Maher Smith

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PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Technology leader with 5+ years as the commercial and technical counterbalance to IT vendors, transitioning to IT operations management. Proven ability to challenge vendor recommendations, right-size solutions, and align technology decisions with business strategy. Managed $20M annual IT spend across cloud, infrastructure, security, networking, and enterprise software. Maintains hands-on technical currency through a personal homelab—deploying and experimenting with proven open-source technologies used by global enterprises and IT industry leaders. This ensures decisions balance immediate practicality with future compatibility, grounded in real implementation experience rather than vendor pitch decks. Combines deep technical knowledge with commercial discipline—a rare profile that ensures MSPs and vendors deliver genuine value, not just invoices.

KEY STRENGTHS

- **Vendor & MSP Challenge** — Question recommendations, validate BOMs, ensure value

- **Infrastructure Decisions** — Network hardware, cloud architecture, security solutions

- **Budget & Cost Management** — $20M spend, TCO analysis, FinOps principles

- **SLA & Performance Governance** — Stage-gate contracts, escalation frameworks

- **M365/Azure Environments** — Migration planning, architecture, governance

- **Executive Stakeholder Engagement** — CTO, CPO, business unit heads

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

$1.1M+ Savings — Network Transformation (280 Sites)

Challenged vendor bill of materials: identified MX67C vs recommended MX68CW across 280 devices, saving $300K on hardware alone. Right-sized Meraki licensing tiers based on actual requirements. Analysed call volumes to shift VoIP from PAYG to unlimited bundles. Consolidated mobile services from $55 to $30/SIM. During this work, discovered 28 self-hosted applications across 60 VMs—enabling subsequent Azure migration planning.

Azure Cloud Migration — Technical Leadership

When internal teams couldn't answer vendor architecture questions, self-directed extensive Azure learning and authored the Business Requirements Document—including Infrastructure as Code requirements (Terraform), DevOps/CI-CD expectations, FinOps framework, and BAU documentation standards. Engaged directly with Continental Global Cloud Lead to clarify hub-and-spoke network security model. Proposed and gained CTO approval for Australian Hub architecture, reducing vendor scope from full hub-and-spoke build to spoke-only implementation.

Vendor Challenge — Zendesk AI at Zero Incremental Cost

When business requested Zendesk Copilot (AI assistant) quoted at $50/licence wall-to-wall, conducted independent usage analysis. Discovered 31 licensed seats vs 16 active users—50% over-subscribed. Negotiated seat reduction (31→21) in exchange for Copilot licences plus 88 hours of professional services. AI capability delivered at no incremental cost.

Cybersecurity Solution Selection — Right-Sized for Organisation

Evaluated SIEM/XDR solutions by analysing endpoint-to-log ratio to determine optimal commercial model. Compared Microsoft Sentinel (log-based pricing), Rapid7 (endpoint-based), and Huntress (managed service). Assessed internal capability gap honestly—no SOC team meant fully managed service was essential. Recommended Huntress:

commercial model aligned with environment, managed service addressed capability gap, right-sized for mid-market organisation.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

IT Procurement Manager | mycar (Australia's largest automotive services network)

2021 – Present | Sydney, NSW • ~1,800 employees • 280+ locations nationally • $20M annual IT spend

Commercial and technical counterbalance to IT vendors across all technology categories. Evaluate architecture, challenge recommendations, negotiate contracts, and ensure technology decisions align with business strategy.

Key Responsibilities & Outcomes:

• **Vendor & MSP Management:** Prequalification, technical challenge, stage-gate contracts, SLA governance, escalation frameworks. Held MSPs accountable for performance and value.

• **Infrastructure Decisions:** Network hardware selection, cloud architecture, security solutions, VoIP deployment, datacenter assessment (identified 60 VMs for migration).

• **Budget Management:** Forecasting, TCO analysis, investment trade-offs, licensing optimisation. Delivered $6M+ documented savings across tenure.

• **Executive Engagement:** Regular collaboration with CTO, Chief People Officer, Head of Customer Care, and Continental global leadership on technology strategy and platform decisions.

• **Technical Debt Management:** Assessed platform utilisation (Mulesoft), translated technical risks for non-technical stakeholders, led decommissioning to eliminate cost and upgrade liability.

• **Platform Strategy Influence:** Conducted independent evaluation of data platforms (Databricks vs Azure Fabric), influenced CTO's strategic pivot based on technical analysis and Continental alignment.

Volkswagen Financial Services Australia

Procurement Specialist – IT & Professional Services | Oct 2019 – Oct 2022 | Sydney

• Project Manager for greenfield Coupa implementation—led delivery from requirements through to go-live, stakeholder alignment, and user adoption.

• Contributed to Coupa integration workstream during Volkswagen Group Australia and Audi merger, supporting procurement process alignment and systems integration.

• Appointed VGA Coupa Platform Administrator—governance, user administration, and platform adoption across merged entity.

• Led tenders for major IT implementation projects, improving commercial outcomes versus initial bids and strengthening contractual protections.

Earlier: equigroup |, Finance Manager, Top Juice (Jun 2017–Apr 2018) Equigroup Pty Ltd (APR 2012-Apr 2018) |, Kimberly-Clark (Oct 2010–Mar 2012) | Credit Controller, Maersk Line (Sep 2005–Aug 2010)

TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE

Cloud & Infrastructure	Azure (architecture, migration, FinOps), M365, Proxmox, Docker, VMware concepts
Networking	Cisco Meraki (MX series, licensing), SD-WAN, VoIP, VPN, firewall concepts
Security	SIEM/XDR evaluation (Sentinel, Rapid7, Huntress), Wazuh (homelab), EDR/MDR, zero trust concepts
DevOps & Automation	Terraform, Ansible, GitHub, CI/CD concepts, n8n workflow automation

Enterprise Software	Zendesk, Salesforce Marketing Cloud, LMS platforms, POS systems (Avayler)
Data & Integration	PostgreSQL, DuckDB, Databricks, Mulesoft assessment, API integration patterns

HANDS-ON TECHNICAL VALIDATION

Personal homelab environment for practical technology experience:

- **Proxmox VE** with high-availability configuration • **Wazuh** SIEM/XDR for security monitoring • **Docker** containers
- **Terraform & Ansible** for Infrastructure as Code • **PostgreSQL & DuckDB** databases • **n8n** automation

Why this matters: When I evaluate vendor architecture claims or assess infrastructure options, I have practical deployment context—not just procurement-side observation.

EDUCATION & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Continuous self-directed learning: Azure architecture, AI/ML technology stack, cybersecurity frameworks

AI Practitioner: Daily use of Claude (Projects, CLI, MCP integration), understanding of full AI/ML stack from compute to orchestration

References available upon request