



# THE OMNI USER

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## Late? Yeah. But Good!

Seriously, we've been getting later rather than earlier this year, and a lot of that is due to the holidays approaching and even more due to the extraordinary workload we've taken on ourselves to get you the very best possible education experience.

There will be a letter going into a little more detail later in the issue, but you can be absolutely certain that you will **not** want to miss the upcoming 18<sup>th</sup> Annual OMNI User Technical Conference. Not only will we be jam-packed with speakers, but this will also be THE coming-out party for the new V5R4 release. If you want to know what's coming, you will hear it at this conference first.

This month's newsletter is a little lighter on topic than previous months, in part because we haven't had a lot of time and in part frankly we haven't gotten a lot of response from you, the readers. If you want more things like Ask the Audience, or IBM RedPapers, or Notes from the Field, please let us know. If not, we can concentrate more on the conference and on getting speakers for our dinner meetings.

Thanks for your support!

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*Edited by Joe Pluta - omni-comm@plutabrothers.com*

## The 18<sup>th</sup> Annual OMNI User Technical Conference V5R4: "It's in there"

The conference team is hard at work on the next big event on the Omni schedule. February 7, 2006 is the date for the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Omni User Technical Conference. This year's conference is getting back to a familiar location for you long time Omni members: the Drury Lane, Oak Brook. The Drury Lane has some fabulous amenities and the location is almost perfectly central to our member community.

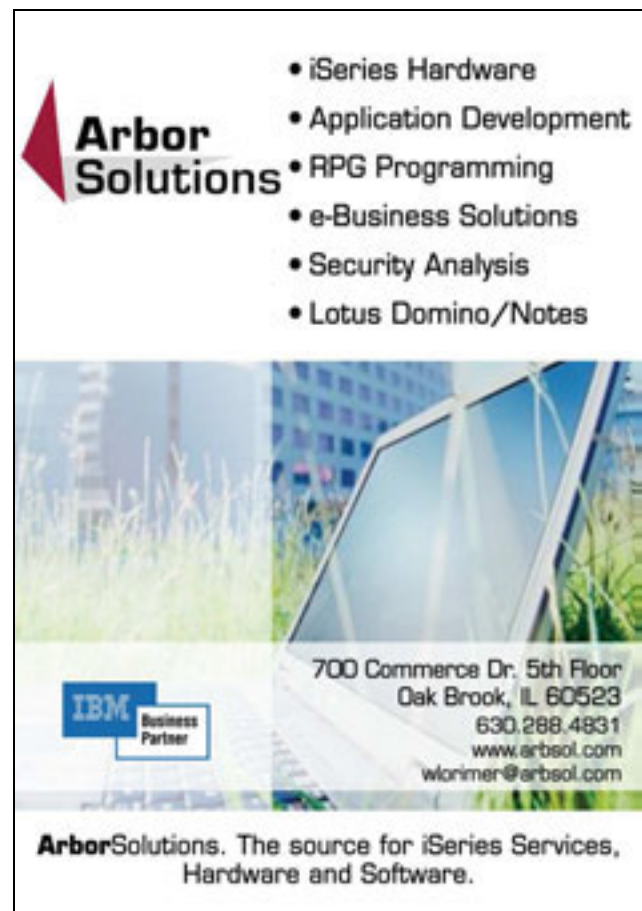
This is not just a couple of rooms with folding tables, either, folks. There will be eight different venues, plus a huge central hall for lunch and vendor booths. In fact, vendors ought to get on the bandwagon now; with the recent announcement about the absolute explosion in iSeries sales, we expect the choice booth locations to go *very* fast. Interested parties, please contact Matt Gross at [prrgg1@sbcglobal.net](mailto:prrgg1@sbcglobal.net) to get more information.

Many popular speakers are ready to share their wisdom and show us all how "It's in There!" with V5R4 taking the spotlight. Speakers who have signed up include some OMNI favorites like Jim Oberholtzer, Larry Bolhuis, Joe Pluta and one of our longtime favorites: George Farr. George will be able to talk about all of the new features of RPG, Java and more.

Stay tuned to the Omni Website and this space for more details about the conference. We are always looking for members to help with preparation of the conference or the day of activities. As Omni is an all volunteer organization we can only survive on the efforts of the members. There are some great folks working on this event and you can help make it perfect. Come on out and join us either as a volunteer or attendee.

We are in the process of making some arrangements for the Hilton hotel next door to the Drury Lane and should have some hard numbers regarding lodging and conference fees on our website very soon. Check <http://www.omniuser.org> for the latest and greatest details. We are striving to make this conference the best iSeries value in town!

- Mike Pavlak, Conference Coordinator



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## iSeries Sales Through the Roof

Every iSeries publication had the news this month (even those nattering naysayers, who shall remain unnamed but who are constantly declaiming the demise of the iSeries and the need to jump on the Microsoft bandwagon): IBM reported that iSeries sales surged 25% in the third quarter of 2005.

And while most didn't have a lot of information, your faithful OMNI journalists did a little digging, a little cajoling and a little arm-twisting to find out that while exact figures were not disclosed, a decent number of these new machines went to new companies. So batten the hatches and get ready for a blow, folks -- the iSeries is far from dead, and the future is looking a lot brighter.

As a side note, in my opinion this also bodes well for all of us old RPG dinosaurs. I don't know about you, but I haven't heard of a single company replacing a large RPG system with, say, Java. So RPG programmers of the world, hang tight; Opportunity is clutching the door-knocker right now!

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## Coming Midrange Events

November 7 - 9	iSeries DevCon <a href="#">Online registration available here!</a>	Rio Hotel and Casino Las Vegas, NV
November 15	OMNI Dinner Meeting <a href="#">Online registration available soon!</a>	Embassy Suites Hotel 707 E. Butterfield Rd Lombard, IL
November 22	OMNI Board Meeting All are welcome!	IBM 2 Lincoln Center Oakbrook Terrace, IL
February 7	OMNI User Conference V5R4 - It's in There!!!	Drury Lane Oak Brook, IL

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## September Meeting Recap

In our ongoing quest to provide you with the very best information to make your company successful, OMNI again managed to provide top-notch talent for the September dinner meeting.

Tameen Moshin and Doug Piner presented the HATS technology to an appreciative audience, proving that system integration is a hot topic for all of us. That in mind, we will continue to provide speakers to address integration topics. Stay tuned!

And if you have any specific topics you would like to see address, please make sure to contact us.



<http://www.rjsssoftware.com/>

# **October Dinner Meeting**

## **Tuesday, October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2005**

**Embassy Suites Hotel  
707 E. Butterfield Rd  
Lombard, IL**

5:00 Registration and User Discussions  
6:00 Dinner and Break  
6:45 Business Meeting & Presentation

### **WebSphere Business Integration (WBI) Server Express**

**Sreeni Angara, Solution Architect, Mercury Consulting**

Mr. Angara is a highly accomplished senior IT professional with twelve years of extensive experience in leading and guiding the design, development and deployment of enterprise application systems. For the past five years, he has functioned as a primary support person for IBM assisting business partners in successfully completing client engagements utilizing WebSphere technologies. He recently joined Mercury's consulting staff to lead our WebSphere team in developing and delivering WebSphere-based services. Mr. Angara is an effective mentor, trainer and project manager. He has an M.S. in Computer Science from Bradley University and a B.S. in Computer Science from Karnatak University.

#### Presentation:

- IBM's portfolio for WBI Server Express
- Where do you use WBI Server Express
- Customer pains
- How Business integration address's those pains
- Sample Client Implementation

Mr. Angara developed a solution that encompassed a major enhancement to the client's Sales Force application utilizing the powerful features in Notes/Domino to provide functionality that is intuitively easy to use, performs rapidly and provides a sound base for further development.

Mr. Angara addressed integration requirements by designing a number of WBI Collaborations (or processes) utilizing IBM's WebSphere Business Integration Server Express. Integration requirements included the need to replicate data to and from an iSeries-based legacy ERP system and other Notes databases as well as to retrieve data from other internal and external data sources.

**Dinner Menu Options**

Starter: Mixed green salad with Ranch and Caesar dressings.

Meat: Chicken Provencal with garlic mashed potatoes and mixed vegetables

Veggie: Pasta Primavera and garlic bread

Dessert: Key Lime pie

**October Dinner Meeting Registration**

Please make your reservations by Thursday, October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2005 at Noon. Call (630) 953-6312, and leave your company name, names of those attending, and the type of meal desired (meat or vegetarian.)

**Cancellation Policy**

Full refund will be issued for cancellations made before 9:00 am October 13<sup>th</sup>.

After 9:00 am Friday, 10/14/2005, cancellation refund depends on meeting attendance. All cancellations must be made as described below.

**Dinner Meeting Cancellation**

It is VERY important to cancel your reservation(s) if you cannot attend, by calling (630) 953-6312 and leaving the name(s) of those unable to attend, or by using the web cancellation feature.

## **November Dinner Meeting Tuesday, November 15th, 2005**

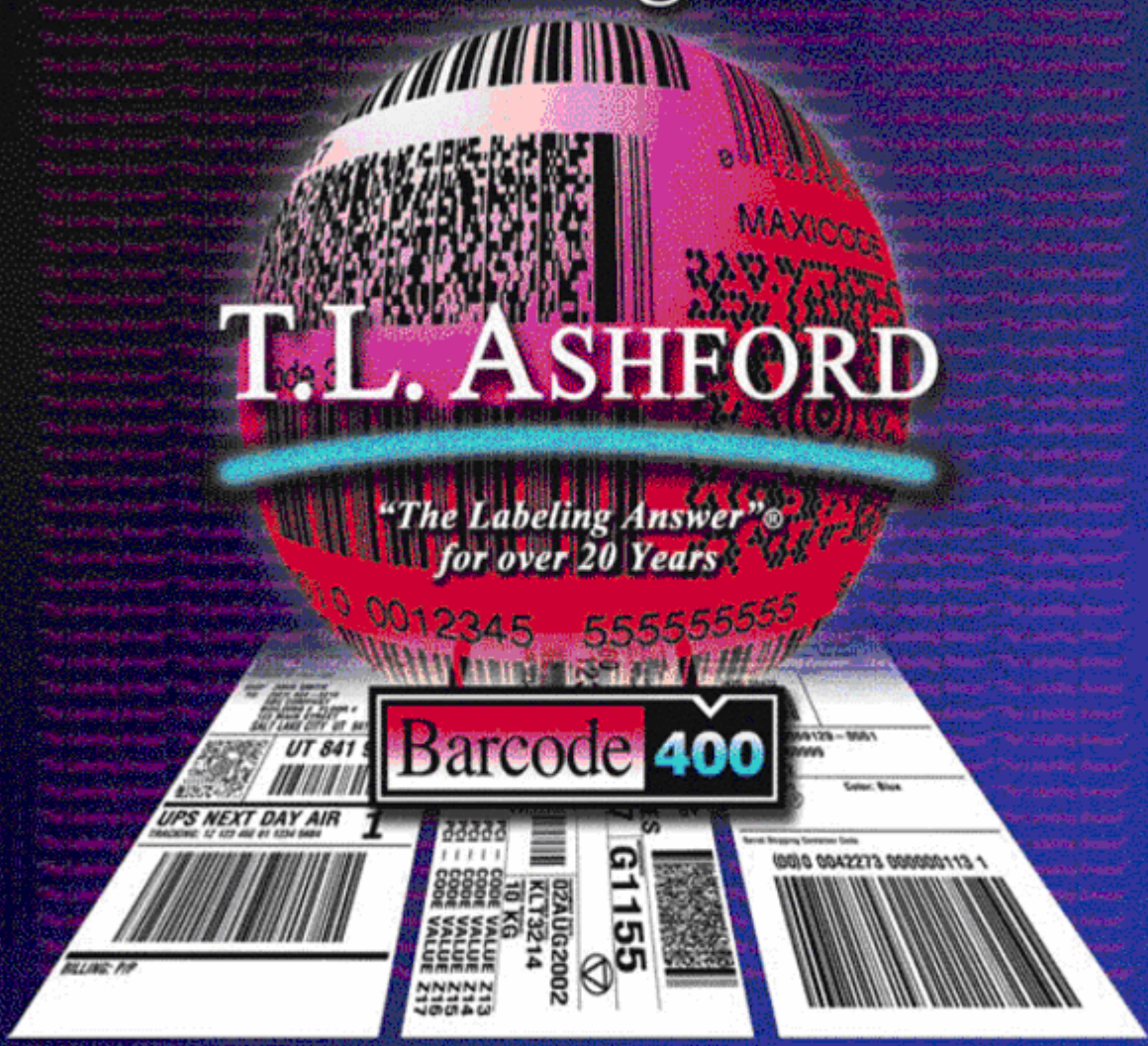
We're looking for a few good speakers. In particular, we're looking for someone to discuss integration between the iSeries and Microsoft desktop applications. In our ongoing integration series, we really think this is an important issue, and one that we know people have been grappling with.

If you have an idea for a speaker topic, please feel free to drop me an email and let me know. You know where I am: [omni-comm@plutabrothers.com](mailto:omni-comm@plutabrothers.com).

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# IBM Redbooks/Redpapers

A monthly compendium of recent IBM Redbooks and Redpapers of interest to iSeries developers.

## Redbooks

### **Approach to Problem Determination in WebSphere Application Server V6**

Revised: September, 15, 2005

<http://www.redbooks.ibm.com/redpieces/abstracts/redp4073.html>

### **IBM eServer iSeries Security Guide IBM i5/OS Version 5 Release 3**

Revised: September, 13, 2005

<http://www.redbooks.ibm.com/redpieces/abstracts/sg246668.html>

### **Migrating Applications from WebLogic, JBoss and Tomcat to WebSphere V6**

Published: August 25, 2005 ISBN: 0738493821 448 pages

<http://www.redbooks.ibm.com/abstracts/sg246690.html>

## Redpapers

### **IBM eServer iSeries Editions Buying and Selling Guide**

Published: September, 14, 2005

<http://www.redbooks.ibm.com/redpapers/abstracts/redp3916.html>

### **WebSphere Application Server V6: Web Server Plug-in Problem Determination**

Published: September, 15, 2005

<http://www.redbooks.ibm.com/redpapers/abstracts/redp4045.html>

### **WebSphere Application Server V6: Web Container Problem Determination**

Published: September, 14, 2005

<http://www.redbooks.ibm.com/redpapers/abstracts/redp4058.html>

### **WebSphere Application Server V6: Application Server Crash Problem Determination**

Published: September, 14, 2005

<http://www.redbooks.ibm.com/redpapers/abstracts/redp4059.html>

### **WebSphere Application Server V6: System Management Problem Determination**

Published: September, 9, 2005

<http://www.redbooks.ibm.com/redpapers/abstracts/redp4067.html>

### **WebSphere Application Server V6: Installation Problem Determination**

Published: September, 14, 2005

<http://www.redbooks.ibm.com/redpapers/abstracts/redp4068.html>

### **WebSphere Application Server V6: Default Messaging Provider Problem Determination**

Published: September, 9, 2005

<http://www.redbooks.ibm.com/redpapers/abstracts/redp4076.html>

### **WebSphere Application Server V6: JCA Connection Problem Determination**

Published: September, 15, 2005

<http://www.redbooks.ibm.com/redpapers/abstracts/redp4080.html>

### **WebSphere Application Server V6: Diagnostic Data**

Published: September, 15, 2005

<http://www.redbooks.ibm.com/redpapers/abstracts/redp4085.html>



## **October 2005 COMMON Corner**

Reprinted from the October 2005 issue of COMMON.CONNECT

### **Starting Your Own IT Consultancy**

By Charles Guarino

For many, the notion of going out on your own is an unreachable goal. Many hurdles exist; some perceived, others very real. However, you simply don't awaken one day and decide to jump into the fray. In fact, 75 percent of entrepreneurs start a new business while working at their existing day job. With proper understanding and planning, you can decide if moving in this direction is suitable for your tolerances, temperament, and personality.

One of the more common desires to be independent is to have more control over one's life. Greater earning potential is also a significant factor. The goal of becoming an independent consultant, while ambitious, is quite attainable. You will need to remain motivated and driven to accomplish this. Having one's own capital and personal reputation at risk is an extremely good motivator. Assuming your current skill set is sought after and marketable, let's explore if you can sustain a career in IT consulting.

### **Getting Starting, Spending Your Time**

It's time for a completely honest gut check; the demands of a fledgling professional career are tremendous. The reality of starting and running any business is that it is hard work. Structured hours become difficult or almost impossible to maintain. With all due respect to bankers, if you want their hours, work for a bank. Speaking to other business owners, as a business owner, can teach you the peculiarities of your locale. It also affords you the chance to hone your business model. Expanding your professional network helps get and keep your career on track. One way to test the waters is to start as a full-time subcontractor, or working for a consulting firm. There are many similarities between subcontracting and going full throttle. The risk/reward ratio is at work here. While risking full income potential, you will (hopefully) be rewarded with a steady stream of projects.

### **The Price of Admission**

There are some basic tenets of stepping into this career. Creating your own corporation is critical, since certain tax and legal benefits are only available using this designation. Moreover, this establishes the impression that you are committed for the long haul. Don't rush to Delaware; incorporating in your own state makes more sense. An accountant who works with new and small businesses can help you navigate around many preliminary issues that typically arise. These professionals often have existing relationships with local banks and others whose services you're likely to need.

Set up a separate business checking account and credit card for your corporation to simplify expense tracking. Secure an email address with a domain name for your company. Even when working from a small home office, accounting software, broadband Internet service, a post office box, fax machine, letterhead, and business cards are basic requirements.

## **Show Yourself the Money**

Equally important components to a starter kit include emergency cash, easily three to six months' worth of expenses. It 's possible to trade off some of this initial seed money in exchange for a firm billable commitment. Indeed, many startups are founded when someone is thrust into unemployment. Ideally, you'll have a reasonable credit score and reliable access to cash resources. With a personal guarantee, a line of credit in lieu of a business loan can help smooth out cash flow issues. Plus, you only pay interest on the amount outstanding.

As a salaried employee, your paycheck is generally guaranteed, as are additional benefits such as health insurance, a retirement plan, vacation time, etc. When the table is turned and you become your own employer, maintaining your own benefits infrastructure is critical.

## **Health Insurance**

Health insurance is a necessity, not a luxury item. It is also not cheap, especially for the self-employed. If you're married to someone with benefits through their employer, the best scenario is getting coverage under their plan. In absence of this, your previous employer's COBRA, if available, might be your next best choice. Other options include direct payment plans with a reputable Health Maintenance Organization (HMO). It's also possible for a local trade or professional organization to offer some type of affordable health insurance to its members. Alternatively, consider a Health Savings Account (HSA). Under an HSA, you purchase coverage using a High Deductible Health Plan (HDHP) and use the money in your account for all medical expenses. In all cases, consult a health insurance broker or perform an Internet search to examine which option works best for your circumstances.

## **The First Client and Billing Rate**

In a perfect world, you'll have secured at least a moderate amount of steady work, at an equitable market rate. Despite the huge temptation, be careful not to dilute your true value. You're successful if when starting, you maintain parity with your former salary.

Oftentimes, a regular paycheck is replaced with outstanding invoices, with some customers extending payment to 30 days or more. Be prepared for non-billable downtime, such as training, customer relations, and business administration. These factors should be considered when negotiating a billing rate. Other factors include the project duration, on- or off-site work, hours of required availability, the client's creditworthiness, general overhead, and many others. Finally, you will be responsible for the FICA payroll tax match. Your billing rate can easily exceed 50 percent of your former hourly wage.

## **Meeting of the Minds**

Now that a billing rate has been established, you'll need to ensure both you and your client are in agreement on the payment terms. Very often, your invoices will undergo an approval process. This inter-department shuffle can significantly delay the payment process. It's your responsibility to understand all the links in this chain, since any one of them can break down. If a certain person is out of the office or unresponsive, who can you speak with to keep the process going? There is a delicate balance between asking for overdue money and coming off as demanding. Generally speaking, the larger the company, the more steps involved to receive payment. Conversely, for smaller shops, it is possible you will receive a handwritten check from the same person you perform services for.

## **Hello World!**

In its purest form, professional networking and partnering is a fast path to success. By teaming with professionals in complimentary areas, the breadth of your billable services is immediately widened. If you're an expert in a particular industry or application, engage with those selected vendors. Salespeople's opportunities increase with the help of your local support. Be creative, and maximize these symbiotic relationships. In many cases, a software vendor will supply you with gratis demo code as well as complete documentation. Additionally, they might offer you training and help desk support. An alliance with known professionals increases your credibility to the marketplace. You're elevated when a business partner does great, but you also share their guilt when they do wrong! Explore a relationship with IBM, under their Partner World for Software Group. Learn how eligible members can purchase or lease hardware for greatly reduced prices and receive other benefits directly from IBM.

## **Business Talk**

As an in-house technician, you may feel insulated from crossing the bridge to management. As an independent, you will encounter and be expected to interact with all levels of corporate personnel. Many independents have a difficult time with this, not being able to have technical conversations with everyone they meet. This presents a problem when a top executive needs to know how many widgets were shipped today, for example. A deep understanding of each person's role in a particular company solidifies your relationship with each of your clients. Remember – your clients want to grow their business as much as you want to grow yours.

## **Staying on Top**

To be considered the best of breed, your skills require constant evaluation and fine tuning. Whether you read technical magazines and books, attend online courses or technical conferences, mingle at a Local User Group, etc., the onus remains with you to stay current. Your resume needs to exude problem-solving abilities. Consider your opportunity costs. Each project should beget a future opportunity. When the perceived value of your services is gone, so is the opportunity for providing your services.

## **I Wish I Knew Then That I Know Now**

Starting out is difficult enough. Here are some concepts I wish I had implemented at the beginning of my endeavor:

- 1) Don't tinker on a client's time.
- 2) Bill all clients on a regular cycle.
- 3) Return all phone calls and emails promptly.
- 4) Hire a part-time bookkeeper early on to stay organized with your clients and the government.
- 5) Avoid complacency – your client's time is just as important, usually more, now than 2, 5, or 10 years ago.

## End Goal

To be sure, this article merely scratches the surface of starting an IT consultancy. Your particular discipline will have unique nuances. In my travels, I've learned many constants. For instance, politics exist in every company. Learn who the power players are. Your skills and personality can transcend industries. Despite the negativity you might have heard, including mine, a career in consulting can be quite fulfilling. The rewards of independence await you.

## About the Author

Charles Guarino has worked professionally on the IBM midrange platform for over 20 years. He first learned RPG in a New York City high school 25 years ago, and has not looked back since. His career includes in-house programming and many years of consulting. He has twice built a staff from the ground up, first as an IT director and since 1995, as founder and president of Central Park Data Systems, Inc., a Long Island-based IT consulting firm. More recently he has been presenting business development sessions at COMMON. He can be reached at [cguarino@centralparkdata.com](mailto:cguarino@centralparkdata.com).

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