USING INNOVATION TO EMPOWER CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE & MOBILITY

An interview with Marco Almeida - Solution Stream Owner at Adapt IT Telecoms
by Katucia Moussongo

In the Telecommunications sector, innovation and technology are two interrelated components. Without the creative minds behind technology, the world would not benefit from the most amazing tools or gadgets; whose purpose is to improve people's quality of life.

In our ongoing search for the "People Behind Technology," we encountered Marco Almeida, Solution Stream Owner at Adapt IT Telecom. Marco has 23 years of expertise in the Telecommunication industry.

Please tell us more about your history, your narrative, why you chose the Technology sector, Telecommunications, and Adapt IT?
I grew up in a small town outside of Johannesburg. I attended high school there, and through a few science competitions, I first expressed interest in studying Computer Science.

Being young at the time, I failed to fathom what I would do later in life. I also believed that since I was great at accounting, pursuing a university education in this area was the best choice for me. I then studied to become a Chartered Accountant, however after a year I recognised it was not the career for me as it did not fit my personality.

Without hesitation, I returned to my initial love, "Computer Science," and I loved every aspect of it, especially coding.

After finishing my education, I started working for a company that focused on traditional IT services. I remained for a year before deciding to move onto a company called Unison Communications. I started working for this company since it combined Technology and Telecommunications.

It was an excellent encounter. In terms of PBXs (Private Branch Exchanges), what we did was provide various ancillary software services to support the fixed-line voice market. The company then started to offer mobile solutions, merged with another company called Aspivia.Unison, and was eventually acquired by Adapt IT in 2015.

Since then, the number of employees at that company has increased from 30 to possibly 150 or more. Since then, this business has split into multiple divisions within the Adapt IT group and serves a multitude of corporate customers, as well as the mobile network operators across Africa as well as Australia.

I'm sure it's obvious, however I've never felt the need to leave this industry. It has been my passion for about 23 years. My career began as a technician, and as I developed, I moved into various positions within the business such as Account Management, Analytics, Consulting, Business Development and Commercial Management. In this industry, I never felt particularly bored.

I changed hats and throughout the course of those years, whereby I managed a wide range of different solutions as the company's offerings expanded.

Why Adapt IT ?
Because it was a fresh adventure and a new market as Adapt IT has unlocked many doors. Over the years, I have been able to form strong bonds with several people; we've practically become family. People will come and go, however there will always be a connection and loyalty that we have with each other. For me, Adapt IT is the right place to be.

Further, Adapt IT provides a wide range of career opportunities due to the distinct divisions within the group. Integration with other divisions is possible, and the ability to switch career paths between divisions and technologies is also possible.

The benefit of having our own development team is that it enables us to react swiftly to new market changes and business requests, thus allowing us to strive to remain on top of what's happening in the market and with our clients. This, in my opinion, is what makes working at Adapt IT so amazing.

Being able to simultaneously give a fully-fledged managed product to the market and not only be a technological enabler for our customers is another important flexibility, in my opinion.

Achieve more.

The other significant factor is the current reach and exposure we have across several sectors, not only in South Africa but internationally, thanks to Volaris' presence.

What is the most thrilling aspect of working in Telecommunications?

What excites me about Telecoms is the variety of markets and clients we engage with, not only in South Africa, but also throughout Africa and of course, globally.

Through our network of partners such as ISPs and System Integrators, we have access to a wide range of market sectors and customers.

So, there is a diversity in who we deal with, which I believe, makes Telecoms extremely intriguing because there are different product lines, and each of those brings different challenges.

No MNO, MVNO or ISP is the same across any market. Each of them has a particular style of doing things. They all have different or unique needs in the solutions and services they deliver in their respective markets. Hence our constant need to innovate and stay current stems from the fact that the industry is perpetually changing.

What is the most exciting aspect of being a Solution Stream Owner?

In my opinion, one of the best features of my job is its diversity. It extends from the two product lines I am responsible for, from my involvement in product development, business development, marketing, budgeting, company operations and other duties. It almost feels like I am running my own company inside a larger one.

How is the Telecom sector being revolutionized by the Customer Experience & Mobility?

In terms of mobility and technology in general, the market has progressed to the point where customers want to have faster access to information. They want to be able to accomplish things themselves rather than needing to contact a call centre or an account manager to obtain the necessary information.

The best part of what we do is that we fill the gap in terms of the solution between the end user and the MNO or the partner. Our creative solutions bridge these two worlds.

We have two platforms that fill this type of gap. The first is referred to as the CCSS (Corporate Customer Self-Service Portal), something we typically provide to MNOs. In addition, we offer what we refer to as the CDMP (Cloud Data Management Platform), which is also known as our APN as-a-Service solution.

The CCSS (Corporate Customer Self-Service) solution is a portal that enables end-users to view or request information, like invoicing, quickly. They are no longer required to contact a customer service representative. Instead of taking hours, days, or weeks to complete a transaction, they now do so in mere seconds.

On the other hand, the APN-as-a-Service is a convergent platform that can operate across many mobile networks. It assists in managing and controlling mobile spending as well as data usage and requirement.

These solutions help MNOs and our Partners improve their customer experience, annuity revenue, brand loyalty, and more. The management of the customer's mobile environment is hence possible.

You recently made note of your desire to grow your costumer portfolio and develop a Channel Partnership in South Africa. What kind of profile would be ideal to develop this relationship with Adapt IT?

We consider every technological company that provides or manages software solutions to be a prospective business partner. And the reason I say this is because all these firms at some point will need to be able to deliver a customised solution that includes not only software but also mobile data connectivity, thereby providing for a comprehensive offering.

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How will you describe "People Behind Technology"?

I think of the "People Behind Technology "as individuals who are passionate about what they do. Those who have the talent or capacity to use technology to help others. Because responding to clients when something goes wrong is just as important as the technology itself.

It is also people who can spark new trends. They are driven by a vision and constantly develop, expand, reinvent the technological stack, or test new business models. They don't stay still. In this is where the passion lies. People that are consistently innovating and evolving their solutions, will continue to grow and remain relevant in the market.

What message do you want to convey to the younger, skilled generation of software engineers who are looking for employment opportunities?

The advice I can provide is to never be afraid to venture outside of your comfort zone. Furthermore, learn and attempt new things in the technology industry because this is the place where innovative ideas are born.

Avoid undermining your ideas. A modest idea tends to grow and develop into something bigger. Other ideas may emerge from this, assisting you in determining a solution or leading to a wonderful innovation.