



# Spotlight on Success

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## Building a Business to Grow with the Times

Sydney-based IT services and solutions provider The Missing Link was established in 1997. Since then, the business has grown rapidly, expanding under the ownership and direction of founding members Alex Gambotto and Daniel Forsythe. It has increased in size and revenue each year since its creation.

With the acquisition of Sydney-based network integrator Inform Solutions in 2003 and Artis Infrastructure Group in 2011, the company was able to accelerate its expansion. In 2013, The Missing Link launched its IT security business, becoming an independent IT security provider in the Australian market.

Karen Drewitt, general manager for The Missing Link, sat down with us to discuss how the company has stayed on top for so long in an industry renowned for rapid change.

**CompTIA:** Can you provide an overview of the business?

**KD:** The Missing Link has evolved a lot since its founding in 1997. Our core offerings are back-up and disaster recovery, cloud, internet and communications, infrastructure, managed services, mobility, professional services and security. The security practice was established just a few years ago because we were seeing an increasing demand for it.

Security has always been part of our product stack, and we had always done some security work as part of the other IT solutions we provided to our customers. However, it was becoming such an increasingly important part of IT that we decided to bring that part of our offering into full maturity with the launch of The Missing Link Security business.

Now, we provide the full stack of IT solutions and services to companies of all sizes in just about all industry sectors throughout Australia.

**CompTIA:** What sets the company apart from its competitors?

**KD:** Our people. The Missing Link is a technology company, and it's also a people business. Most technology providers have access to the same technology thanks to the network of vendors operating in the local market. It's the people that make the difference, and The Missing Link has always invested heavily in its people.

We have an amazing team who genuinely care about each other as well as our clients and their needs. That matters enormously, because it means we focus on the value of the talent we have internally, while also taking the time to really understand what our customers need. It is important to invest in both sides of that equation.



As an organisation, we always make an effort to be clear about what we want and what we need in our people. Finding great talent can be a challenging task, and I've found that it is made much easier if there is clarity around the specific skills the business needs as well as what sort of personality would best suit the culture and existing team.

You have to focus on both of these things. We identify our needs, then find someone who can both fit as many of those needs as possible while also possessing the soft skills needed to serve the company and our customers. This is a large part of why our people set us apart from our competitors.

**CompTIA:** Who are your typical customers?

**KD:** The Missing Link doesn't really have a 'typical customer'. We work with very large companies, such as banks. But we also work with very small companies too. The one, constant commonality among all of our customers, is that they are companies that value their IT, and are willing to invest in it.

Beyond this single, defining feature, our customers populate just about all industry sectors, and are of all sizes. With our very large clients, we will often provide a specific niche service for their IT departments. For our smaller customers, we might manage the majority of their IT infrastructure. For very small clients, we sometimes act as their IT department.

**CompTIA:** What opportunities do you see in the local IT channel?

**KD:** There is a lot of opportunity at the moment in the local IT channel for providers that are willing to invest in staying ahead of the curve. IT is moving so quickly now that there are new opportunities arising all the time, as long as you keep your eyes open and have some sense of what is coming next.

Right now, there is an explosion in security, with a lot of organisations becoming far more conscious of the evolving threat landscape than they used to be. This means there are more companies prioritising security solutions in terms of their IT budget allocation. So, there is a lot of opportunity for providers to meet their customers' security needs.

Another area where there is a lot of opportunity is in managed services. Certainly, managed services have provided huge opportunities for The Missing Link. In fact, outsourcing, in general, is providing a lot of opportunity, as companies realise that it is often easier to let someone else take care of their IT than try to do it internally. It is a growth area.

**CompTIA:** What successes have you had over the past year?

**KD:** The Missing Link has seen incredibly good growth in its managed services portfolio over the past year. We've expanded our managed services offering and we've picked up many new clients taking advantage managed services, as companies see the value in the breadth of our offering in this area.

Another area that has grown rapidly over the past year is our security practice. The security business has been incredibly successful, and it just continued to grow. Security is getting an enormous amount of attention. It is likely to get even more attention in the near future, as the Australian government looks at introducing mandatory breach disclosure laws,





meaning security is also likely to receive larger portions of more companies IT budgets.

Security is an arms race, and the evolving threat landscape is compelling companies to implement new and increasingly innovative security solutions. Nobody wants to be the person in the company who says no to spending more on security, only to have the company's systems breached in a cyber-attack. It can destroy brand equity. Companies of all sizes know this, and that is a big reason behind why we're seeing such expansion in our security business.

**CompTIA:** What are your plans for the year ahead?

**KD:** Right now, The Missing Link is on the acquisition trail. We're looking for businesses and talent that will help us to broaden our portfolio and service offering. One of the areas where we would like to bulk up our offering is in cloud computing. To this end, we will spend the coming year looking for people with skills and experience around cloud consulting.

More broadly, we want to increase the size of the business and what we offer. If we come across an existing business with the right talent over the next year that could help us do that, then we will consider an acquisition. It's all about addressing our client needs and building a service around them.

We will also be looking at automating more of our processes. This will let us grow swiftly without needing to put additional resources into certain business processes. If we automate some processes, we will have room to scale rapidly if we need it. Automation also lets us make sure we are focusing on activities that add value, such as solution customisation.

**CompTIA:** What advice can you give other IT channel players?

**KD:** Most channel players have access to the same technology, so people make the difference. If you treat your staff and clients well, the rest should take care of itself.

Caring about what you do, your customers, your employees and your reputation is incredibly important. It's not hard, but some organisations forget that this is an important part of running a successful business.

