

The YiPs—Looking to the Future of i

By Justin Porter

Since attending my first COMMON Meeting as a fresh college graduate and brand new user of IBM i, I've been in many conversations regarding the need to recruit more young people and "converts" to IBM i from other platforms. While at my first COMMON meeting, I met up with a small group of young people who called themselves the YiPs. Young I Professionals. There I was invited to attend a roundtable discussion to address the issue of youth recruitment and to peruse possible avenues and marketing ideas to present to the COMMON community and IBM. Over the next few years, the discussions continued and the group has continued to maintain a presence at COMMON, though the names and faces of YiPs attending COMMON have changed from conference to conference.

The reality is that the YiPs represent an important demographic as both COMMON members and IBM i users: we are the future. Continued perfection on the platform depends on our ability as a community to come together and expand the Young i Professionals. The roundtable discussion at this year's COMMON Annual Conference in Nashville was a great success, thanks to CaN support from Trevor Perry and Pete Helgren, as well as a dedication of support from IBM's Steve Will, Mark Shearer, and Linda Grigoleit. In fact, the momentum at COMMON this year was so great we found the need to add an extra session at the end of the conference to meet again and continue the discussion.

The result of our meetings at COMMON has been the creation of a YiPs community that exists outside of the actual conference—the official Young i Professionals website (www.youngiprofessionals.com). The goal of the Young i Professionals website is to create a meeting place where new and young users of IBM i can congregate and learn from each other. The features on the website include: a PHP bulletin board system, the beginning of the YiPs open source initiative, a wiki dedicated to issues and ideas from and to users of IBM i, and a reference section for various topics of education and interest. This has all been possible by tremendous support from COMMON, IBM, and the recently forged relationship between the Young i Professionals and the Power Systems Academic Initiative headed up by Linda Grigoleit.

The Power Systems Academic Initiative has grown by leaps and bounds with Linda at the helm. Professors and students from the Initiative schools now attend COMMON conferences and are working with members of COMMON, the YiPs, and the IBM

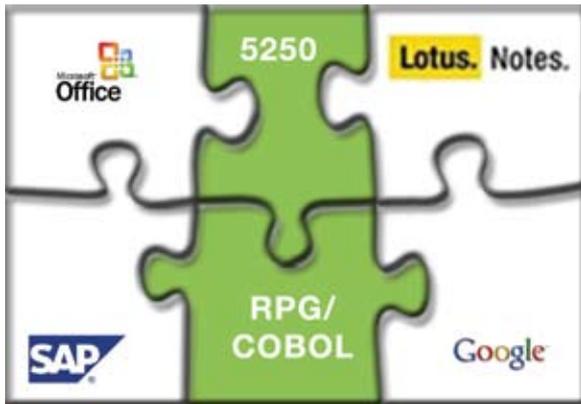


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community to continue growing their involvement. To forge the Academic Initiative / Young i Professionals relationship, the website and hosting for www.youngiprofessionals.com is being provided through the Power Systems Center, a hub dedicated to colleges and universities around the world for teaching. The Young i Professionals and the Power Systems Academic Initiative will continue to collaborate beyond the basics of the website, with plans for possible Initiative student mentorship opportunities as well as Initiative student involvement in YiPs projects, including the YiPs open source initiative.

In addition to the hard work being put into the website, the YiPs are also actively engaging with IBM and IBM i experts during regularly scheduled YiPs conference calls as another part of our educational and operational offerings. **Steve Will**, Chief Architect of IBM i, has been instrumental in helping us get the conference calls together and also by putting us in touch with guest speakers and other IBM i experts to aid us in the

growth of the YiPs. Over the next few months, our guest speakers will phone in to talk about everything from new programming techniques to storage and backup best-practices.

The YiPs are looking for everyone to be involved and are actively reaching out to new users and other young professionals in the field to help foster our growing community. If you know a young person using IBM i, or even a young person who needs a little extra help to see just what i really has to offer, send them to the website or put them in touch with us (yips@isociety.org) —we welcome members of any level of aptitude or skill and are committed to learning from one another through community participation and diversity.

As we move forward, the YiPs will continue to become a much more visible part of the COMMON and greater IBM i community. This column will become a regular feature, detailing not only the activities of the YiPs organization as it grows, but also highlighting individual YiPs, how they learned the platform and what they



Mark Shearer with the YiPs

use it for. We want COMMON and the IBM i community to get to know us better so please look for the column in each future issue of COMMON Connect. And if you know a YiP or meet one, take the time to show them what we already know: if you can dream it, it's possible with IBM i. Continuing to build the young user base on the platform is an imperative we should all be involved in—the future of our community depends on it. 

About the Author

Justin Porter is the Director of Technology at Westside Produce in Firebaugh, CA. He has worked on the IBM i platform and been both a member of COMMON and the Young i Professionals for four years. He can be reached at justin@westsideproduce.com.



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