

Securing the Cyber Sphere

People, Security, and Communication are the three business units guiding everything PS&C Ltd does as it makes its presence known in the information and communication technology professional services market.

Images by Estelle Judah Photography

In 2014, significant reforms were made to Australia's *Privacy Act 1988*, increasing the need for businesses to be highly vigilant when handling consumer data such as names, addresses, and credit card information. Breaches can be subject to fines from the Privacy Commissioner of up to \$1.7 million for every offence, and the new legislation encourages that reasonable steps be taken to ensure systems are secure.

That's where PS&C comes in. The ICT services company offers cyber solutions including vulnerability assessment, penetration testing, and security regimes to protect organisations from any sort of breach. Managing Director Kevin McLaine says it is important that C-level executives put time, effort, and money into security protection.

"The cyber security space is a growing area in Australia and we are a significant player in it," he says. "We provide services focused on helping companies understand if their systems are vulnerable, and we also check their processes to make sure that they are less likely to

be penetrated. Organisations pay us to try to penetrate, or hack, into their system to determine how robust their security is. Our vulnerability assessments might involve constant monitoring to look at operating protocols and security procedures. Every time you put a new application inside your system or make a change to your website, then it should be penetration tested to check if it's vulnerable. Our businesses are basically about providing assurance.

"The traditional client base of the industry has been banks and organisations that have financial transactions facing the public. Due to this, they have been across cyber security issues for a long time and are really well developed in what they do. But the growth of business via the internet has opened up a lot more risk for all sorts of organisations. For example, you often see people walking around with iPads and smartphones that are connected to information back at head office—that may be marketing, financial, or strategy data. That sort of data in 'cyber space' is subject to being accessed by the bad guys."

Security is only one sector PS&C specialises in. Its two other business units—People and Communication—are also kept busy. In the People division, revenue is derived from contractor management, sourcing, and recruitment, whereas Communication is all about managing, designing, and deploying unified communications, IP telephony, as well as network and business technology solutions. "We operate in niches," Kevin notes. "As a business, we are less exposed to discretionary IT spend that a lot of businesses are exposed to, and that means that we should do relatively well no matter what is happening in the economy."

PS&C has only been in operation for a short time. It acquired five companies and listed on the ASX in December 2013. Kevin has been with the company since day one. An accountant by trade, he previously held senior roles at Shomega Limited, CSG Limited, and GE Capital in Asia. Kevin says his time as a CFO with a variety of companies was particularly beneficial as it gave him ample experience in an executive environment. >

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In its first year of trade, PS&C recorded an EBITA of around \$6.7 million, and that is predicted to increase by almost 30 per cent this year. Kevin says it is constantly looking at ways to grow organically and through acquisitions. “We will stay within the three pillars of our business—people, security, and communication—but there are a number of good organic growth opportunities and a number of acquisition-type growth opportunities across the divisions,” he explains. “So we will continue to pursue those. We have completed one acquisition in the security space this financial year, and we have more on our radar.”

When procuring a company, PS&C tries to ensure a smooth transition by choosing strategically and by aligning values. “We have pulled together with successful private companies so they know how to make money and they know how to operate a business,” Kevin says. “I guess our issue is around what changes

there will be for them and how we can make that easier—things like the dynamic of reporting to external people and the governance regime that comes along with being listed. We apply a culture across the business which is around treating people fairly, operating an employer-of-choice environment, and adhering to the governance standards. They are the main values we instil in each business in the early days.”

After the acquisition process, PS&C supports and encourages the development of its new staff, while the individual companies are given the freedom to run their own training programs. According to Kevin, the growing number of employees, particularly in the security unit, has been somewhat of a challenge as the demand for its services is ever increasing. “It’s a question of being able to attract and keep all the staff interested. To address this, we have a number of initiatives happening on that

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front. Anyone that’s in a high-growth sector has the same issues as us. We have three great security businesses that currently operate separately. They are doing well, and we believe they are all great places to work.”

Although PS&C is a new organisation, it already has some significant relationships with suppliers and partners. Some of these associations date back 20 years thanks to dealings that were initially set up by the acquired companies. “We have some very strong partners,” Kevin says. “We have honest, pluralistic, and great relationships with our suppliers.”

PS&C will continue to provide ICT services through its three business units to help a range of government and corporate organisations achieve success. While still in its early days of existence, it is expected to stay on a positive growth pattern both organically and via further acquisitions. •

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