

What I've **LEARNED**

5 lessons from 25 years of IBM i experience

I've been working on IBM i and with thousands of clients worldwide for 25 years, and have learned a number of things about the platform during that time frame. Mostly, what I have learned is that from the time we first tested our software on an AS/400 in the lab in Atlanta, everything has changed—especially performance and options. After 25 years on IBM i, IBM has come up with one powerful machine that will be my last platform. Here are the top five lessons I've learned.

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1. The basics still matter.


Reliability, security and speed are some of the building blocks to this IBM i foundation. IBM i users and IT staff will laugh in your face when you ask them when their system last went down. No matter how old or new their system is,

they expect it to be up and running—and it is.

I've never had a client call in saying their system has been hacked or they're scared that there's been a security breach. As a cross-industry software provider, we have banks, hospitals,

manufacturers, transportation companies, casinos, government agencies and more running their businesses on the platform.

Everyone loves the security the platform has built in. And every new machine clients purchase is normally compared to how many



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thousand times faster it is to the previous model.

2. IBM i is worth it.

The OS has all of the elements other platforms charge you extra for. You don't have to go out and purchase from other vendors for communications, security or a database.

Another savings afforded with IBM i comes from needing fewer people to support the hardware and the rock solid support of IBM. I've seen some software vendors buy into the idea of moving their application over to Windows*. They end up spending millions and wasting time in the process, only to eventually listen to their clients and come back to the tested, proven IBM i platform. With IBM i products offered by third parties, you can really bring fast GUI into your company.

3. Real-world staff love it.

If you want to start a good argument, tell an IBM i manager that your Windows box will do more than their IBM i. They have so much pride in the platform, and rightfully so, specifically because of its reliability. Everyone in every industry we serve feels that their applications need to be up at all times. IBM has made

high availability easy to implement, and we have clients use it successfully on a regular basis as evidence to that fact. It's never the squeaky wheel, but the glue that holds the company's needs together at a click of the button. Programmers are fans, too. Back in the old days, we had COBOL/RPG and some BASIC for programming on the system. Those languages have been upgraded into today's free form versions that new users gravitate to.

4. IBM i is tough.

The database is truly bulletproof. We have clients with hundreds of millions of records in their databases and it still continues to deliver the requests in a second, every single time. You can use native RPG or SQL and still expect the same result. I've never had a client call and say, "That's it, we've maxed your software out. What do we do now?" That's strictly because of the industrial strength of IBM's Db2* database.

When something does go wrong, IBM is there to help with disaster recovery. I cannot tell you how many of our clients have experienced both natural and manmade disasters, including hurricanes, floods, fires, 9/11, sprinkler system malfunctions, wildfires,

earthquakes, tornadoes and more. We seem to always have one or more clients with a vital situation.

5. Attend conferences and training.

Going to these types of events can provide you with valuable networking, perspective and information on new technologies. I just came back from the Drive-way to Watson* training class at IBM Rochester. The technology is incredible—your IBM i can talk directly to Watson. Watson can not only perform serious analytics on your data but also pull data from so many other sources. Using this data in conjunction can answer questions you never could before, such as, "Watson, what is the increase of our sales on the weekends as opposed to during the week?" And attending the COMMON Conference taught me, "Monty, it's IBM i, not an AS/400."

Everything has changed from the original box. We just feel things have stayed the same because we can still bring our RPG along. But new IBM i enhancements include everything from new languages to incorporating open source (including Python, Ruby, nodejs and Java*), and improved performance to rocket-fast SQL. 