

# DOMINIC WHITEHAND Profile

## Security man who loves people

Dominic Whitehand, managing director, WhiteGold

By Byron Connolly

**A**S A FORMER KICKBOXER and bouncer, you could say that security has been on Dominic Whitehand's mind. These days, as the managing director at specialist security distributor WhiteGold Solutions, Whitehand is more interested in securing corporate networks than controlling physical entry at a front door.

Whitehand's path to the IT security market began in 1992 when he graduated with a Bachelor of Science at the University of Central England. During his time at university, he would "bounce" to earn money and also had a go at kickboxing. "I've seen plenty of action of that side of things. I used to love that. I still think I could do it but I need to lose 20 kilos. My fighting weight is probably about 80 kilos and I weigh 100 kilos now."

He started his IT career with UK management consultancy The Ultimate Perspective and moved from there to Workgroup Systems, which was bought out by Datawatch in 1994. He jumped from systems administrator, to development, consultancy and sales roles during that time. "Datawatch brought me over to Australia as a senior consultant in 1996 and it's there that I went into sales and did a lot of travel around Asia – Hong Kong, Brunei and Tokyo."

Although technical, Whitehand fancies himself as a people person. "I still now like to get my hands dirty and understand technology but when I was in development I was literally falling asleep at the screen and knew it wasn't for me. I love gadgets, I still love technology but it was just very obvious that I'm more of a creative people person than a strict coding sort of person."

He stayed at Datawatch for more than four years before moving to HP in 1999, running the company's OpenView channel. "I had been at smaller companies for a long time and felt I needed the breadth of

experience to go to a major vendor. It wasn't really what I had expected."

He left HP when an opportunity arose to start an early Australian security distributor dubbed Layer 9. "We had Check Point and Nokia – we were a master distributor for them; we had Websense, F5 and a number of other offerings. We did some great things there and made an awful lot of sales but unfortunately it was the 'dotbom' era and we were funded by a mining resources company."

Whitehand and current business partner Jonathon Odría were in business together at Layer 9. "We did about \$4 million in sales in the first five months and then we had problems with suppliers in things like that," he says. The company went into administration in 2000.

After that, Whitehand consulted to companies like Fuji-Xerox, Datawatch and Advanced Data Integration. "That's when I started to develop a lot of my channel skills – Jonathon [Odría] has been in the channel pretty much his whole career, Sealcorp and One World and places like that."

In 2002, Odría and Whitehand founded WhiteGold, a small security-focused distributor that sells products from the likes of Fortinet, Barracuda, Airtight, Stonesoft and Webspy to the reseller channel.

### Resellers and security

Whitehand says that while the big security players understand the market, others in the mid and small end of town don't quite get it yet. "Some of the medium and small guys get it but I think the main problem for them is that there's so much coming out, so many areas of security, a lot of the time they don't focus on specific offerings of technology and they kind of get lost."

"A big mistake they can make is trying to be all things to all people with security. They are never going to have the resources available themselves to get trained

**"We don't want to be one of those guys that just takes vendors"**



and certified in all these different technologies." He says a way to combat that is to focus on two or three areas in the security market and get some good training and get a couple of solutions. "You might go for a Fortinet, a Juniper or a Check Point – whatever it is, get trained on it, get some experience on it and start understanding more about what your customer wants."

"I think what they need and where we see our position in that is doing a lot of hand-holding and helping them understand that they should try and focus on some areas and hand-hold them so that when they start making some sales, build their confidence and off they go."

Some resellers take months, a year or even 18 months to understand how to sell security solutions, but once they are educated properly, they do well, he says.