

TechChannel

Recognizing and Fostering Greatness in the Power Systems Ecosystem

- Spotighting influential women in the IBM i community
- Pete Massiello on how mentorship and IBM i education can effectively close the skills gap on Power Systems



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It's About the People

The IBM i OS and the Power Systems platform have stood the test of time for good reason. It's not just the continuously evolving technology, capabilities and tools; it's the people.

Those within the ecosystem have a way of rallying together to solve common challenges—one of which (as many of you know) is the skills gap. In this e-book, you'll find insight from iTech Solutions president Pete Massiello on how mentorship and IBM i education can effectively close the skills gap on Power Systems.

The strong community is also what has kept so many brilliant technologists in the ecosystem around for the long haul, as you'll read in this e-book's "Recognizing Influential Women of IBM i Community"

feature spotlighting Alison Butterill, Susan Gantner, Dawn May, Marina Schwenk, Peg Tuttle and Carol Woodbury.

Brilliance deserves recognition, and this community is full of brilliance. Here's to continued innovation, collaboration and acceleration.

Keelia Estrada Moeller, Senior Editor



Recognizing Influential Women of the IBM i Community

A look at some of the leaders who have shaped the IBM i ecosystem over the years

BY NATALIE TRIMBLE, TARRA WILLOX AND CHRISTYNA YANG

IBM i has evolved continuously since its inception—not just in name, but through its advancing capabilities, tools and the ecosystem surrounding it. Throughout this time, there have been several influential women who have drastically impacted IBM i evolution through technological innovation, evangelism, education and more.

TechChannel is recognizing some of these women in this article.

Alison Butterill

35+ years on the platform

Alison Butterill has devoted her entire career to fostering goodwill to the IBM i community and growing the ecosystem. She began her journey on the IBM i platform in Canada when she was hired into the General Business Systems Unit as a systems engineering representative in Technical Sales. “I quickly got hooked on the technology and more importantly, I loved working with customers and helping them to solve business problems,” says Butterill. After progressing through various roles, Butterill



Alison Butterill



Susan Gantner



Dawn May

is now the Worldwide IBM i product manager at IBM. The technology, the IBM i team and the people in the community are what keep her involved for the long run.

Butterill describes her biggest accomplishment as growing her career into her current position. Each role she previously held has built up to her current role, and the IBM i business has thrived under her stewardship. The mission of an IBM Product Manager is to be a conduit between IBM i development and clients. Butterill is known around the world for actively working with the user community by evangelizing and talking about the latest innovations in IBM i. She is proud of how she has done her job, which has enabled the IBM i team to flourish. From a technical perspective, she's seen the ecosystem grow in a variety of ways. Not only is there ongoing enhancement to traditional technologies such

as Db2 for i and RPG, but there are now more than 300 open-source products available expanding the career opportunities for new programmers. IBM i integrates with IBM Watson, analytics, AI, containers, robots and more. In addition, the business results attributed to IBM i have grown throughout Butterill's time in this role, despite weathering the global economic crisis and the COVID pandemic.

Butterill is incredibly proud to have dedicated her career to a platform that started before there was internet when terminals were hard-wired to the system and has evolved into a critical keystone component which allows many global companies to modernize their computing environments and build new next-generation applications. Today, companies are deeply entrenched in technology. They have easier access to

business solutions that include IoT, robotics, analytics and AI. It's the ongoing job of the IBM i team to provide the integration capabilities which allows companies to exploit these technologies in their business solutions. In many companies, today, Butterill explains, technology drives business process decisions which can play a vital role in the overall success of a business. She believes that the speed of evolution is increasing in the IT industry. New technologies are being proposed at a dramatic rate.

Butterill summarizes by saying, "I have enjoyed my career growing both the platform and community and I feel that there has never been a more exciting time to be working with IBM i."

Susan Gantner

35+ years on the platform

A developer, consultant and educator, Susan Gantner is no stranger to the IBM i platform, having worked on it for more than 35 years. Gantner's journey began at the beginning of IBM i, when it was known as AS/400, and before that, System/38. Having worked on (non-IBM) mainframes and other midrange systems, working with System/38 felt like home. "It was the best possible platform for developers," says Gantner. A programmer at heart and an ongoing advocate for System/38, Gantner went from developing applications for the

companies she was working at to working for IBM supporting those who developed applications.

Becoming an educator also opened many new doors in Gantner's career path, such as her integral role in introducing the platforms to developers in its infancy. A tremendous team player, she collaborated with a small group of fellow enthusiasts within IBM who would travel around the world teaching the technical merits of the new AS/400 system, first internally to other IBMers and later to the rest of the community. Gantner made the leap and moved to Rochester, Minnesota, to be closer to the IBM development team and the home of the platform that we now know as IBM i.

An enthusiast for IBM i and its ever-evolving nature, Gantner has witnessed the system change over time to mirror the industry. Although hard to believe that a platform that began 34 years ago could still be viable for today's applications, Gantner and her team worked on this platform always knowing it would not only evolve but would do so with no upheaval to the application code running their businesses.

After several years working at IBM, Gantner left Big Blue to work more directly with helping developers learn to modernize their applications. Driven and hardworking, she collaborated with two others to create the RPG & Db2 Summit event, which occurred twice a year for 13 years until the pandemic. Although

it was hard work, “nothing could beat the sheer joy of witnessing the camaraderie among the groups of IBM i developers who participated in these conferences,” says Gantner. The event was for like-minded developers and fans of the platform, its integrated database and its most popular programming language, RPG. While the in-person events have ended, the Summit team continues to offer virtual education for developers. With new languages arriving all the time and open-source tools and technologies, it's a major area of change and evolution for IBM i.

Dawn May

35+ years on the platform

Dawn May, owner of Dawn May Consulting, LLC, has many accomplishments to be proud of. Throughout her many years with IBM, May led many development projects, including the development of the Performance Data Investigator (PDI) which debuted with the 6.1 release. To this day, she teaches people how to navigate the PDI and how to use it daily to identify and solve issues with performance. As a writer, May is proud of her blog, “i Can” which has been active since August of 2009. A list of all “i Can” posts can be found on the [“i Can” Blog of Blogs](#). In addition to the projects she spearheaded at IBM May was elected president of COMMON this past May. “COMMON has played a major role in my

career development—from education to professional development to speaking skills,” she says.

May began her IBM journey after graduating college, starting out on the System/38 and joining the AS/400 development team almost immediately. From the very start, May describes how much she appreciated the platform’s consistency and ease of use. “I had many excellent opportunities during my years there including low-level LIC development, OS development, team leadership roles and business architect for the core OS,” says May. Near the end of her IBM career, May worked with the Large User Group (LUG), the COMMON Americas Advisory Council (CAAC) and the COMMON Europe Advisory Council (CEAC). As she worked with these organizations, May craved more “real-world” experience and decided to leave IBM in 2018 to start her own independent consulting practice.

The decision to leave IBM was a challenging one, as it would entail starting a business from scratch, finding customers and ensuring quality results. Although Dawn May Consulting, LLC, is a small-scale business, May has had the opportunity to work with many IBM i shops across the globe. A statement she often makes is, “IBM i runs the world’s economy,” and that’s what keeps her involved. May is proud to have worked her entire career on a product that has been so critical to running businesses around the world. She credits the IBM i community as what truly makes the platform

unique and describes how it has stood the test of time while evolving throughout the years. May specifically sees COMMON as a leader of career enhancement, and believes the value of a COMMON membership has never been greater.

Marina Schwenk

7+ years on the platform

For over seven years, Marina Schwenk's impactful career as a senior programmer analyst for Everbrite has undeniably transformed the way that professionals interact with the IBM i platform. For Schwenk, designing IBMiUnit in 2017/2018 with her mentor was one of her greatest accomplishments yet. "There was not much available to the community in the way of unit testing. We knew that a tool written in RPG was needed and that is why IBMiUnit was created," says Schwenk. Since publishing IBMiUnit, Schwenk has witnessed how it has benefited and evolved the community. Alongside the publication of IBMiUnit, Schwenk also managed to create a standard logging program to replace hard-coded messages.

Both projects have allowed Schwenk the opportunity to improve her public speaking abilities. Upon the public release of these projects, she knew that the most effective way to get the attention of a larger audience was to do presenting. Over time, Schwenk noticed a

significant change in her speaking abilities. She was even awarded the John Earl Speaker Scholarship at POWERUp 2020, which is given to a member of the COMMON community who shows extensive dedication to helping the community expand. This scholarship is exclusively by committee nomination and covers the registration expenses for the annual COMMON conference. However, the awards for Schwenk do not end here, as she was also the recipient of the Al Barsa Memorial Scholarship at POWERUp 2022. This award honors one individual who reliably expresses commitment, advocacy, mentorship and dedication to the IBM i community.

Schwenk also proudly participates in helping the New to IBM i (N2i) community members strive to achieve their goals. N2i is a COMMON committee which has expanded over recent years and now hosts two meetings per month and an event at the annual conference. It also provides mentoring for community members seeking mentorship, which is incredibly important to those that are new to the platform.

The platform's evolution over time is quite significant. Schwenk notes that the community and the technology are constantly changing. It will likely remain this way as more advancements and ideas are shared. She also notices the platform's increased use of multilingual solutions, which allows for both an explosion of open-source languages and support from younger developers.

As both an administrator and a developer, Schwenk is able to understand the platform from multiple viewpoints, making her a crucial asset to the IBM i platform.

Peg Tuttle

30+ years on the platform

When Peg Tuttle kicked off her career in sales and marketing, she had no idea that she would be working with the IBM i platform for the next 30 years. Her journey began at a small software startup in Eden Prairie, Minnesota, now known as HelpSystems. At the start, she was unaware of System/38 or the new IBM computer, code-named Silverlake, which would eventually grow to become the AS/400 (and later, IBM i). As the platform grew, so did she—becoming a sales manager and later a podcast host.

A tremendous supporter of IBM i, its innovation, and its continuing importance throughout the years, Tuttle says, “IBM i is the most reliable, secure, scalable platform around.” Similar to how Tuttle has lived through all the name changes of IBM i, every platform has to modernize from hardware to applications to be of relevance today. She shares that companies who are continually running IBM i to upgrade hardware and software, develop and modernize applications, and leveraging third-party tools to work smarter at their job are victorious at the end of the day.



Marina Schwenk



Peg Tuttle



Carol Woodbury

Tuttle's love and advocacy for IBM i comes from its innovative capabilities, strong security and progressive community growth. As Tuttle witnesses the evolving platform, she gives insight into what it's like to be on the sales and marketing side: "Every day we have the opportunity to talk with customers about their environment, what they are working on, and what's important to the business. We learn more about how we can help them do their jobs better and faster." She's amazed by the community's utilization of IBM i—from changing management software that reduces downtime from hours to seconds to REST APIs connecting IBM i to so many applications.

Tuttle's dedicated and humble character have led to many amazing accomplishments. In January 2022, she was named an IBM Champion. That following May, she was elected to be on the COMMON Board of Directors. Overjoyed with pride and honor with her achievements, Tuttle also feels that she has hit the jackpot to have built so many relationships throughout her career with friends, customers, co-workers, vendors and industry folks. Her love for helping others and making a difference through sharing her knowledge has progressed into the **Incredible i Show Podcast**. As the podcast's host, Tuttle sits down with IBM i users and professionals. The podcast is a storytelling outlet that shares the remarkable things that customers are doing on and with the platform, such as employing IBM at the core of their businesses, bringing together old and new to be the market leader,

or developing a competitive advantage through the utilization of their IBM i. Through Tuttle's podcast, these stories reach and inspire others to continuing innovating and modernizing on the IBM i platform.

Carol Woodbury

30+ years on the platform

With over 30 years on the IBM platform, Carol Woodbury, president and CTO of IBM i Security firm DXR Security—and an IBM Champion—enjoys reflecting on her career journey since starting out in Systems Test at IBM in Rochester. Woodbury has been working on IBM i since the first release of AS/400. She moved into development after a few releases and eventually started working with customers and attending COMMON. In her career since leaving IBM, Woodbury has continued to work with organizations both large and small. "I love the creative ways organizations use the technology and their devotion to the platform! To help organizations move their projects forward and increase the security posture of their systems is very rewarding," she says.

Woodbury takes pride in starting and co-owning two businesses focused on IBM i security consulting. Her current business, **DXR Security**, specializes in IBM i security services that help clients improve security and reduce risk. She notes how obtaining the globally recognized security certifications—CISSP, PCIP and

CRISC—has given her the credibility to have meaningful discussions with C-level executives. Being able to share her knowledge about IBM i Security is very important to her. Via DXR Security, she provides customized security education for organizations, teaches sessions at user groups such as COMMON and OCEAN and has two books available: [IBM i Security Administration and Compliance, 3rd Edition](#) and the newly-released companion book [Mastering IBM i Security](#).

Woodbury notes two observations when considering how the platform and community have evolved over time. “Because the technology has evolved and efficiencies have been gained through automation and better user interfaces, I’ve seen organizations do more with less,” she mentions. However, Woodbury points out how this can be both good and bad. It puts additional pressure on the system administrators that often don’t have time to learn new skills and new features to further improve their efficiencies. She has also observed how IBM i has stayed current with modern technologies, allowing an individual with no IBM i expertise to interface with the platform. “In other words, you don’t have to be an RPG programmer to access information on IBM i, making it easier to find resources to work with the platform,” says Woodbury. ■



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Closing the Skills Gap Through Mentorship

Although the IBM i ecosystem is thriving in many ways, we are still challenged by the skills gap. The best way to close this gap is through mentorship and IBM i education.

BY PETE MASSIELLO

This has been an especially good year for our IBM i community. We've had the release of IBM i 7.5 and the unveiling of new Power10 servers. We also experienced the **first in-person COMMON conference** in three years.

IBM i is thriving. People are excited, and they're motivated. Since the Power10 announcement, my company, iTech Solutions, has done more configurations than I can ever recall immediately following the release of new hardware.

And yet, we still face challenges—one daunting challenge in particular. Our community—our workforce of system administrators, programmers and developers—is aging. Some already took retirement during the pandemic. Many more will step aside in the next few years. We can't let this continue. We need younger or newer professionals, and we need them now.

Of course, this hardly comes as breaking news. We've all heard about the skills gap. Still, I'm not sure everyone truly grasps the urgency. It's not just that we need new professionals to join this industry; we need them working side by side with

our experienced people while they're still around. If you don't transfer the skills as you bring newcomers on board, you lose so much. The IBM i pros with 20-30 years on the job simply can't be allowed to walk out the door without first giving them the opportunity to impart the valuable lessons they've learned. Their experience is a goldmine that must be tapped.

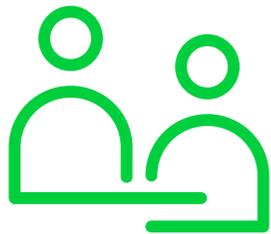
While we know IBM has **long-term plans for IBM i**, I don't feel our community is doing enough to ensure the future of this platform. Naturally, there are no simple solutions, but as workers in IBM i shops and individuals in this community, I see one thing in particular that we can do to help: Become a mentor.

The Value of Mentoring

I'm a big believer in mentoring. Over the years I've mentored through COMMON as well as on an individual basis, and found it to be very rewarding. Sure, I was nervous initially. It's a little scary to think of someone new to this profession, putting their trust in you and acting on your guidance. But the great thing about mentoring is that you learn from one another. Often I think I've gotten at least as much, if not more, from these interactions as those I've tried to help.

Us long-timers may have the experience, but I'm convinced we do benefit from working with younger or newer professionals. They're enthusiastic, and to see that veracity in them is great. But they also possess unique skills and knowledge of newer technologies and more modern ways of doing things. Think of





When you're side by side in mentoring, you can more easily see and understand. You both learn, you both improve your skills. Ultimately, you both enhance your careers.

your house. You can look through the front windows, you can look through the back windows—it's the same house, but a different view. Newer people have different views and perspectives. In general, they have fewer biases compared to those of us who've been around a long time. But when you're side by side in mentoring, you can more easily see and understand. You both learn, you both improve your skills. Ultimately, you both enhance your careers.

Being a mentor is more than simply showing someone how to write code or do an OS upgrade. To get started, you should take a little inventory of what they know and what their career goals are. You need to understand their vision. It's not that you're trying to direct their professional path; you're helping them figure out how they can avoid roadblocks and get to where they want to go. It's important that your skills and experience match. For instance, as systems administrator, my skills wouldn't make me a suitable mentor for, say, a programmer who maybe has written in Node.js and Python and is trying to pick up RPG.

Your association may last a few months, or perhaps as long a year or two. This is a journey, and it will take time. That said, it isn't as if you're joined at the hip. A mentor provides input when needed. During the pandemic we all got used to video conferencing. While in general I don't think one-on-ones are needed often, a periodic video chat can be helpful and much more effective than a phone call.

So how does one become a mentor? I mentioned COMMON. IBM i user groups also provide opportunities to meet and interact with other professionals.

Promoting IBM i Education

Taking a broader view, there are things employers can do, not simply to create mentorship opportunities but to begin to address the skills shortage. If you're running your business on IBM i, reach out to local

colleges and universities. While I wish more learning institutions would teach IBM i skills, that's a two-way street. Especially if your business is large enough to hire IT professionals on a regular basis, you should regularly be in contact with these schools. Or you can go through IBM. What was previously known as the **IBM i Academic Initiative** has been absorbed into the SkillsBuild program. You'll find a comprehensive list of IBM i resources to the right, in "IBM i and Power Systems Training and Information Resources."

But get the word out. Let them know you're hiring. Let them know that RPG programmers typically make more than their counterparts who work on Microsoft platforms. Let them know that open-source programmers are **increasingly needed on IBM i**.

As IBM i professionals, we don't just work on this platform, we have a passion for it. And this platform and the IBM i community have provided all of us with good lives. So let's pay it forward. We know IBM i will be here for the long haul, but IBM i can't survive without professionals who recognize its value and understand how to leverage what businesses have invested in it. Let's do what we can to bring on the next generation to keep it moving ahead and growing. ■

PETE MASSIELLO is the president of iTech Solutions, a Service Express company.

IBM i and Power Systems Training and Information Resources

IBM

- **IBM Training: IBM i courses**
- **SkillsBuild: Power Systems**
- **IBM Credentials**
- **IBM Power Systems Redbooks**

COMMON

- **Education and events**
- **N2i community**
- **User groups**

Other Learning and Training Resources

- **Exit Certified: IBM i and RPG IV training**
- **imPOWER Technologies**
- **LearnQuest: IBM i training courses search results**
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This e-book was published by



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