Richard Atkinson MBCS CITP

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Richard Atkinson, CIO, JustGiving

Richard Atkinson is CIO at JustGiving, the organisation that enables charity fundraisers to generate donations online. A highly skilled IT architect and entrepreneur, Richard has been instrumental in developing a host of successful enterprises in sectors ranging from healthcare to air travel, retail and leisure.

Achieving CITP status enabled Richard to cast off any doubts he may have had about his technical abilities and make a personal pledge to lifelong learning.

He advocates the development of the IT profession and sees achieving CITP status as a way to channel his support.
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THE MOTIVATION

Commencing his undergraduate course in Manufacturing Engineering in 1992, in a university investing heavily in technology at the time (Brunel University), Richard Atkinson considers his career in IT was as much down to timing as it was choice. His final year placement was in Thorn EMI’s Research and Development department.

‘The beguiling influence of all that cutting edge computing was unavoidable’ he tells us.

Timing played its part once again when Richard left university - on the cusp of the dotcom boom. ‘In a world where established businesses were struggling to understand the new wild west of the internet,’ he explains, ‘the opinion of youth was not only entertained but actively sought by top level management.’

Richard’s foresight and enthusiasm, together with his passion for IT architecture, has since secured him 20 rewarding years in the industry within established organisations as well as many start-up environments including the company now known as Circle, Europe’s largest healthcare partnership. He has recently returned to JustGiving, the organisation he helped lay the foundations for some 10 years before. Now as CIO he’s responsible for re-platforming the business for global expansion.

Richard tells us he wanted to achieve CITP status for a number of reasons but perhaps none more so than to validate his competencies, for the reassurance that he has not just been ‘in the right place at the right time’.

THE JOURNEY

Richard joined BCS in 2006, around the time he became Chief Technology Officer for the company that was to become the Circle partnership: ‘The opportunity to conceive IT systems for healthcare provision without too much worry about legacy was exciting’ he comments.

Since then, Richard has drawn great benefit from access to the BCS membership community as well as other member resources.

‘Being able to meet with peers in the specialist groups where we can share and learn best practices or alternative approaches is tremendously useful. I also enjoy the member publications and I’ve made regular use of SFIAplus in developing my teams.

‘The assessment process for CITP was more rewarding than I anticipated. Although I could claim on my CV that I had a couple of decades of IT experience, it nevertheless required genuine work and experience to make sure I passed the breadth of knowledge test.

‘The interview was enjoyable and I felt I was being given constructive assistance rather than a grilling.’

THE BENEFITS

‘I chose to apply for CITP status for a number of reasons. Initially, to assure myself I had the foundational technical skills and had not just been in the right place at the right time. It represents my commitment to lifelong learning and it’s a way for me to lend my support to the effort to drive standards within the profession.

‘IT is a new profession and in the early years of this century that really showed in the lack of skills definitions and clear academic qualifications, and the muddy career paths. The Institute is proactively working to change this and CITP has given me a framework to help mentor others on professional development.

‘It’s also given me knowledge that has helped me deliver my day-to-day work and provided a basis on which I can develop my own skills.

‘It’s very important for the progression of the IT industry that we embrace standards. If we don’t, we will fail to earn the respect of our customers. CITP holds value for employers in developing employees to provide a greater service at every level, and in helping to retain those employees through recognition, and fostering a sense of accomplishment.

‘If you’re not actually applying for CITP, then you should be developing your skills towards it and understanding its relevance to your career.’