



## **Chapter VIII**

# **Russell Turner**

## **MetService**

*A global leader in valuable weather and presentation services*

My name is **Russell Turner**. I am the chief information officer at MetService in Wellington, New Zealand.

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### **Personal History**

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I was born in Gisborn, a little town on the east coast of the North Island of New Zealand. We moved to Wellington when I was two. I attended a public elementary school and then a catholic secondary school where my mother was teaching. I obtained an A bursary and went to Victoria University where I focused on physics. I have completed my third year, taking such courses as digital electronics and quantum physics. But, I have not finished my degree. I took what at the time was a very high paying job as a computer programmer. I had planned to return and finish my degree after I had some experience under my belt. But, I have not yet done it.

This high paying job was with Praxis Software. I was a junior programmer using Pascal and COBOL languages. The systems were real estate tracking using point of sale, and warehouse management. The clients for these systems were local wholesalers who were importing products from India. The mark-ups on equipment and

clothing were significant, sometimes in the tens of thousand percent. This created an issue for me as a COBOL programmer. I had to determine how to handle such large percentage figures.

At the beginning of 1986, I took a job with Colonial Mutual in Melbourne, Australia. They are quite a large superannuation and insurance company. This was my first experience with a large company with a lot of programmers. I mainly worked on a system that computed calculations for superannuation and payments.

Next, I moved to a supplier of Colonial Mutual. I was involved with package delivery to customers. These were superannuation systems. Also, while I was here I worked on payroll systems. At the time Australia was building a new parliament house in Canberra. We developed a payroll system for the commission responsible for the construction.

I then moved to Prismac, still in Melbourne. This company focused on check processing and image processing systems for banks. This was quite interesting as the use of this technology was just emerging. We would take standard UNISYS machinery and program them for individual banks depending on their specific needs. They were high volume check processing machines, which were quite large. They could be as long as 10 meters. At the time, imaging technology was just emerging, which would eliminate the physical encoding of the check amounts.

But, in 1989 my wife had a baby and we decided to move back to New Zealand to be close to our parents.

I took a job with Phillips, New Zealand. They are a Dutch company which had developed an optical laser disc technology. The intention was to convince large government departments to scan and archive their documents onto laser disc. My experience in imaging technology helped me get this job. We were able to sell the system to various government departments. My role at Phillips was a technical product manager. I worked with organizations to determine what was possible and how our system could be implemented. So, that was when my programming career ended. I moved more into a consultative or product management role. After only 1 year, Phillips decided to close their Wellington office.

I then moved to KPMG Peat Marwick. They were looking for consultants who had experience with document imaging systems. I joined them as a consultant to develop a strategy for providing document imaging consulting services. I did seminars on document imaging and the benefits that could be obtained. We attracted a lot of work from clients for projects around their perceived need for the technology.

One of our major clients for this service had a significant need for document imaging with respect to the national grid. They were still documenting the grid by hand using India ink. These were lovely works of art going back to the 1940s. This was a significant project to convert these diagrams to electronic images. So, with everyone's agreement, I moved to a specially established subsidiary to complete this project. I spent the next 2 years working on this project.

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