experience, and we use our laptops for a purpose. We sat there each day using applications or critical business services that go well beyond what's in our immediate environment. And it's like measuring that whole end-to-end. We've had application performance monitoring those sort of capabilities for some time, response times that are acceptable when you're trying to access a critical application. But the whole sentiment analysis, the whole experience of the end user now is being measured truly end-to-end, and SIAM is helping to take it to that stage.

Tom Reilly:

It's funny how valuable these conversations are because I think Weston, when you were talking about the, you sort of pulling it all together, I think one of the utilities we're working with right now has come to this realization for exactly the kind of reasons you were talking about Weston, which is historically what they've done is they've put in place dozens of agreements with technology vendors. They've had really solid SLAs and really solid measures. But what they're finding is that focus on business outcomes just isn't happening. You know, and when you look at it in isolation, they're doing everything right. When you look at it together, it's falling down and it's because, you know, they don't have that end-to-end view and they don't have all the interdependencies mapped out, and how do you measure those outcomes, right?

Tom Reilly:

It's very difficult to start measuring those business outcomes until you get to customer experience or employee experience. Then suddenly the outcomes start becoming a lot easier to measure because the things that people are either satisfied or dissatisfied is about an outcome. It's either an employee outcome or something they're trying to do in the business. So it's, again, maybe there's more to that stealth <laugh> Tony than <laugh> that you were originally saying, because I think that's what we're saying where suddenly people are jumping to the experience and they're trying to say, well, that we need to measure that now, but that may be becoming the most important measure of all because it's got that direct link to outcomes where a lot of the other traditional SLAs don't, unfortunately. And then, then you start thinking about the fact that they've been doing these contracts in isolation and managing them differently and okay, well starting to manage them together, now we're getting back into the SIAM discussion.

Weston Morris:

And SIAM has been around a while, right? Experience management is all pretty new. We're still figuring it out. But I am seeing some levels of maturity though. There's these "aha!" moments that enterprises have when they realize that after they've had XLA for a while, they realize that they're not set it and forget it. It's not like an SLA that you put into a contract you keep for five years. We've got some SLAs that we haven't changed in 20 years, right? But an XLA, for example, I'm thinking of a U.S. customer where they were involved with a merger and that XLA was measuring the experience of two groups, company A and company B as they come together to form a brand new company. And we're looking at the experience parity between them. That XLA only needs to continue to be in existence and measuring while the merger is taking place.

Weston Morris:

You know, so 15 months out, 24 months we don't need that anymore. And that's when we realized there was a need for an experience governance board that we never had for SLAs that we do need for our XLA. And I'm just wondering if that, to me, that's a sign of when an enterprise asks about that they have gone to a level of maturity and we're just beginning to see that in the U.S. and North America and in Europe. And I'm wondering are you seeing that in the ANZ region as well?

Tony Parsons:

I would say definitely, Weston. I think those, those transient, let's call 'em transient XLAs. A good example in state and federal government is what's called the machinery government. We have a lot of government agencies being combined, merged, broken up, restructured. There's a lot of those sort of changes where you would have those sort of experiences. The example you just gave, where for a 12- or

18-month period, you probably want to measure certain XLAs around that experience as the agencies are brought together or split up, but then they become not relevant after that, they would change. And so it is a continual evolution or evolving those XLAs, hence that need for that experience governance board. And you raise a good point. There was, there was never an SLA governance board in the normal service governance structure, but there is a need for an X B in the SIAM environments we have today.

Weston Morris:

Well, I think we've come to the tough part of the podcast here. I'd like to conclude with some predictions, ask you to look into the future. Imagine it's December, 2024. Now we're looking back, what are a couple of things that the most successful enterprises or government agencies in the ANZ region will have done? So maybe Tom, you can start things off for us.

Tom Reilly:

I think thankfully we've reached that watershed moment where people realize that they can't just cruise with the same IT practices that they've done for the last 20 years. They have to get on the ball as it relates to service management. They need certainly to get on the ball in terms of security and, and you know, maybe that's the, the catalyst that's making the big difference here. But I do think that really successful organizations here will start, for the most part, getting better at managing service providers rather than either doing themselves or doing things on a one-off basis. So I do think that we are already seeing some of the more successful organizations adopting SIAM. I love the idea Tony of SIAM-X. I'll, I'll certainly give you credit for it because <laugh>, until I started speaking with you, I hadn't heard of it, but I think we're already there in terms of experience management.

Tom Reilly:

We're already there in terms of knowing we need to take a different approach to managing multi-vendor relationships. We know we're already there in terms of having to manage the digital world and change our internal IT departments from the traditional SDLC system development lifecycle kind of organizations to DevSecOps. And I think that's where we're seeing people really make the change. And I think that's where it's gonna be Weston, is the really successful organizations are gonna realize they need to get on the ball and the way they manage their IT organizations. And a big part of that is gonna be SIAM, SIAM-X, SIAM by stealth, <laugh>, whatever you want to call it. All of those things coming together. We're definitely seeing all the components of that right now.

Tony Parsons:

Well, I'd say the successful enterprises, looking back at the end of next year, would've established those SIAM frameworks, whether the SIAM-X, which is what Unisys would like, of course, but they would establish these SIAM frameworks, will have onboarded their vendors and their internal teams into those frameworks, and then be fully operating them with the evolution of their XLAs. That's what success would look like. The framework's established, it's operating, it's delivering business value, and they're onboarding and offboarding vendors as their business needs them.

Weston Morris:

Well, Tom and, and Tony, if our listeners have heard something here that they'd like to follow up with you on, I know we've covered a lot of great topics here, really digging into SIAM and experience management and what's new and unique about the ANZ region, Tom, how can people get ahold of you?

Tom Reilly:

Yeah, the, I mean, the simplest way is my email Tom dot Reilly, and that's r e i-double l-y at BeaconField Partners, all one word, dot com or LinkedIn. LinkedIn is probably an even better way to not only get in touch, but to stay in touch. I'm in there as, as Tom Reilly at Beaconfield on LinkedIn.

Weston Morris:

Excellent. And Tony, how about you?

Tony Parsons:

Pretty much the same. My email is anthony.Parsons@unisys.com. And like Tom, I'm a big proponent and user of LinkedIn. My LinkedIn profile is Tony Parsons.

Weston Morris:

Excellent. Well, Tom Reilly of Beaconfield Partners and Tony Parsons of Unisys. I've really enjoyed this discussion. It's great for me to get a better view of what's going on down under. Thank you both for sharing your insights today.

Tom Reilly:

Oh, that was great. Yeah, that was great to be here.

Tony Parsons:

As you can hear, we're both passionate about this. Yeah, it was great. Great having this discussion with you, Weston.

Weston Morris:

Well, you've been listening to a special edition of The Digital Workplace Deep Dive that focuses on trends down under. I'm your host, Weston Morris. Thanks for listening.