

Volume 5 Number 3

June 2008

ISSN 1932-0140

# CONNECT™

The official Journal of COMMON A Users Group

# COMMON



## Mr. 400

1952 - 2008

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Publications Mail Agreement No. 40907015 - Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to: Eclipse, 1725 - 250 The East Mall, Toronto, ON M9B 6L3  
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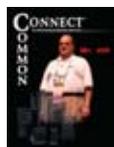


Vaughn Dragland

COMMON Staff: Leah Seiffert  
Member Service Representative

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**COMMON.CONNECT** is published six times per year by COMMON – A Users Group. Its mission is to facilitate the exchange of information among professionals in the field of IBM System i computer technology, provide them with practical tools and techniques, and serve as a forum for discussion of emerging trends and issues. All articles are the views of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the COMMON. CONNECT magazine or of COMMON.



## Dear COMMON Colleague,



One of the honors available to a COMMON President is an opportunity to bestow the President's Award upon someone who I believe has made a substantial contribution, either to this organization or to the broader community. I have given out that award.

At a recent company staff meeting I presented **Dave Feters**, my boss, the COMMON President's Award. It would have been ideal to give it to him during our Annual Meeting in Nashville, but he was not able to be there.



Vaughn Dragland

Randy Dufault

Now, before you write this off as a completely self-serving, egotistical act on my part, let me explain.

While I did present the plaque to Dave, this award truly is to recognize all of the business owners, IT directors, CIOs, and other bosses that support COMMON by allowing their team members to volunteer. While I personally believe that companies gain much more than they lose by allowing their staff to participate in their peer community, I do recognize that there are some very direct costs involved. If you are a boss, and you or a member of your team are volunteering for COMMON, I thank you for that.

I've volunteered some of my time to COMMON in a number of different capacities for twenty years now. I have been a speaker assistant, a speaker, a program manager, a member of the board of directors and, for nearly four years now, an officer of the organization. I say that I volunteer MY time, but in reality a good share of that time belongs to the company I work for. I work for a technology services firm, and any time I spend doing the work of COMMON (at least during typical working hours) is time that directly impacts my company's bottom line. Time interrupted by calls during the day, time at remote meetings, time spent at the Annual Meeting, is all time that I am not able to bill or otherwise charge to a project.

I gave Dave the award to recognize the substantial investment he has made in COMMON and in this community. I cannot even fathom the amount of lost revenue and actual costs he has tolerated over the years in order to support my participation in this endeavor. Dave, I thank you for that.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention all of the self-employed individuals that volunteer time to make this community better. Many of our speakers and long-time volunteers work for themselves and are the ultimate example of employer support for this organization. When, for at least one week a year and usually more, someone gives up any

and all opportunity for income in order to help out—that is a distinct sacrifice. If you are self-employed and are volunteering your time to COMMON, I thank you for that.

COMMON is great organization only because of its volunteers. And it only has volunteers because forward thinking bosses understand how COMMON helps everyone involved be just a little bit better at what they do. Of course being better at what you do is always important; it is important for your company, it is important for you, and it is important for this community.

So if you are volunteering, please thank your boss (even if it is yourself). If you aren't volunteering, please consider it. My boss lets me volunteer, I'll bet your boss will too!

Sincerely,

Randy Dufault  
COMMON President  
randy\_dufault@common.org

# Nashville Conference Exceeds Expectations for the CEF

By Michelle August

**T**he COMMON Education Foundation had an incredibly successful conference. The CEF raised just over \$14,000 in Nashville! This was almost \$5,000 more than last year's conference. This success can be attributed to several different factors. First of all, we had over 100 items in the silent auction, several of which were from first time donors. We also had a few very popular items that went for \$300 or more: an XO Laptop (donated by COMMON), an iTouch (donated by OMNI), Magellan Portable GPS (donated by Quadrant Software), RPG Toolbox Software (donated by Linoma Software), SOArchitect Software (donated by Look Software), Advertisements in COMMON publications (donated by COMMON), and 2009 Annual COMMON Registrations (donated by COMMON). We also had seven different LUGs participate in our 3rd LUG Challenge. These LUGs, in alphabetical order, are FASUG, IBM Academic Initiative, IMUG, OCEAN, OMNI, SEMIUG, and TUG. These LUGs donated items to the silent auction in a competition to raise the most money for the COMMON Education Foundation. The OMNI User Group from Chicago was our winner for the second year in a row! Their items raised \$760 for the CEF and OMNI received COMMON key chains for their membership. We will be running the LUG Challenge again in Reno, Nevada, so all LUGs: start brainstorming now on what you could donate to the silent auction to raise the most money for the CEF. Thank you to everybody who donated items and participated in the bidding to make the silent auction such a success!

In addition to the silent auction, we also raised money through our nightly raffle ticket sales, our golf putting station, and our merchandise sales. We had

several new merchandise items this year that were very popular and this was the second year that we ran the golf putting station. Participants really had fun! For each hole-in-one, participants earned a raffle ticket entry to win an Odyssey White Hot XG Marxman Mallet Putter. This putter has a \$215 value and it was generously donated by **Lauren Lombardi**. The winner of the putter this year was **Ed Booth** from Suncast Corporation. Congratulations Ed and thanks to everyone who tried their hand at golf to benefit the CEF! Watch for this fundraiser again in Reno, Nevada!

A special thanks needs to go to our generous cash donors! The CEF received cash donations from **Jim and Judy Sloan**, **Bob Lane**, **Jim Oberholtzer**, and **Jeff Crosby**. Please thank these individuals when you see them!

I would also like to thank all of our volunteers: **Laura Ubelhor** for dedicating ALL of her time at the booth, **Trevor Perry** for raising additional funds during our nightly iSocials by selling the popular iCAN hats, **Jane Kimmel** for recruiting volunteers for the CEF booth through the Guest Program (**Susan Boettcher**, **Danna Trowbridge**, and **Charer Gearhart-Dekreon**), **Michael Ryan** our newest volunteer, **Elizabeth and Alexandra Kimmel** for their help with the nightly raffle tickets, all the YIPs who helped with the raffles and at the booth, all of the educators attending the conference who helped at the booth, and to all the people who stopped by the booth to volunteer whatever time they had! It was inspiring to see so many people come together to help the CEF in Nashville! Please consider helping out at our next conference in Reno, Nevada. It's a great way to meet new people and have some fun during conference!

All of these efforts help provide for the various scholarships that we offer. The CEF awarded seven educators



Vaughn Dragland

Michelle August

free registration to the Annual 2008 conference and sponsored **Jiangping Wang** from Webster University in St. Louis to attend on the VMS Scholarship which pays for his registration, housing, and travel expenses. We also awarded two \$625 scholarships to **Herb Kronholm** and **Paul Coleman** to attend the 11th Annual IBM Summer School event being held this summer in Rochester, MN. In the fall we will award four \$1,000 tuition reimbursement scholarships to college students who are recommended by a COMMON member. The deadline for applications for these scholarships is August 1st. If you are interested in sponsoring a college student for this scholarship, please visit [www.common.org/foundation](http://www.common.org/foundation) for more information.

There are many ways you can get involved and help support the COMMON Education Foundation and the future of i! Please e-mail Michelle August ([michelle\\_august@common.org](mailto:michelle_august@common.org)) if you have any suggestions, questions, or would like to get more involved with the CEF. Thanks again to everybody helping in the success of the CEF! 

## About the Author

**Michelle August** is Executive Director of the COMMON Education Foundation.

# Editor's Desk

Randy Dufault makes a good point in his President's Message about employers investing in their human capital—by seeing the value of supporting their volunteer efforts.

I think we should take up Randy's torch and give thanks to all of the great employers who support their COMMON volunteers. Here is what some other volunteers are saying about their bosses:

Marshall Akins says, "The company that I work for (Hanna Steel Corporation) sees the value of going to COMMON. I have been attending since 1984. I report to Pete Hanna, who agrees that it is well worth the investment in knowledge that I have brought back from conferences over the years, since there is great value in keeping knowledge current—in order to take advantage of new technology. I have also served as a volunteer on the Nominating committee and the Judicial Affairs council. Conferences are one thing, but volunteer work is harder to quantify, so I am grateful to Pete for supporting my effort to give back for the common good.

Kevin Mort, Solutions Architect, Arrow Enterprise Computing Solutions says, "Over the last year and a half, as I transitioned into new roles within my company, I've had no less than three managers to report to. As many of us do, I've had to make my case for our continuing participation with COMMON. I am happy to say that this hasn't been a difficult sell. Through my volunteer work with COMMON I build relationships, gain knowledge and obtain insight into the IBM i business which I bring back to our office. I am grateful that my managers recognize the value that my participation ultimately brings to our company, and that I have the support to continue being a part of COMMON's volunteer team.

Chris Rowell says, "I would like to thank Lita Shillenn, Executive VP at Penn Veterinary Supply for trusting me to see the inherent value in being an attendee and a volunteer at COMMON. Generally, a person benefits individually, and for their organization, in proportion

– continued on page 11 ►

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The official Journal of COMMON-A Users Group

COMMON

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Suite 810  
Chicago, IL 60656 USA  
Tel: 800.777.6734

- Return undeliverable U.S. addresses to COMMON Headquarters.
- Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to Eclipse Technologies Inc.

Pre-press and publishing services provided by  
**Eclipse Technologies Inc.**  
250 The East Mall, Suite 1725  
Toronto, ON M9B 6L3  
416.622.8789 [www.e-clipse.ca](http://www.e-clipse.ca)  
Publications Mail Agreement No. 40907015

Printing and binding services provided by  
**Amanda Graphics Ltd.**  
1050 McNicoll Avenue #7  
Scarborough, ON M1W 2L8  
416.497.0500 [www.amandagraphics.com](http://www.amandagraphics.com)

Distributed in the United States by  
**Brittany Industries Inc.**  
222 Ironton Street  
North Tonawanda, NY 14120  
716.692.8371 [www.brittanyindustries.com](http://www.brittanyindustries.com)

Distributed in Canada & internationally by  
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Mississauga, ON L4W 2R8  
905.624.9082 [www.grants-mailing.ca](http://www.grants-mailing.ca)

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ISSN 1932-0140



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## About COMMON

COMMON is an international professional association, serving the Global Community of organizations and individuals who have an interest in IBM-related technology. COMMON provides a member forum for proactively developing solutions to challenges presented by technology evolution and business requirements. COMMON provides pre-eminent leadership in education. Members receive unparalleled educational benefits that facilitate the effective use of information systems and enhance professional growth. COMMON promotes multiple vehicles for communication, an environment that encourages information exchange through interpersonal knowledge sharing, and a level of support unavailable elsewhere in the information technology industry. COMMON is independent of IBM.

Vaughn Dragland



2008 COMMON Board of Directors

# Al Barsa Memorial Scholarship

By Pete Massiello

**A**l Barsa, Jr. had a heart of gold and was always there to help, to listen, to advise, and, of course, to swap family stories. No matter who you were, Al would come over and talk with you during a conference and make you feel at ease. He was always working his hardest to make our beloved i the best platform in the world, and we have Al to thank for his constant critiquing of IBM. You could always count on Al to open COMMON's Sound-off with comments on how IBM Rochester had performed over the last year. Al's dedication to the System i was only surpassed by his dedication to his family. His entire face would light up when he spoke about **Albert** and **Christie**; he had a lot to be proud of in their accomplishments.

Al was also involved in the charter days of the COMMON Education Foundation (CEF). He and **Jim Sloan** were the initial benefactors by providing the seed money for the CEF. Because of Al's accomplishments and his willingness to help everyone in the System i community, the COMMON Education Foundation (CEF) has decided to establish a special scholarship in memory of our friend Al Barsa, Jr. This scholarship, the Al Barsa Memorial Scholarship, will honor an individual who exemplifies Al's commitment and dedication to the i community and is an advocate to the i community.

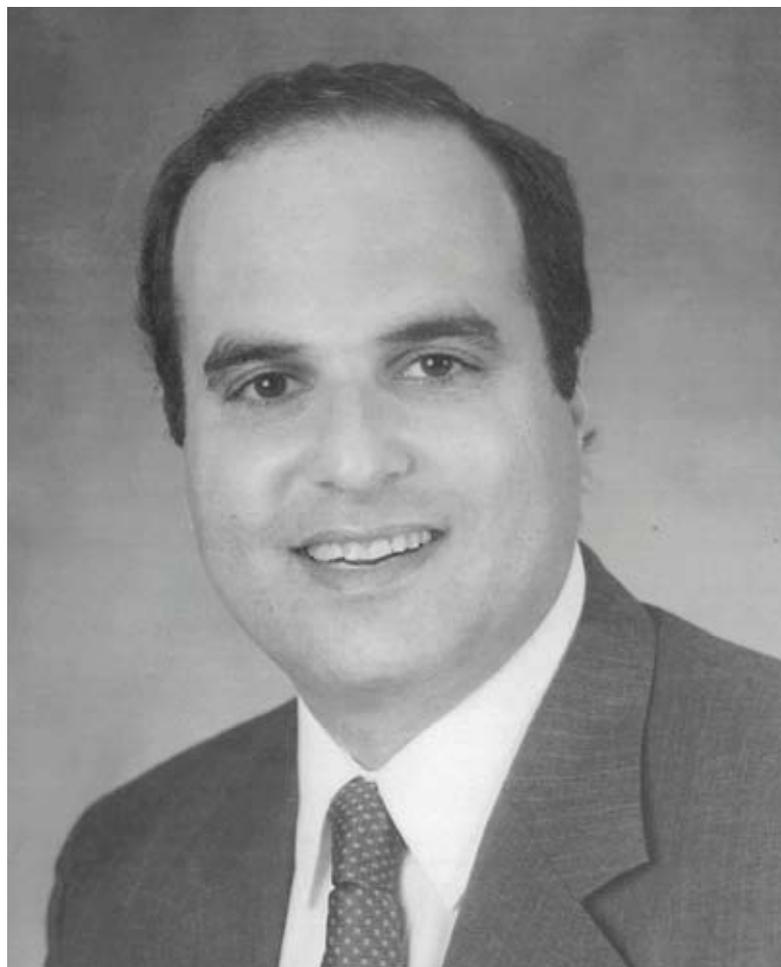
The recipient of this award will receive a conference registration and be presented a plaque at the COMMON Annual Meeting. Anybody within the i community is eligible and an application will be posted on the CEF website in the fall. You can nominate yourself or another deserving member of the community.

The CEF has already raised over \$10,000 in Al's memory. We have received many generous donations from companies (**Jim Sloan, Inc.**, **LANSA**, **Midrange.com**, **Central Park Data Systems**, **Slomin's, Inc.**, **Amerequip Corp.**, and **Durakon Industries, Inc.**), Local User Groups (**LISUG**, **FASUG**, **NEUGC**, **NHMUG**, **OCEAN**, and **TUG**), and individuals who were Al's friends, colleagues, and admirers. Thank you to all! If you have learned from Al, if Al has helped you or your career in any way, if you have heard him speak or had him speak at your User Group, or if you are a friend, we ask that you contribute to this scholarship in Al's memory.

You can find the contribution form on the COMMON Education Foundation website ([www.common.org/foundation](http://www.common.org/foundation)). Scroll down and click on the link for the Al Barsa Memorial Scholarship – Contribution Form under the “Scholarships Available” section. All donations are tax deductible under IRS guidelines. If you have any questions you can email **Michelle August** at [michelle\\_august@common.org](mailto:michelle_august@common.org) or call her at 815-592-8924. 

## About the Author

**Pete Massiello** is the President of iTech Solutions Group, President of the Fairfield CT AS/400 User Group (FASUG), a past member of the COMMON Board of Directors, and a frequent speaker at user groups. Email him at [pmassiello@itechsol.com](mailto:pmassiello@itechsol.com).



## BARSA, ALBERT SIMON JR.

Albert Simon Barsa Jr. of Rye passed away suddenly on Friday, April 4, 2008 at age 55. Al was born in New York City and raised in Rye, New York. He graduated from The Cranwell School and received his B.S. in Management and an MBA from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. For more than 20 years, Al was President of Barsa Consulting Group, LLC and Barsa Systems Distribution, Inc. in Purchase, NY. He was an IBM business partner and expert with regard to every aspect of the software and hardware relevant to IBM System i (AS/400, i Series). He was widely regarded as a pioneer in his field and unique in his computer related knowledge. Al was a frequent speaker at both COMMON USA and COMMON Europe. He was also an Editor of the COMMON Technical Library, and a member of the Speaker Excellence Committee. Al had been voted COMMON's Best Speaker, and received COMMON's highest honor, the Distinguished Service Award. He will be fondly remembered as a gregarious and enthusiastic business leader who loved to tell jokes. Every year from 1996 to 2000, he was named on the AS/400 Insider Weekly's 10 Biggest AS/400 Market Influencers list, making him the only person in the world to have received this honor 5 times. He also served as the president of the Long Island Systems User Group (LISUG). He is survived by his beloved wife of 32 years, Susan, his two loving children Albert and Christina, his devoted mother and father Gloria and Albert Barsa and his beloved sister Barbara Jamison.



# Al Barsa — Mr. 400

**D**o you have stories to share about Al Barsa Jr.? A special blog website has been set up as a tribute to Al. Check it out at [www.mr400.com/Al.html](http://www.mr400.com/Al.html). You are invited to add your comments too.

Here are just a few samples of the many kind words written by friends about Al on this site:

## Dan Hughes

"It was Fall 1996 Conference. I had attended a few of Al's sessions over the past years, but had never personally met him. We were looking at getting a new RISC box and I was relatively new to this platform. After a session, I asked Al if he had a minute to help me understand the new system that we were considering and ideas on the huge CISC to RISC conversion that would be required. Al said that he was in a hurry to get to his next setup, and was on the way to the restroom in between, but if I wanted to walk and talk, he would do his best to help me. In the next few minutes walking, he helped reassure me that the system was a good fit for us and provided me with information and resources that helped me to do the conversion on my own. That's one example of Al's generous nature to even strangers. May God bless you, Al Barsa, and your family."

## Sara Blake

"I met Al at a COMMON (or 2) back in the 80's, and shared some information on a new solution I had a problem on the old S38. We exchanged several phone calls and I sent him a piece of code. I truly enjoyed that little piece of working with him, and remember him well after all these years. He was as quick to share as he was to receive. I always loved his passion for the iSeries (or whatever it's name) and still share that passion today. He will be missed."

## Kim Kuras

"He was loved by many and respected by all. I'll miss you my friend."

## Scott Haglund

"Al was one of the hardest working people in the business. He was admired by many and respected by all. I will miss you my friend."

## David Naigles

"Al was a driving force behind making the AS/400 (I don't care what they call it now, it will always be what it was in 1988) what it is today. But he was also an engaging, friendly individual who lent his support to others and will always be remembered for his humanity. I have had the honor of knowing Al and sharing time with him at many events."

## Steve Shurge

"I met Al 19 years ago and have had the privilege of participating in many of his sessions. As we can see, Al has had an impact on many of us. Al was a GREAT person and FRIEND that his family are surely very proud of. Al will be greatly missed."

## Bob Kane

"I met Al in 1991. IBM introduced us and I didn't know what to expect. I had gone to lunch, and when I returned to my office, I found a pair of winged tip shoes scattered on the floor, along with an Igloo cooler. It was then that I learned about Al's love of Diet Coke and his need for sneakers to stand on the cold, hard, raised floor of the computer room. Al and I became the closest of friends as a result of that engagement and I will miss him very much. Geography separated us over the past 3-4 years, but we still remain the best of friends."

## Rares Pateanu

"How do you sum up in a few words 20 years of friendship, of shared jokes and shared passion, of meeting in airports and foreign places, as well as close to home, years of one COMMON conference after another, years of sharing ideas and disagreeing from time to time? I don't know, but what I do know, is that for all of us who have known and loved Al for all these years, it was a privilege to know him, and to be a small part of his life. Dear friend, may you forever rest in peace, and may you forever live in our memories."



## Affiliated LUG Conferences and Special Events

### Southeast Michigan iSeries Users Group MITEC – Michigan iSeries Technical Education Conference

[www.semiug.org](http://www.semiug.org)  
June 3, 2008  
Dearborn, Michigan



### OCEAN User Group OCEAN – 15th annual OCEAN Tech Conference, Vendor Expo, and Executive Breakfast

[www.ocean400.org](http://www.ocean400.org)  
June 30, 2008 Irvine, CA



### Northeast User Groups Conference

[www.neugc.org](http://www.neugc.org)  
April 6–8, 2009  
Sheraton Framingham Hotel,  
1657 Worcester Road  
Framingham, MA



### Wisconsin Midrange Computer Professional Association (WMCPA) 23 Annual Spring Technical Conference

Spring 2009  
Geneva Resort, Lake Geneva, WI



### Toronto Users Group for Power Systems TEC 2008

[www.tug.ca/tec](http://www.tug.ca/tec)  
Spring 2009  
Sheraton Parkway Toronto North  
Richmond Hill, ON, Canada



# The Buzz is Definitely Back

By Manzoor Siddiqui

Attendees, media, and the entire IBM i community is still buzzing about the second COMMON Annual Meeting and Exposition, which took place in Nashville, Tennessee from March 30 – April 3, 2008 at the Gaylord Opryland Resort and Convention Center. The continued success of the annual meeting of the members is driven by the many volunteers and members that continue to give back to COMMON. Here are some highlights from the Annual Meeting:

## Opening Session

The attendee-packed Opening Session of the second COMMON Annual Meeting and Exposition opened with **Randy Dufault**, COMMON President, talking about how COMMON has evolved and grown in its 48-year history, and continues to grow. He further elaborated on how the new volunteer structure, which is now broken into the three pillars of COMMON—Advocacy, Education, and Community—continues to make strides on all fronts.

Advocacy's success was highlighted by a sold-out IT Executive Conference – the first time in its seven year history. The Advocacy pillar is aligned along three areas: Leadership, Advocacy, and Volunteer Excellence. Leadership continues to develop leaders within COMMON and align COMMON as a leader in the IT industry; Advocacy is charged with the requirements process and raising COMMON's stature in the industry; and Volunteer Excellence encourages, recognizes, and rewards outstanding volunteer contributions.

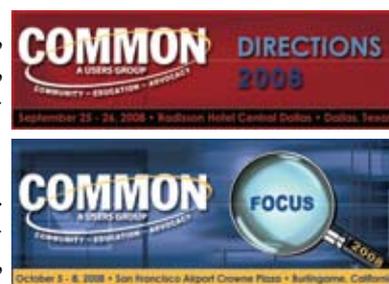
The Education pillar continues to build upon the COMMON...*Customized* education model to provide the IBM i community with a variety of options to gain the most relevant



Randy Dufault presenting the COMMON Distinguished Service Award to David Gibbs

Photos by Vaughn Dragland

education. The Annual Meeting and Exposition is the largest educational offering combining sessions, pre-conference workshops, and labs. New this year is the two-day COMMON Directions conference which will be held in Dallas, Texas. COMMON Focus, the highly successful all-day workshop conference will return this year in San Francisco, California. In addition to the conferences, one-day Seminars, Webcasts, and Webinars provide even more educational options to the community.



The Community pillar continues to: build on its mission of fostering community, provide networking opportunities, and provide a balance of education and networking. The COMMON Cares community is an example of its outreach efforts, which this year included COMMON's participation in the One Laptop per Child program. One laptop was given away through the COMMON Education Foundation, and one will be donated to a deserving school in the Nashville area.



Opening Session - Sunday March 30, 2008

The COMMON update was followed by the Speaker Excellence Awards presented by **Anne Lucas**, which recognizes the top volunteer speakers. Randy then presented the Distinguished Service Award to **David "midrange.com" Gibbs** "for many years of tireless efforts to keep the midrange community together—a perfect example of what 'community' is all about!"

**Mark Shearer**, Vice President, Marketing and Offerings, IBM Business Systems then joined Randy on stage for a joint presentation of the Fourth Annual COMMON/IBM i5/OS Innovation Awards. Mark then gave an update on IBM's strategy for the System i platform, providing a business update and insight for future growth. He also teased the audience about what to expect at "The New Power Equation"



Mark Shearer, Vice President, Marketing and Offerings, IBM Business Systems

announcement during IBM's Town Hall meeting on Wednesday morning of that week. Mark was followed by the Keynote Speaker, **Dr. Jurij Paraszczak**, from IBM Research who spoke about the future of innovation in Information Technology.

Opening Session set the tone for another high-energy Annual Meeting that promised attendees more of what they have come to expect from COMMON conferences and an exclusive look into the future by IBM.

### Nightly iSocials

The evening iSocial events, organized by Community and Networking group, allowed the attendees to relax and have some fun after a day full of intense education and networking. Each evening was a different iSocial, providing attendees plenty of opportunities to meet peers, learn from experts, and also to honor fellow members.

The "iSocial – Ask the Experts Night" kicked off the evening iSocials on Sunday, featuring experts on 15 different topics. This well-attended roundtable event allowed attendees to get one-on-one time with subject experts in a relaxed atmosphere. Attendees enjoyed some drinks and hors d'oeuvres while perusing the latest i5/OS-related products and services at the The "iSocial – All Attendee Reception in the Expo' on Monday night.

Attendees had face time with the 92 exhibitors to learn about their offerings, and how those solutions can help them with their business problems.

Tuesday evening featured the fun-filled "iSocial – Fun and Games Night" where attendees could unwind with light refreshments and a drink, network with fellow attendees, and have fun with games that everyone loved. The "iSocial – Recognition Night" on Wednesday evening immediately followed Meeting of the Members (MOM). This evening allowed the many volunteers, that give so much to COMMON, to be publicly recognized for their contributions in front of their peers.

After a week of intensive education, the conference closed with the "iSocial – Main Event" on Thursday evening. The night featured food, drinks, great giveaways, and fun with the live, interactive comedy show "BONK." This event was very well attended, and everyone had a great time going "BONK"ers!

### IT Executive Conference

Concurrent with the Annual meeting, COMMON held its 2008 IT Executive Conference, the exclusive invitation-only event for high level decision makers who want to maximize their IBM i investment. The IT Executive Conference set an all-time attendance record in Nashville. Topics included: i5/OS Directions and Strategy by IBM Executives, Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery, Seven Strategies for Success by **Bob Tipton**, and Domino Strategy and Directions.

### Education

The educational offering at the 2008 Annual Conference did not disappoint, with over 500 educational sessions offered to attendees. Beyond the traditional sessions, attendees could choose from five all-day, pre-conference workshops, which provided in-depth education before the official start of the conference. Numerous Labs were also offered in Nashville, which allowed attendees to complete hands-on exercises at their own pace, covering nearly every technology. Each Open Lab also had an expert instructor in the respective technology area, ready to answer any questions the attendees had.

The education sessions offered at the 2008 Annual Meeting gave attendees



Bonk



Susan Gantner works one-on-one with a student at one of the popular Pre-Conference Workshops



Attendees at the IT Executive Conference

an opportunity to gain the latest skills and information to help them, and their companies, become more efficient and cost-effective. The week featured some of COMMON's well-known sessions and speakers, as well as new sessions, new speakers, case studies, and a wide variety of hands-on labs. The leading-edge topics continued to be a successful draw for all attendees, allowing them to maximize their educational investment.



IBM opened the covers on the Power System models at Expo



Alison Butterill presenting a "For the COMMON Good" pin to Debbie Saugen at the 2008 COMMON Annual Conference

### Save the Date

The 2008 Annual Meeting and Exposition closed as yet another successful event, but remember to mark your calendars for future COMMON conference events. The new COMMON Directions conference, a two-day version of what you would find at the Annual Meeting will be held in Dallas, Texas from September 25 – 26, 2008. COMMON Focus, our three-day

workshop conference returns in 2008 with three days of intensive, all-day educational workshops. It will be held in San Francisco, California from October 5 – 8, 2008.

Now is also the time to mark your calendar for the 2009 Annual Meeting and Exposition, which will take place at the Grand Sierra Resort and Casino in Reno, Nevada, from April 26 – 30, 2009. As before, this annual meeting of the members will offer more of what you have come to expect from COMMON—more education, more networking, more solutions, and more fun. 

### About the Author

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## COMMON Calendar of Upcoming Events in 2008

July 17, 2008	Webcast: Implement a WMS with Success
September 25 – 26, 2008	2008 COMMON Directions Conference – Dallas, Texas 
October 5 – 8, 2008 2008	COMMON Focus 2008 Workshop – San Francisco, CA 
April 26 – 28, 2009	2009 COMMON IT Executive Conference – Reno, NV
April 26 – 30, 2009	2009 COMMON Annual Meeting and Exposition – Reno, NV

# COMMON and IBM Deliver i5/OS Innovation Awards to Innovators

By Manzoor Siddiqui



Heartland Co-op from West Des Moines, Iowa



Specialty Pipe and Tube from Mineral Ridge, Ohio

**F**ive organizations were recognized for their innovative use of System i solutions at the Fourth Annual COMMON / IBM i5/OS Innovation Awards during Opening Session of COMMON's 2008 Annual Meeting and Exposition in Nashville, Tennessee.

The COMMON / IBM i5/OS Innovation Awards recognize, showcase and share best practices in managing the IT environment and using System i solutions. Nominees were selected from three categories: Small and Midsized Innovation, Large Enterprise Innovation, and Education Excellence.

Separate judging committees for each category, each consisting of COMMON members and IBM content experts, ranked and scored each nomination based on established criteria.

The Small and Midsized Innovation Award was presented to two companies with fewer than 1,000 employees, the **Heartland Co-op from West Des Moines, Iowa**, and **Specialty Pipe and Tube from Mineral Ridge, Ohio**. The next award category was for Large Enterprise, and the winners were **Landstar Systems, Inc. from Jacksonville, FL** and **FedEx Corporate Services from Coraopolis, PA**. The final award for Educational Excellence went to the **University of Nebraska-Lincoln** for their outstanding commitment to ongoing i5/OS education. Their efforts have promoted collaboration and innovation between the university and IBM on academic training.

Nominees were evaluated on how well their IT solution demonstrates business innovation, supports outstanding achievement, and highlights business value to the company and its end users. Award winners are considered to offer the best practices in the industry. Congratulations to all the winners! 



Landstar Systems, Inc. from Jacksonville, FL



FedEx Corporate Services from Coraopolis, PA

[Representatives from each of the winning companies are show above (posing with IBM's Mark Shearer and COMMON's Randy Dufault) except University of Nebraska-Lincoln, who were not available at photo time.]

## About the Author

**Manzoor Siddiqui** is COMMON's Marketing Manager. He can be reached at [manzoor\\_siddiqui@common.org](mailto:manzoor_siddiqui@common.org).



# World's Largest i-Related Exposition Rises to New Heights in Nashville

By Elise Deramo



Jeff Kennedy — one of the many winners at Passport-to-Prizes in Nashville

The 2008 Annual Meeting & Exposition held at the Gaylord Opryland Resort in Nashville, Tennessee concluded with resounding success as both attendees and exhibitors enjoyed a week filled with learning, networking and even a little fun. The Exposition, in particular, drew wide-spread attention, as 92 exhibitors packed the hall to showcase their latest products and live demonstrations to the IBM i community. This three-day extravaganza, filled with food, fun, and networking, attracted both the vibrant first-timers, as well as the seasoned veterans.

Beginning with a refreshment break on Sunday afternoon, the Exposition opened its doors to a large crowd interested in learning more about the latest solutions available to them. "I feel the level of products was high and many were competing with each other. I thought the Exposition was very informative—each booth was full of friendly, approachable, and knowledgeable people representing their companies," said **Cheri Sadler**, System Administrator for Ewing Irrigation Products.

On Sunday evening, the Exposition was home to the Welcome Reception, sponsored by 3COM. Here, individuals were not only able to meet other i users, but also network directly with those exhibitors who's specific products their company uses on a daily basis. "I needed information to improve document management and the Expo provided multiple vendors with options for my problems. Overall, it was a very valuable use of my time," said **Jeff Kennedy** of

Cerco, Inc.

Monday and Tuesday featured Exposition hours during lunch, allowing attendees and exhibitors alike to network with each other and with other decision-makers in the i community. Relationships were developed and strengthened as a number of IBM executives also toured the Exposition hall to view the latest innovations available to Power users.

A second reception was held on Monday night, this time allowing attendees the chance to relax and regroup after two long days of intense learning. It also gave attendees another chance to return to those exhibitors from whom they wanted to get more information, and delve deeper into a specific range of products best suited to their company's needs. "The COMMON Annual Meeting gave us a great opportunity to educate the System i and Power Systems community on our latest solutions and methodologies in a friendly face-to-face environment," said **Philip Roestamadji**, Marketing Director for Profound Logic Software.

Concluding with the popular Passport-to-Prizes drawing on Tuesday, the Exposition hall closed after lunch, with attendees heading back to the classroom, and the exhibitors heading home with a fresh set of new leads and possible sales for their companies. "Those companies that stood out were the ones offering message monitoring (lights out program)," Sadler added. "We have used the Bytware product to monitor for messages and it was interesting to talk with their competitors. Because we are

not a 24/7 shop, the message monitoring is very necessary in case of a system failure at night..."

This Exposition also featured a number of new exhibitors, as well as those that have exhibited with COMMON for many years in the past. "After several years away from COMMON expos, ASNA was pleasantly surprised at the response that we received when we re-emerged into the COMMON spotlight this year in Nashville. Since ASNA is all about evolutionary technologies and services for the i community, it was fantastic for us to actually experience the evolution that the COMMON attendees have gone through since we last met," said **Michael Killian**, VP of Sales at ASNA – A Blue Phoenix Company.

With the success of the 2008 Exposition now behind us, COMMON is already looking ahead to the 2009 Annual Meeting & Exposition in Reno, Nevada. We will undoubtedly prepare to expand our Exposition even more, giving additional companies the opportunity to showcase their products on the largest i-related stage in the world. "We were happy to be back, and plan to participate in future COMMON events throughout the upcoming years," Killian concluded. 

## About the Author

**Elise Deramo** is COMMON's

Conference & Expo Coordinator. She can be reached at [elise\\_deramo@common.org](mailto:elise_deramo@common.org).



# THE NEW POWER EQUATION

By Vaughn Dragland

**A**t COMMON's Annual Meeting in Nashville, Tennessee (April 2, 2008) IBM unveiled their new line of Power Systems™, the most significant mid-range announcement since the birth of the AS/400 in 1988.



Vaughn Dragland

IBM Power 520 Express

The new Power Systems servers from IBM will incorporate POWER6™ processors, and support IBM i, Linux®, and UNIX® applications simultaneously on a single server system. The new Power Systems also feature PowerVM™ virtualization technology that supports up to 254 virtual partitions in a single system. Additionally, IBM's secure and integrated operating system, i5/OS®, will now be called "i" — signifying a simplified, streamlined experience for all "i" customers. These Power servers are available as preconfigured AIX editions, i editions, or Linux editions; or they can be ordered a la carte and mix and match with AIX, IBM i, and Linux on a single Power server.

### IBM BladeCenter JS12

For a complete integrated business system, the BladeCenter JS12 Express blade server, combined with a BladeCenter S chassis, allows the small or mid-sized company to avoid increased spending and staffing requirements, but still enjoy outstanding price/performance in a com-



Léo Lefebvre

Ross Mauri unveils the IBM Power Systems in Nashville

mercial IT environment—with superior reliability, availability, and serviceability (RAS) characteristics; and high energy efficiency.

### IBM BladeCenter JS22

The exceptional price/performance in a virtualized environment; breadth of available applications; superior RAS characteristics; energy efficiency; and leadership virtualization of the BladeCenter JS22 Express makes it a highly desirable blade server for organizations of any size. The JS22 Express will bring significant rewards to clients who want a durable server solution for consoli-

IBM Power Systems Summary	IBM BladeCenter JS12 Express	IBM BladeCenter JS22 Express	IBM Power 520 Express	IBM Power 550 Express	IBM Power 570	IBM Power 575	IBM Power 595
<b>Max Processor Cores</b>	4	4	2/4	4/8	16	32	64
<b>Max Clock Rate</b>	3.8 GHz	4.0 GHz	4.2 GHz	4.2 GHz	4.7 GHz	4.7 GHz	5.0 GHz
<b>Max Random Access Memory</b>	64 GB	32 GB	64 GB	256 GB	768 GB	256 GB	4 TB
<b>Max Logical Partitions</b>	20	40	40	80	160	254	254
<b>Max I/O Drawers</b>	-	-	8	8	32	1	30
<b>Max I/O Slots</b>	-	-	60	59	212	24	600
<b>Max Internal Disk Bays</b>	2	1	102	102	264	18	480
<b>Max Internal DASD (not including SAS disks)</b>	292 GB	146 GB	30.6 TB	30.6 TB	79.2 TB	(5.0 TB )	620.9 TB
<b>Sample Benchmarks:</b>							
<b>LINPAK HPC (AIX 5.3)</b>	-	-	53,600	104,000	239,400	466,900	1,028,000
<b>rPerf (AIX 5.3)</b>	14.71	30.26	31.48	68.2	134.35	*	553.01
<b>SPECfp_rate2006 (Linux)</b>	45.9	84.7	79.7	176	430	*	2110
<b>CPW (IBM i 6.1)</b>	7,100	13,800	8,300	18,000	76,900	*	*

\* Benchmarks not available at press-time

Statistics are provided for informational purposes only, and are not verified or sanctioned by the author, IBM, or other companies. No warranties of any kind are expressed or implied. All performance information was determined in a controlled environment. Actual results may vary. IBM, the IBM logo, AIX, BladeCenter, POWER, PowerVM, and Power Systems, are trademarks or registered trademarks of IBM Corporation. UNIX is a registered trademark of the Open Group. Linux is a registered trademark of Linus Torvalds. SPECfp is a trademark of the Standard Performance Evaluation Processing Council (TPPC). Other company, product, and service names may be trademarks or service marks of others.

dating multiple applications and servers into a single BladeCenter; transitioning from traditional rack servers to highly efficient blades.

### IBM Power 520 Express

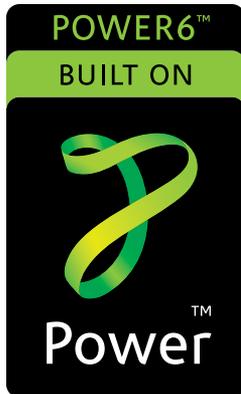
The IBM Power 520 Express is a 1- or 2- core (for i edition), or up to 4-core (for AIX or Linux editions), 4.2 GHz POWER6 processor-based entry server designed to deliver outstanding business value to smaller and mid-sized businesses while meeting the needs of mission-critical applications. It offers outstanding price/performance in a commercial IT environment; a breadth of available applications; superior RAS characteristics architected to avoid, detect, and recover from errors to achieve near-continuous availability.

### IBM Power 550 Express

The Power 550 Express is a 2-, 4-, 6-, or 8-core entry server utilizing 3.5 or 4.2 GHz processors and includes tremendous configuration flexibility to meet most capacity and growth requirements. (Currently the IBM i edition only supports up to 4-cores.) The Power 550 Express offers a choice of operating environments in either a desktop or 4U rack-mount form factor. It is designed to deliver outstanding business value to medium-sized businesses with a choice of operating systems, proven virtualization capabilities, and support for innovative energy management technologies.

### IBM Power 570

For mid to large transaction processing workloads, the IBM Power 570 server delivers outstanding performance, mainframe-inspired reliability, modular non-disruptive growth, and innovative virtualization technologies. These fea-



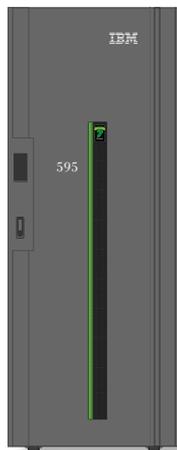
tures are integrated to enable the simplified management of growth, complexity and risk, in a complete business system combining all aspects of a company's IT infrastructure.

### IBM Power 575

The IBM Power 575 cluster node is designed for organizations that require a highly scalable system with extreme parallel processing performance and dense, modular packaging. Use it in clustered configurations of as few as 32 processor cores or in world-class supercomputer configurations of thousands of processors. Densely packing up to 448 POWER6 processor cores per frame, each one running at 4.7 GHz with innovative cooling features, the 32-core Power 575 cluster node is designed for speed and tuned for performance.

### IBM Power 595

Equipped with ultra-high frequency IBM POWER6 processors in up to 64-core, multiprocessing (SMP) configurations, the Power 595 server can scale rapidly and seamlessly to address the changing needs of today's enterprise data center. With advanced PowerVM virtualization, EnergyScale™ technology, and Capacity on Demand (CoD) options, the Power 595 helps businesses take control of their IT infrastructure and confidently consolidate multiple UNIX, IBM i and Linux application workloads onto a single system.



IBM Power 595

### About the Author

**Vaughn Dragland** is an independent graphic artist, editor, photographer, Web designer, IBM i developer, project manager, and business consultant. He has been a volunteer at COMMON conferences since 1983, and was the Editor-in-Chief of COMMON.CONNECT for its first 27 issues. Vaughn Dragland can be reached at [vaughn@e-clipse.ca](mailto:vaughn@e-clipse.ca) or by phone at 416-622-8789.



### IBM Power VM

PowerVM is the family of technologies, capabilities, and offerings that deliver industry-leading virtualization on all of the IBM POWER processor-based systems, to achieve server consolidation, mixed workloads, isolated environments, and dynamic resource requirements. 



For more information about IBM Power Systems, visit [www-03.ibm.com/systems/power/news/announcement/20080402\\_announcement.html](http://www-03.ibm.com/systems/power/news/announcement/20080402_announcement.html).

*Much of this information was obtained from the April 2008 issue of IBM Canada's iSay newsletter. Special thanks to **Kathy Gregson and Barry Pow.***

## Editor's Desk (continued from page 4)

to the effort that they put in to any endeavor like this; so as a COMMON volunteer, I really appreciate the support I get from my employer.

COMMON has enjoyed great support from member companies in this area for many years. For example: BassPro – **Paul Fenstermacher** has volunteered for over 10 years; Arbor Solutions – **Larry Bolhuis** has volunteered for over 10 years; Bank of Nova Scotia – **Jack Karvat** has volunteered for over 6 years; Countrywide Home Loans – **Michael Lance** has volunteered for at least 6 years and others from this company have volunteered as well; Perishable Distributors of Iowa (PDI) – **Scott Hamilton** has volunteered for at least 5 years and others from the company have also volunteered (e.g., **Dan Swinehart**); Vision Solutions – **David Brown** has volunteered as a speaker for over 15 years. But that's just a partial list. If you feel that your company deserves to be mentioned, drop us a line and tell us your story. We would love to hear about it. 

— Vaughn



# With the Merger of i and p, What Happens to IBM Customer Support?

By Anne Lucas, COMMON's Advocacy Program Manager

There was an air of excitement at COMMON's Annual Meeting as the IBM POWER server® announcement was made. For years, we heard IBM allude to the merging of hardware platforms, and now it's a reality. One CIO commented, "This is great for business. IBM just provided me with more options for my business."

While IBM and many of its most dedicated users were touting the advantages of this new organization, some of the COMMON attendees and many loyal IBM AS/400®, iSeries®, and System i™ users were asking the question: "How might this change customer service?"

For years the AS/400, iSeries, and System i support team provided its users with the industry's "gold standard" user support. Would IBM change the very successful support process and infrastructure that those users have come to love? If so, how might those changes affect us as users?

COMMON's Leadership and Advocacy Team (L/A Team) decided to dive into the merger of System i™ and System p™ user care and support. Have no fear System i users—your System i support will be stronger than ever. The remainder of this article is what COMMON's L/A Team learned from IBM's Power System Customer Care Team.

For years the System i support team provided a level of support unique in the industry and unique within IBM. The integrated support team, located in Rochester, provides support for all aspects of the System i solution. This includes core hardware and operating system offerings and extends into other products

offered by IBM; for example, storage and SWG products. This integrated support mirrors the integrated hardware and software philosophy that has been a core value proposition since the beginning of the AS/400.



Anne Lucas

The success of this approach was recognized by the Service and Support Professionals Association (SSPA), a leading industry Association for IT support professionals. Three STAR Awards were presented over the past three years to the System i business support team in the areas of sustained performance, metrics and business intelligence, and customer commitment. This industry award recognizes the best of the best when it comes to providing user support and can be seen as recognition of twenty years of excellence.

With the Power System reorganization announced in January, the following two changes were rolled out to the user care service teams organizations. First, both the System i and System p technical support organizations (along with the additional IBM Systems and Technology Group support teams, such as Storage, System x, and System z) now report to

Walt Ling, Vice President Post-Sales Technical Support, IBM Systems and Technology Group. While the reporting structure changes, the System i team remains an autonomous team within Ling's organization. Therefore, the existing processes and levels of support are not changing. In fact, with access to a broader and deeper set of STG technical skills, the System i team can be even more responsive to its users. In addition, the System i and System p teams have already begun to explore best practices between the groups.

The team recognizes that client service expectations vary across the System i and System p user communities and understands the importance of providing levels of support consistent with those expectations. Comparing and adopting best practices allows the support teams to improve the level of support by discovering more efficient and effective processes for the System i and System p users. The merging of these support organizations also enables a sharper focus on strategic initiatives. The team is already looking at delivering support utilizing the latest Web 2.0 technologies. With a single view across all products, they are able to leverage more consistent client self-assist technology, electronic problem submission, and new tools including live chat support.

The second customer service-related organizational change was the consolidation of System i and System p Quality and Client Satisfaction management under **John Manasso**, Director of IBM Power Systems Client Care. This team includes the Client Satisfaction Project Offices who help drive resolution of critical client problems, when they occur. Similar to the support teams approach, John and his teams are working to implement the best of both the System i and System p approaches to managing client care. Reacting to the questions raised by the COMMON users, Manasso had this to say: "From an end-to-end quality and satisfaction perspective, the latest Power Systems products have been nothing short of a complete success. We have a very positive track record on both our System i and System p teams with a reputation of dedicated focus on our clients. We expect the integration of our processes and outstanding people,

combined with our excellent product performance, to drive even higher levels of satisfaction for System i and p clients.”

Given all of this, the question remains: when the dust settles on these organizational changes, where is the typical System i user? The positive impact these changes will have on the System i community was summed up by Walt Ling, who has over 25 years of experience with the System i community (most of which was in support and client care capacities): “The high level of support and the resulting extraordinary levels of satisfaction that the System i Client Care team delivered are very well understood by me and within IBM, in general. This new organization allows us to leverage an even larger set of resources and bring more energy to issues that affect our client set. I fully expect previous levels of support to be continued and, in fact, expect users of all STG products to see improved levels of service as a result of these changes.” 

Anne Lucas can be reached at [alucas@teamggi.com](mailto:alucas@teamggi.com).

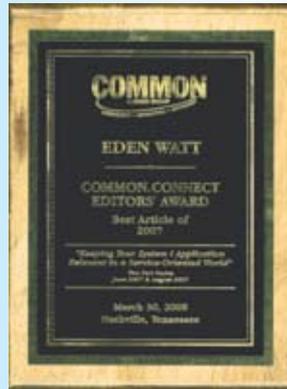
# COMMON.CONNECT Editors' Choice Award

By Vaughn Dragland



Eden Watt

The COMMON.CONNECT Editors' Choice Award for the best article of 2007 was announced at the COMMON Annual Meeting in Nashville, Tennessee. In order to be nominated for this award, an article had to satisfy some or all of the following criteria: interesting to readers, relevance to the System i community, technical merit, educational value, readability & visual content, originality, humor, and style. The article must be an original submission, not a reprint. COMMON staff members are not eligible. This year's winner is **Eden Watt** (Services Director at Lansa Inc.) for her article “*Keeping Your System i Applications Relevant in a Service-Oriented World*” (which appeared as a two-part series in the June 2007 & August 2007 issues of COMMON.CONNECT).



The Runner-Up is **Saima Latif** for her article “*System i Telephony at FIDM*” (April 2007 issue).

Honorable Mention goes to **Nikki Jensen** for her article “*How to Evaluate a Web Application Development Tool*” (October 2007 issue).

Many thanks to all of the authors who contribute to COMMON.CONNECT. Without you there would be no magazine. — Vaughn

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# The Cutting Edge

## Blade technologies are changing the way companies are looking at IT

By Jim Utsler



**B**y now, it's likely that everyone IT on the planet has heard of blades, those skinny little computing modules that slide into space-saving chassis. And many of those IT folks have already deployed them, whether to consolidate their many standalone servers, free up space in their data centers or save energy.

There's much more to the current crop of blades than one might expect, especially those coming from IBM.

No longer simple x86 modules that lessen floor space, these new IBM® blades—specifically the POWER6™ technology-based JS22 and the newly announced JS12—are poised to drastically alter the computing landscape.

This may sound like hyperbole, but it isn't. Thanks to their new chip underpinnings, these two blades are offering capabilities few would have guessed at just a few years ago. The keyword here is convergence. That is, the capability to run multiple OSs on individual blades or even, thanks to advanced virtualization—in the form of IBM PowerVM™—on single blades.

We're not just talking Windows® and Linux® as with x86 blades. Now, IBM blade users can deploy the IBM AIX® OS and i OS, formerly i5/OS®, on these modules, running them alongside the aforementioned OSs by mixing and matching x86 and POWER blades in the same chassis, giving users a single, smaller—yet powerful—footprint in which to do all of their computing.

As part of this effort, IBM has also announced the new BladeCenter™ S chassis. Capable of holding six blades and supporting up to 12 internal hard drives, it complements the JS22 and JS12 blades by putting them into a small, attractive and portable chassis that's quiet, convenient and expandable—perfect for small to mid-sized businesses (SMBs). For those with beefier requirements, there's the larger BladeCenter H chassis, which supports up to 14 blades.

Thanks to these advances in blade technologies, there's no denying that IBM and its blade and BladeCenter users are on the cutting edge.

### Serious Evaluations

"Indeed, the IBM BladeCenters systems have come along way. Originally, they were based on the PowerPC® 970 chip, with its floating-point AltiVec engine," adds **Scott Handy**, Vice President of Worldwide Marketing and Strategy for IBM Power Systems. This engine made the blade popular among the high-performance computing (HPC) crowd, with its capability to run fast and in clusters. IBM broadened blades' appeal by introducing many of them based on the existing x86 architecture, allowing organizations to run Windows and Linux on them. This move is likely what helped turn blades into not only high-performance computing devices,

but also into everyday back-office appliances.

At that point, users could augment their specialized hardware platforms (mainframe, open systems or midrange, for example) with small, clustered computing modules that could connect with their primary servers. This has

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*Because the BladeCenter S, like the BladeCenter H, is plug and play non-techies can easily swap out blades and storage as needed.*

---

allowed many of them to jettison their standalone servers in favor of a much more compact form factor, with BladeCenter systems taking up less space than one-off PC servers while offering the same—and sometimes improved—functionality. For example, blades can share disk, power supplies and networking cables, negating the need for one—or two—for each standalone server.

With the introduction of blades running POWER6 technology-based processors, which consume about the same amount of energy as their POWER5™ technology-based predecessors while running twice as fast, users can expect even more. In addition to still playing an important role in the HPC environment, thanks to the continued use of AltiVec, along with a new decimal math accelerator in POWER6 processors, average business users will have increased opportunities to both speed up their standard workflows and consolidate their server environments. As Handy explains, "Because you get so much processing power in a very small amount of space with great energy efficiency, people who are looking to consolidate large numbers of servers into a dense configuration will want to seriously evaluate these."

### Year After Year

The JS22 is the powerhouse of the new blades. It has two sockets, each running two dual-core POWER6 processors, for a total of four cores. Additionally, it supports up to 32 GB of memory, making it, as Handy puts it, "a pretty big server," which is made even

bigger when the JS22 is placed in the 14-module BladeCenter H chassis. For example, one rack of IBM POWER6 technology-based blades can take the place of 23 racks of IBM rival Sun's

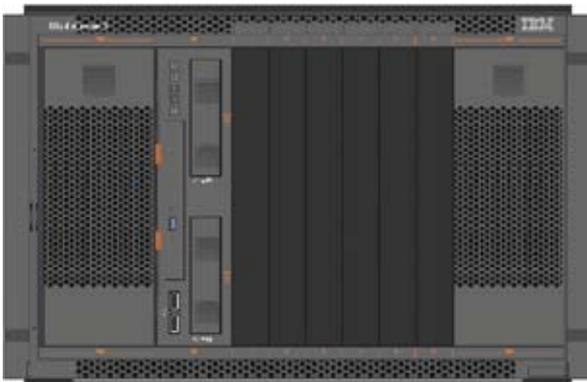
latest UltraSPARC processor-based servers saving tremendous amounts of space and energy while also providing more performance, according to Handy

([www.ibm.com/press/us/en/pressrelease/22559.wss](http://www.ibm.com/press/us/en/pressrelease/22559.wss)).

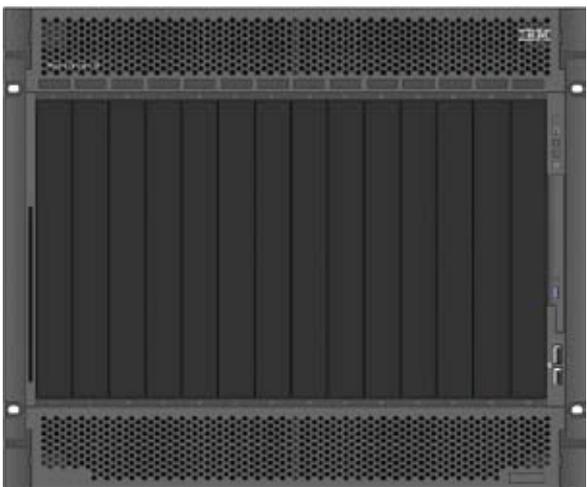
"That's like taking 180 of their servers and replacing them with 56 of our servers, by putting 14 blades in each H chassis and four chassis in each rack," he notes.

The JS12 has similar consolidation capabilities, although it only comes with one socket, for a total of two cores. This blade has another audience in mind, specifically SMBs that may require less horsepower but more memory. Whereas the JS22 can support up to 32 GB of memory, the JS12 supports up to 64 GB of memory, making it a fine companion to, for example, memory-hungry ERP applications. "SAP is very interested in moving to a blade infrastructure with us and is very interested in POWER," Handy says. "But they're not as interested in having four cores so much as they are in having more memory, so we made that substitution." Aside from fewer sockets and increased memory support, however, the two blades offer essentially the same benefits, including improved consolidation in a very dense chassis and rack configuration.

Of course, that's a major part of the blade story: reducing the number of racks in the data center. This not only



IBM BladeCenter S



IBM BladeCenter H



JS22

frees up floor space, but also decreases energy usage. As Handy points out, using the aforementioned Sun versus IBM example, “If you put 23 racks into one H rack, that’s a 92-percent savings in power alone. Over the course of three years, that could be more than \$400,000 in savings, not including another \$200,000 in cooling. And then there’s the 95 percent savings in floor space. So when you do the math, you could actually pay for the entire BladeCenter rack system in three years just in power and cooling savings alone. And then it just keeps giving and giving after that, year after year.”

Using the newly announced BladeCenter S chassis, which, although smaller, can accommodate both JS22 and JS12 blades as well as x86 blades, can also result in reduced costs, which includes its lower initial upfront cost. It holds up to six blades and includes support for up to 12 internal hard drives. The inclusion of those drives, both SAS and

SATA, negate the need for sometimes-expensive external storage, making the BladeCenter H very easy to manage. As a bonus, storage modules are hot-swappable, meaning users won’t have to take their systems offline if they want to

reduce noise, offers a passive dust filter and can come configured with a built-in monitor and keyboard, both of which slip in and out of the S chassis body. “The integrated monitor and keyboard just folds flat into a drawer and slides into the chassis,” Handy remarks. If users choose not to go with that option, they can easily attach their own monitor and keyboard. The BladeCenter S is also nice to look at, with its sleek black profile and rounded edges, allowing users to put it in a retail environment without arching the eyebrows of curious customers.

Handy expects that the BladeCenter S will be very popular with IBM System i™ users who would like to run i alongside blades running x86 and Linux technology-based applications in the same—and smaller—footprint. As he explains, “System i customers like very simple and integrated environments. But within those environments, they also have Windows and Linux servers. So the idea of putting all of this—i, AIX, Linux and Windows—into one small package is very appealing to them.”

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*The research firm IDC predicts that 20 percent to 25 percent of all server volumes will be in a blade form factor by 2010*

—Scott Handy,  
IBM Vice President of Worldwide Marketing  
and Strategy, IBM Power Systems

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add or remove storage. If, however, users choose to use the H chassis in a storage-area network (SAN) environment, they can, attaching it to IBM System Storage™ DS storage devices.

Because the BladeCenter S, like the BladeCenter H, is plug and play nontechnies can easily swap out blades and storage as needed. IBM engineers made it even easier to manage because it’s on wheels, has finger grips, was built to

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### On the Move

Although the new BladeCenter H and S offer dense rack configurations, there’s much more to this consolidation story. In the case of IBM, it comes in the form of the recently announced IBM PowerVM virtualization software, which includes three editions: Express, Standard and Enterprise. The Standard Edition comes free with all POWER6 technology-based blades, including the JS22 and the JS12, unlike competitive virtualization offerings, which can cost around \$2,500 per socket, making virtualization for consolidations yet another money-savings benefit to these new blades.

Thanks to PowerVM, users can run up to 40 OS instances on each blade (10 per core) on a 4-core JS22 or 20 instances on the 2-core JS12. These instances can include a mix of OSs, including AIX, i and Linux. Workloads on these instances can be dynamically reallocated without rebooting the system. They can also

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add or remove memory and, also as part of PowerVM, use virtual I/O to share network and Ethernet adapters, as well as memory and storage. “You won’t have a bunch of cables lying around,” Handy notes.

Also noteworthy is these POWER6 technology-based blades’ capability to run Linux x86 applications in chip “emulation”—or chip-level translation—mode, using IBM PowerVM Lx86. Rather than purchase a blade specifically for a Linux application, users can take advantage of Lx86—which is included with all three editions of PowerVM at no additional charge—to run Linux and Linux x86 binary applications on the new POWER technology-based blades, without recompilation, and, because of the performance of the POWER6 processors, have fewer performance hits for many applications compared to slower x86 servers that may be being consolidated onto newer POWER blades. “As soon as a Linux x86 application launches, it’s immediately detected as being non-POWER, and the operating system will automatically put it in the Lx86 environment and execute it,” Handy says. “We’ve had beta users testing and using this in their production environments for months now, and they love it.”

The PowerVM Enterprise Edition has a few more tricks up its sleeve. For example, if AIX or Linux users want to move partitions from one server to another, they can do so dynamically, while the system is up and running. (The AIX OS or the latest versions of Red Hat and Novell SUSE Linux are required to take advantage of this functionality.) A function of POWER6 called Live Partition Mobility simply handles the dynamic creation of a duplicate image of the same definition on the other server and keeps the first one running while an exact copy is created, including all of the memory pages as they’re getting populated. “Once everything’s in

Vaughn Dragland



IBM BladeCenter S with JS12

sync, there’s a quick, up to two-second pause in the application as it switches from one server to another,” Handy explains. Similarly, users can also do this with individual applications, using Live Application Mobility, a new function built into AIX 6.

This is all part of the larger all-the-time-uptime philosophy behind all of IBM’s servers. Rather than take them offline to move partitions or applications or to apply OS or hardware firmware patches—or in the case of swapping out disk in the BladeCenter S—users can keep their servers up and running, without impacting the business. Some innovative early testers have even begun using these mobility options to move partitions to fewer blades during off hours to save on server operating and cooling costs. “They said it was so easy that when they all went home at night, they would move from 12 servers to three servers and shut the inactive ones down, and when they came back in the morning, they would move everything back,” Handy recalls. “They said it was one of the easiest ways to save on energy costs.”

### A Change in Numbers

All of these new announcements, including the POWER6 technology-based JS22 and JS12 blades, and the BladeCenter H and BladeCenter S, as well as PowerVM, are pointing to a new computing future. And according to Handy, it’s all about convergence, whether on the hardware level, with consolidated blade chassis and racks, or on the software level, with users running multiple OSs, including AIX, i and Linux, on separate or even the same blades.

And people are already beginning to take notice, as Handy explains. “The research firm IDC predicts that 20 percent to 25 percent of all server volumes will be in a blade form factor by 2010,” he says, citing a Feb. 2008 study. Given all of the benefits blades have to offer—especially the POWER6 technology-based blades and other blade technologies coming out of IBM—this is hardly surprising—and those IDC numbers may have to be amended upward soon. 

### About the Author

**Jim Utsler**, IBM Systems Magazine senior writer, has been covering technology for more than a decade. Jim can be reached at [jutsler@msptechmedia.com](mailto:jutsler@msptechmedia.com).



# 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](http://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

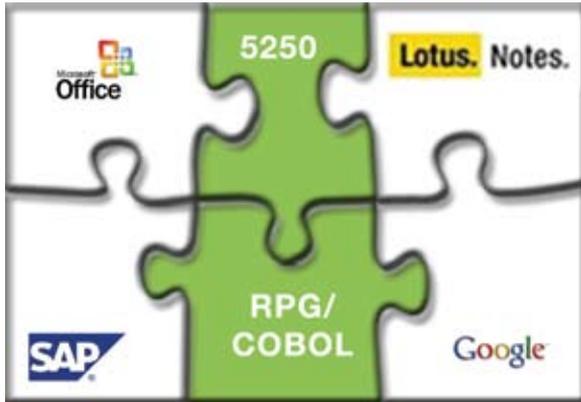


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community to continue growing their involvement. To forge the Academic Initiative / Young i Professionals relationship, the website and hosting for [www.youngiprofessionals.com](http://www.youngiprofessionals.com) is being provided through the Power 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](mailto: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](mailto:justin@westsideproduce.com).



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# Return of the Speaker Assistant

By Dori Allen

Nashville saw the return of the speaker assistant — this valuable volunteer position. With the speaker assistants, speakers are less pressured, especially when they have back-to-back sessions. Speaker assistants participate in the volunteer spirit of COMMON and get more involved. With speaker assistants, attendees receive more organized, coordinated sessions. In short, things run a whole lot smoother.

post conference speaker Survey, where we find out what went well for the speakers, the presence of this role was the clear winner. It got mentioned time after time in the writein comments. This year, Speaker assistants wore a green volunteer ribbon on their badge identifying them as an appreciated resource and their names were put into the “hat” and to be eligible for the nightly drawing of iCAN caps. As if those fashion statements weren’t enough, first time volunteers also got

was only my second COMMON and it was a nice way to get involved without having to compromise my agenda while attending the classes. I will definitely sign up again the next chance I get to come to COMMON.”

Speakers were also positive about having speaker assistants. On the speaker survey we asked, “What went well for you in Nashville?” It generated responses such as: “I loved having a speaker assistant”, and “Speaker assistants helped to do some tasks for me.” In fact, not one speaker had a negative comment about speaker assistants.

With such excellent results at Nashville, the Volunteer Excellence Team is already gearing up for repeating this opportunity in Reno. We’re especially interested in recruiting folks who don’t already have a volunteer position within COMMON. To help you take on this role, a team member will be at the sign up board at Registration to explain how the board works and encourage new volunteers to sign up. Previous speaker assistants will be contacted in advance of the conference and reminded of the opportunity.

So, if you were one of the speaker assistants, THANKS! You made a difference. If the prospect of being a speaker assistant sounds good to you, watch for the sign up board in Reno, Nevada. If you’d be willing to lend a hand during registration or during an iSocial (signing up new speaker assistants or explaining the role), please contact the volunteer excellence team. We’d be glad to help try and match you up with a role which capitalizes on your talents and interests. You can reach us at: [VolExcellence@common.org](mailto:VolExcellence@common.org). 

## About the Author

**Dori Allen** is a Retired i Professional (RIP) who has worked with IBM platforms since 1967. For the past 20 years, Dori has been a technical trainer on the System I and predecessors. A long time attendee of COMMON, she serves on the Volunteer Excellence Team and has been a speaker for the past 7 years. She can be reached at [doriallen@aol.com](mailto:doriallen@aol.com).



Vaughn Dragland

Volunteer speaker assistants at COMMON's Annual Meeting in Nashville

What is the role of a speaker assistant? In theory, the speaker assistant signs up to help a speaker at a session. The speaker assistant arrives in a timely fashion, distributes both handouts and evaluation forms, assists the speaker when problems arise such as blow outs or projector problems and at the end of the session insures that the evaluations are handed in and placed in the proper envelope. By helping with these administrative tasks, the speaker has more time to focus on answering questions and getting equipment set up.

The volunteers pictured here took on this role by signing up in advance – during Registration or at the iSocials — to help out at a session they already planned to attend. By the look of this photo, they must have enjoyed the experience. Just look at the smiles on those faces! They got the opportunity to help their favorite speaker and the grateful appreciation of the speaker community. In fact, on the

to sport a cool “1<sup>st</sup> Timers (I made a difference!)” button.

But don’t believe me, here are some comments from several of the 30 speaker assistants who stepped forward in Nashville. **Marilyn Lemasters**, Columbia Insurance Group: “Thank you for the opportunity to be speaker assistant, I very much enjoyed it. Everyone was wonderful to work with and if I am able to attend COMMON again, would be happy to volunteer.” **Victoria Wolfe**, Georgia Pacific: “It was my honor to assist my favorite speakers that I have looked up to for many years. If I get a chance to make it to the next conference, I will be happy to volunteer and contribute to COMMON.” **Jeff Green**, AGC Automotive Americas: “I was a speaker assistant at the conference and it was a lot of fun. I don’t have a lot of time to volunteer and this made an easy way for me to become involved.” **Michael Whitmer**, AmTrust Bank: “This

# Woodstream Discovers the Better Mouse Trap

Provider of Animal-Friendly Products Improves Business Processes, Customer Collaboration and Internal Integration

By Stephen Rosen

**W**oodstream provides animal friendly and organic alternatives for wildlife and pest control systems, lawn and garden products, and pet supplies. Brands include Victor Pest, Havahart, SaferBrand, Fi-Shock and Perky-Pet, with product lines including traps, repellents, baits, bird feeders, and landscaping & houseplant solutions.

They are a technologically sophisticated company who has found a better way to handle Business-to-Business (B2B) communication, Application-to-Application (A2A) integration, and automation of internal processes & reporting. In other words, they have “discovered the better mouse trap” for using business integration technology solutions to improve their business.

Woodstream sells to customers of all sizes—from big box retailers and home improvement giants such as Wal-Mart, K-Mart, Lowe’s and Home Depot; to hardware chains such as Ace, True Value and Do-It-Best; to down-town, mom and pop, and specialty stores. They have more than 1,000 customers representing over 100,000 retail outlets.

The company was informed by the provider of their legacy EDI system of the end of support for the product. Woodstream would have to go through a complete conversion and platform change to use the vendors supported solution. They decided to take the opportunity to investigate other solutions and other providers.

As the team was establishing requirements for a new system, they uncovered needs beyond traditional EDI. In order to accommodate their customers who were not using EDI, they needed an automated way to accept and integrate formats such as spreadsheets, flat files and XML. They also pinpointed a need for A2A integration to automate and synchronize sharing of data between disparate applications and platforms for better

reporting and improved internal business processes.

By adopting a business integration technology solution, they created a way to expedite the extensive amount of work required by IT during the company’s frequent acquisitions. They’ve enhanced reporting throughout the enterprise with their ability to synchronize data and processes and expose data from disparate systems. They have increased the availability of their Web ordering system, and automating the integration between website orders and their back-end applications and processes. They also can now manage both traditional EDI, and the much more complex automation of integrating non-EDI formats such as spreadsheets, XML, and flat files.

## Managing Inventory Across the Supply Chain

Woodstream had already established good EDI relationships with its largest trading partners. But with a broader business integration approach, they were able to take these relationships to a higher level by linking to their partners’ Point of Sales (POS) systems.

POS data from many retailers comes directly into Woodstream’s iSeries server. Using their new solution, Woodstream created the processes that validate and move data to an application on their SQL server, which aggregates the information and generates comprehensive reports using Woodstream’s standard enterprise tools.

The reports generated give visibility into the customer data, which enables the sales team to have better relationships with their customers. Sales can make the customers aware of trends in regions,



products, and seasons, and make recommendations on how to more efficiently buy Woodstream products.

## Mergers and Acquisitions

A big component of Woodstream’s plan for market penetration is growth through acquisitions. They have been acquiring, on average, one or two companies per year. Acquisitions are a challenge for any IT department. Typically, they’re not announced until the contracts are signed. And then IT is expected

to transfer all of the trading partner and transaction data of the acquired company into their systems—within days. This often meant “burning the midnight oil” to meet deadlines.

“We usually get the data from the other company in an Excel spreadsheet,” explained Schumacher. “The only way to enter the data into our systems was to manually rekey it. This was slow, labor intensive and error prone.”

Now, Woodstream quickly and easily sets up maps between the Excel spreadsheets and Woodstream applications, and the data is completely integrated with Woodstream’s processes. It takes minutes to do what used to take days—and without the errors.

## Web Ordering System

Another way Woodstream is using business integration to improve both the customer experience and internal processes is through its Web Ordering System. Each of Woodstream’s websites has an online order form. It is used by consumers to order products as with any retail website. And, it is used even more by Woodstream’s 20 sales people in the field.

Data that comes in through the website goes directly to their Infor PRMS ERP System, which runs in their iSeries computer.

“The XML from the Web order goes right into PRMS,” said Schumacher. “When we had to rekey it, there were

## Woodstream's Use of EXTOL EBI

Acquisitions  
Web Ordering (XML)  
Integrated EDI  
Accepting Spreadsheets  
and Flat Files

delays and errors. That's gone." As a result, Woodstream is encouraging their sales people to use the Web Ordering System, which is making their job easier. The orders placed are filled more quickly and accurately, which keeps the customers satisfied, and order fulfillment costs down.

### The End of Swivel Chair Integration

Integrating XML from Web orders directly into PRMS is just one way that Woodstream is putting an end to "Swivel Chair Integration." That's the old-fashioned, but still much-used, method of having a data entry person print out the data from one application or system, and then spin around in a swivel chair to a separate PC to manually input it into another application or system. Although still alarmingly prevalent, even in otherwise technologically sophisticated companies, Swivel Chair Integration is loaded with obvious inefficiencies. Woodstream is on a crusade to totally eliminate it from their processes.

### Order Placement and Fulfillment

"Woodstream is pretty sophisticated and complex. We have developed procedures so that a very high percentage of orders are never touched until they are actually picked, packed and shipped," explained Mowrer.

In fact, 70% of their orders come in through EDI. 120 of their major trading partners are EDI capable. They use 22 different EDI transaction types, and process between 60,000 and 95,000 transactions per month.

Woodstream uses four distribution centers strategically located throughout the United States and one in Canada. Woodstream outsources their trucking. When an order comes in from the website, from an EDI-enabled partner, or on a spreadsheet attached to an email, it automatically flows through PRMS, which sends data to a warehouse management system in the distribution centers.

"Our EDI orders aren't touched by human hands until it's time for pick and pack in the distribution centers," said Mowrer. "We've got the system so finely tuned that most orders ship within 1 to 3 days, go into transit, and reach their final destination 3 or 4 days after that."

### The Next Frontier: Spreadsheets, XML, Flat Files and More

EDI is just one component of a B2B strategy. Another big challenge for Woodstream is handling orders from customers using non-EDI formats—generally smaller customers submitting orders on spreadsheets or flat files.

Formerly, these orders were handled through Swivel Chair Integration, and were cumbersome to say the least. But now, Woodstream has begun the process of automating the integration of non-EDI formats. They map the fields in a spreadsheet or flat file directly into their order entry system.

### Is There Really a Better Mouse Trap?

There's always a better mouse trap—just look at the Woodstream product line. And as technology continues to progress, there will always be more efficient ways to run a company.

Woodstream has found more uses for business integration technology than they originally anticipated. Now, IT projects that once seemed daunting are immediately considered manageable. Whatever request comes along next—whether from a customer or from an internal department—Woodstream's IT department can handle it because of the agility afforded by their strategic approach to business integration. 

### Some of Woodstream's Customers

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- Modell's
- Orchard supply
- Petco
- Pet Smart
- Sentry
- Service Star
- Sports Authority
- Tractor Supply Company
- Tru-Value
- Wal-Mart

### About the Author

**Stephen Rosen** is Vice President, Marketing, at EXTOL International, a provider of B2B integration software. He can be reached at [srosen@extol.com](mailto:srosen@extol.com).



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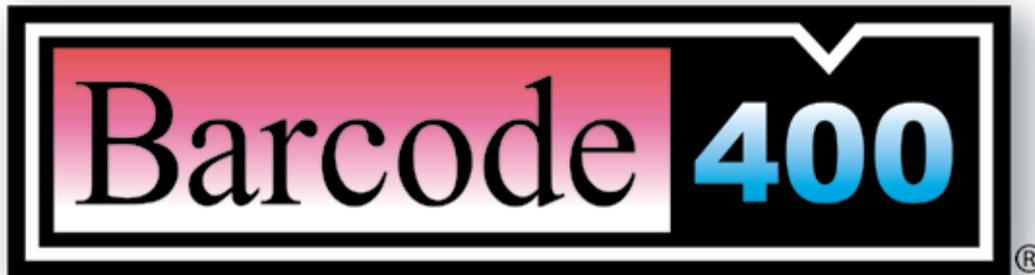
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