



Name: Ken Robertson

Location: Sydney

Work role: Retired – sort of – maybe so maybe no.

Professional role: Short internal audit related projects that I can mostly do in my own time while looking after grandkids during the day. Having two divergent but important and rewarding tasks every day yields the best job satisfaction ever.

Community role: pulled back from community roles

How did you get a start in internal audit?

I did a career shift to internal audit in the early 90's from investigation work. I felt frustrated about government lawyers being bashed in Court by defence barristers raising objection after objection – sometimes not one question of willing witnesses would be accepted by the Court no matter how it was structured and asked. Then we were faced with legal officers that did not want to find any reason to take fraud matters to Court. It seemed logical to me to try and make change from inside the fence rather than from outside. For my first two weeks I was convinced that I had made the wrong decision – but then the storm clouds started to roll in and I have loved doing internal audit work ever since – so much so, that I just can't seem to give it up.

What's the coronavirus drama effect on you?

Very little apart from taking more care to avoid catching it. Internal audit work has not dropped away yet and people are just as lovely to deal with over Screen2Screen as they are in Face2Face. They look more relaxed in their casuals – and happier; though sometimes their voice is disembodied from their wonky screen video feed. But this just adds to the fun and entertainment.

Working from office or home?

Mostly from home.

How has coronavirus changed the way you work?

Very little - but a dud upcoming NBN connection could change everything.

What risks would you say are heightened by coronavirus?

I am seeing early signs of burnout from overwork where people are so afraid of losing their job that they are working from home 12+ hours each day. Productivity seems to have gone through the roof and these new expectations may become a significant challenge to pull back from. Some in my family took a pay cut to work harder and longer rather than be cast out. The economy needs more people employed and sharing the burden. I feel that there will be repercussions from a WH&S perspective if it is not watched closely.

What is the biggest challenge facing internal auditors?

Survival. Every recession or downturn that I have seen has decimated internal audit ranks as budget savings initiatives prioritise front line workers. Internal auditors that are not value-adding may not be working in the same place doing the same thing over the next 6-12 months. But never mind too much because people will always be people; supervisors will always miss things; systems will always have holes in them and demand for internal auditors has always returned and will return again and again.

What is your most memorable internal audit moment?

The irony of success. A new CEO, sweating, stuttering and more nervous than you could imagine, stood up for a major internal audit finding against a powerful and connected Board. It resulted in tens of millions of dollars being channelled back to the business on 30th June – enough to pay for my internal audit team for the next 20 years. The next year's budget cut funding for my internal audit team in half.

What are you working on at present?

Helping internal auditors maximise their potential in quality assurance reviews by giving them tips and clues on how to raise their performance levels without impinging much on their available scarce resources.

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What are you reading at present?

I stopped reading when I stopped riding buses and trains. Now I make up fun stories to help send kiddies into their afternoon naps.

What is on your desk right now?

Inspiration from photos of loved ones – new, past and present. It helps remind me of now, ever and always.

Concert or event you would most like to attend?

One where I debut all the better songs I have written over the years but have mostly only played to myself in my study on my guitars. Who knows, one day one of them might even sound good to someone else.

What would you change if you could?

Courts that take enjoyment from belting young aspiring lawyers who are trying their best but are confronted with a powerfully connected “barristers are best” culture.