

Survey Summary: IBM i Products and Services

(Based on 404 Survey Responses)

If your company has decided it's time to improve the system, maybe by getting rid of the green screens or installing state of the art security software, and you're the one who has to get it done, where do you start?

You could just pick the product you used at your last company and try to convince people that the due diligence done back then still holds true. It probably doesn't though. Some of the products you compared back then could have been greatly enhanced in the interim, and superior products could have come to market after your previous search.

Or you could ask everyone in your IT for suggestions and pick the top three to perform your due diligence on. This could give you a set of products chosen for a variety of reasons other than they were the best ones available. They might be inferior but easy to implement; inferior but familiar and more comfortable to work with; inferior but widely used, making the developers and system administrators more marketable themselves in the future. Another option could be to call your colleagues at other companies who faced the same situation to see what solution they picked after doing their due diligence. This could also give you a set of products chosen for some other reason than that they were the best ones available. Your colleagues might have picked their product based on one of the flawed reasons stated above, or if they weren't responsible for the implementation of the solution then

they might have relied on the choice of someone else at their company and not really understood why it was chosen. In addition, they might not have looked outside their industry for a solution, the same mistake you'll be repeating if your colleagues all work in your industry.

So the question remains, where do you start? My suggestion is that you start right here with the results of this survey. Why?

- It shows which solutions were chosen most often regardless of industry.
- It lets you profit from the expense of the due diligence done at other companies. While some might not have done any due diligence at all it's likely that if 50 companies picked the same solution then at least a few of them did their due diligence correctly. To put it another way, how likely is it that every single one of them did their due diligence poorly?
- It shows you solutions that you, your colleagues, and the people in your IT department might not even be aware of. It was created to give as close to a real-time view of what's going on in the ecosystem as possible. People can go back in and change their answers as things change at their company (the results are updated daily) and there's no end date that would turn it into a stale snapshot. That means cutting-edge solutions which haven't had enough time to gain a significant share of the market will show up on it.

- It provides you with a list of people who have volunteered to give you a review of products they're familiar with. Their reviews aren't vetted in any way - you're as likely to get a negative review as a positive one.

This summary has been divided into two sections.

The first section identifies specific solutions for problems.

The names of the top three most commonly used solutions or service providers will be highlighted, along with the names of two more you might want to include in your due diligence process because they might have come out on the market too recently to have gained a significant market share compared to products which have been on the market for years, or they might be widely used in regions where news of the survey hasn't become well-known yet.

The second section will be of more interest to the people in your IT department than the company as a whole. It contains information about other companies in the ecosystem, things like what the most frequently used programming languages are, what version of the operating system they're on, whether or not they plan to migrate off of the system. etc...

A few things you should keep in mind while reading the summary:

- All of the questions on the survey are optional so some will have more responses than others. If you download a complete copy of the survey at all400s.com you'll be able to see the number of respondents per question.
- People could choose multiple answers for some of the questions so when you read the full report you'll find some of the percentages adding up to more than 100%.
- Duplicate responses from the same company were merged into a single record. One or two duplicates may have slipped through the cracks but with the large number of responses this shouldn't impact on the overall rankings. (If you took the survey and don't see your answers when you go back into it then someone else from your company also took it and the answers were merged into their record.)
- Answers like 'None', 'Not Applicable' and 'In-House' were ignored in the rankings. The purpose of the summary is to give you the names of actual products and services to compare during your due diligence process.
- 'IBM' was given as an answer to many questions without clarification. They could have meant an IBM product, IBM's Global Services, or a method. If 'IBM' ranked as one of the top solutions then the number of choices will be increased to four with 'IBM' as the fourth. If you want to include IBM in

your testing you'll have to contact it directly to find out what it suggests.

- Some of the questions at the end of the survey were added after the survey had already begun. These were added based on suggestions from many people who thought finding out the answers to them would help the community and due to their late addition they'll have fewer results.

Section 1 - Product and Service Solutions

What's the best way to get rid of green screens and replace them with a modern user interface? Include these companies in your due diligence process:

1. Fresche Solutions (Looksoftware, BCD)
2. CNX (Valence)
3. Rocket Software (LegaSuite, JWalk)
4. IBM

If you'd like a couple of more products to round out your testing process then Profound Logic and Easy400 were next in the rankings.

One vendor whose name comes up frequently when talking about converting to a modern user interface, ASNA, ranked much lower than expected based on how well-known it is. That's why we'll make this point here. At least one person at every major vendor was made aware of the survey - lower than expected rankings of any vendor won't be due to any lack of awareness on their part. They might have chosen not to encourage their customers to participate in the survey; their customers might not have been eager to endorse them by letting anyone know they're using them; or there might be other, less obvious, reasons for their lower score. If you need to start your conversion project right away then we'd suggest you go with one of the current top-ranked vendors on the survey. If your project is scheduled to start a few months down the road then it wouldn't hurt to wait and see if the rankings have changed when the next summary comes out. We'll be creating a new summary after each new batch of 400 responses has

been received so the next one is due at the 800 mark (it will include any updates companies have made to their previous responses.)

What's the best security product for protecting your system?

1. HelpSystems (Powertech, StandGuard)
2. Microsoft (?)
3. Cisco (?)
4. RazLee (iSecurity - SEA is its North American reseller)
5. Townsend Security

Helpsystems topped the rankings by a wide margin when it came to this question. Five options were provided to answer this question because the Microsoft and Cisco solutions didn't include any particular product name in the responses.

If you need more than these five products we'd suggest you skip a few of the spots down the rankings and test the ones from Syncsort (Cilasoft, Enforcive) and Kisco Information Systems, the former because it's one of the top four vendors in the ecosystem and the latter because it tends to make products that are easy to use.

What's the best change management product, one that can help with Sarbanes-Oxley compliance and be easy to use from the SDLC perspective?

1. Rocket Software (Aldon)
2. SoftLanding (Turnover)
3. JIRA and Git (tied for 3rd place)

Rocket and SoftLanding are the clear winners here. If you'd like to include more products then based on name recognition alone Remain Software, Midrange Dynamics and Arcad Software might be good choices.

What ERP software would be the best one for your company? That's a harder question to answer than you might think because it depends a great deal on what industry your company is in. These are the top six industries companies we received responses from:

1. Manufacturing
2. Distribution
3. Computers (Hardware, Software, Consulting)
4. Transportation and Logistics
5. Retail
6. Insurance

If your company belongs to one of them then the top three picks would be:

1. JDE World
2. SAP
3. Infor XA

There are a few caveats though. ERP software that has been around for a long time might suffer from the same kind of naming confusion AS/400 and IBM i suffers from. People who said 'BPCS' might have used that label out of habit when the company is really using its replacement, Infor LX. The same could be true with 'Mapics' and 'Infor XA'.

JDE EnterpriseOne isn't in the top three but when ALL400s checks the job boards JDE World and JDE EnterPriseOne consistently show up more than any other ERP package. This might be explained due to the fact that companies outside of the manufacturing industry frequently use its accounting module.

If you're not in one of the industries named above we suggest you look at question #4 on the current survey and skim through the rankings to find software that was designed with your industry in mind.

What should you use for system automation?

1. HelpSystems (Robot Console, Halcyon, Skybot AutoMATE)
2. SEA (absMessage)
3. Jenkins
4. IBM Director

If you need a couple of more products then Spoolflex and TWS are next in the rankings.

What should you use for job scheduling?

1. HelpSystems (Robot Scheduler, Halcyon)
2. AJS (Advanced Job Scheduler)
3. Control-M
4. IBM Advanced

If you need a couple of more products then SEA has just come out with one called absScheduler, and TWS is another option.

What's your best bet for a native IBM 'i'- based software or SaaS for credit card processing?

1. Curbstone
2. FirstData
3. Verifone

The word 'native' was missed by many people because many of the products further on down in the rankings aren't 'native' solutions. You'll have to check with those vendors to find out if their product really resides on the platform.

What should you use to backup your system?

1. BRMS (IBM)
2. VAULT400 (UCG Technologies)
3. Evault

Those were the top three products - as opposed to methods. Several people responded with the methods they used with "Backup Tapes" and "Save to SAVF and then FTP to another location" being the two top methods. EMC Data Domain and iTera (Syncsort) were the next two real products in the list.

What the best product for high availability and disaster recovery (HA/DR)?

1. Mimix, iTera, Quick-EDD, OMS/ODS (Syncsort/Vision Solutions)
2. APSU
3. VAULT400 (UCG Technologies)

iCluster (Rocket) and Maxava HA were the next two highest ranking solutions.

What cloud hosting company should you use?

1. AWS
2. Azure
3. Office 365
4. IBM

For two more vendors you might want to choose One Drive and UCG Technologies based on their rankings for that question.

What consulting company should you use? The obvious answer is 'the one that the highest number of companies has been satisfied with', which is exactly what one of the survey questions asked. And here are the answers.

1. BVSTools
2. CNX
3. Sirius
4. IBM

Fresche Solutions and UCG Technologies were next on the list.

That concludes Section 1 of this summary. Section 2 contains the answers to questions most IT departments will find interesting.

Section 2 - IBM i (AS/400) Platform Points of Interest

One of the questions programmers who aren't thinking of retiring anytime soon ask is "What programming language(s) should I learn to stay relevant?" If you intend to stay on the IBM i platform then, in addition keeping your RPG skills up-to-date, you should also learn, in order of importance -

1. SQL
2. Java
3. Javascript
4. PHP
5. XML
6. JSON

Aside from the various versions of RPG, these are the languages that were reported as being used most frequently on the platform. Many of the respondents reported multiple languages were being used in multiple combinations.

It's not surprising that SQL came out on top considering the responses to the question about how files/tables are being created. While DDS is still being used at the majority of companies, SQL (Create Table) and DDL are frequently being used (120 companies use the former and 112 companies use the latter).

If you're an RPG programmer to-the-core and closing in on retirement then it looks like you'll still be marketable for a while. Out of 404 companies, 146 said RPG III was still being used in production (36%), and 58 said they still had some RPG II code running in production (14%).

IBM and its Champions have been working hard to get programmers to switch from ADTS (SEU, PDA, SDA, etc..) to RDi and they've been making progress. ADTS is still being used at 195 companies (57%) but RDi is catching up at 45%. It's being used either with ADTS or all by itself at 156 companies (45%). Visual Studio and the free version of Eclipse are also being used by a significant number of companies.

Another area where IBM and its Champions have been working hard in is to get people to stop calling the IBM i an AS400. It's been 11 years since the IBM i came out yet 93% of the surveyed companies said their users still call it an AS400. Another 20% companies said their users called it an iSeries. In all fairness to them, it might really be true that those companies are using an iSeries - the system is known for its dependability. Only 9% of users call it an IBM i (3% call it a Power System). You'd think seeing these results after 11 years of trying IBM would realize it's time to take a different approach. Its current approach needs rethinking.

It might be argued that what the users call it doesn't matter, that what matters is what the highest ranking person at each company calls it (usually the president or owner). Well, that question was asked too. For this group, 73% called it an AS400, 11% called it an iSeries, 6% called it an IBM i, and 2% called it the Power System. These results would still seem to call for some rethinking on IBM's part.

Many of the surveys we've seen ask what version of the operating system companies are on. This implies companies are running only one version of the operating system in production. Misleading results are the consequence.

The survey we're running broke the question down into two parts - what's the oldest version of the operating system you have running in production, and what's the newest version. Put this way, 46 out of 355 companies said they still had version 5.4 or older running in production. Out of 353 companies, 14 also said the newest version of the operating system they're running is 5.4 or older (this must be where a lot of that RPG II coding comes from).

Migration on to or off of the system was the topic of two other questions.

Out of 330 companies, 9 said they had migrated to the platform within the last five years (2%).

Out of 344 companies, 64 said they plan to migrate off of the platform within the next five years (18%).

There's a myth that companies often say this but almost never follow-through because it's too hard. If you download a free copy of the Company List from all400s.com and filter the list by 'Off-platform' you'll see a lot of success stories (even after filtering the list further to get rid of the companies that moved off-platform because they closed).

The number of companies who can afford to send anyone from their IT dept to a conference seems to be getting lower and lower each year. In order to see where people thought you could get the best value for your budget dollars we asked what single conference would companies send someone to if they could only afford to send someone to one conference.

These are the votes based on the 277 people who answered that question.

1. COMMON 102 people, or 38%
2. RPG-DB2 Summit 34 people, or 12%
3. WMPCA. 12 people, or 4%
4. IBM Think. 9 people, or 3%

All of the other conferences, whether regional, national, or global, garnered less than 3% of the vote per conference.

One thing to take into consideration regarding this question is what kind of development is taking place at the companies who answered the question. Companies using multiple languages and technologies might have leaned towards COMMON because it takes a broader approach, while companies who are developing heavily in the RPG world might have leaned toward the more focused RPG-DB2 Summit.

One more note before concluding this summary. Consolidation is taking place among vendors in the ecosystem with HelpSystems, Rocket Software, Fresche Solutions and Syncsort being the major players. Each of them has become the major vendor in their main market and usually have offerings that will compete with their major competitors.

If you're looking for a product that will solve a problem that wasn't addressed in the survey then it would probably save some time if you made one of those vendors your first stop.

Speaking of vendors, all400s.com was created to share information among the participants in the ecosystem - people who work on the system, companies who use it, and vendors who support it - and everything on it is free thanks to the sponsorship of some forward-thinking vendors in the ecosystem. Their main interest is in expanding the free Company List as a way to share information but in the interest of transparency (since this survey is also being run by ALL400s) here's a link to a list of all of the vendors who are supporting this project - <http://cli.re/6QmWxr>.

The next summary will come out once the survey has reached the 800 response milestone. If you haven't taken the survey and would like to you can take it here - <http://cli.re/Lkqzod>. If you'd like to get a list of the people who volunteered to review products you can get it here - <http://cli.re/LvwOpN>.

** A link to the detailed summary results - <http://cli.re/Lk5eB6>.

