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Tuesday, December 20, 2005

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Computing Canada's IT Leadership Awards

The winners of the lifetime achievement award and project team of the year

12/20/2005 5:00:00 PM

by ITBusiness Staff



Stephen Ibaraki

Lifetime Achievement:

Stephen Ibaraki, Industry Analyst

Stephen Ibaraki's parents always instilled in him the importance of giving back to the community, and that's why he has spent much of his IT career teaching others in one way or another.



Ibaraki discovered his love for IT at an early age and at the age of 10, he built his own analogue computer.

But the first job he actually got paid for wasn't in IT. The British Columbia-based company he worked for as a general helper, however, did have a digital system for taking food orders that would often break down. The company would have to fly someone from Calgary to fix it at \$100 an hour, starting from when he got on the plane.

"I offered to work on it myself and I was able to fix it by reading books," he says. Ibaraki charged the company \$25 an hour.

At the time minimum wage was \$1 something an hour.

After that, Ibaraki got a job as a data processing operator at Datatech Systems Ltd. The company processed data for a variety of organizations, including municipalities, school boards, and manufacturing and retail companies.

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“So it was a great environment.”

While working at Datatech, Ibaraki approached the local papers about writing a column on computers. He also approached a local college about teaching a course on computers for the general public. During that period, he produced more than 100 technical papers, including a marketing guide and a 400-page guide to computers and software trends for the Canadian office products industry, which was just beginning to see the importance of IT in the office.

At his job, Ibaraki quickly moved up to being a data processing manager and then into systems analysis. From there, he wanted to challenge himself further and learn something he'd never tried before: Sales.

“When I asked the managers to go into sales, they expressed surprise. But I knew if I went into sales, it would give me a better picture of how everything operated,” he says.

He made a bet that he'd make a sale in his first week and won. This, he says, was despite the fact that he was shy. He practised role-playing in front of his relatives and the mirror.

Ibaraki has put his talents to use in multiple areas. He wrote a business development plan for his company, developed a hardware innovation for monitoring mainframe performance and improving operation efficiency, and developed business applications for microcomputers and supporting software. He wrote code and donated it anonymously to the community.

At the request of the Canadian Office Products Association, Ibaraki spoke at one of their major conferences. This led him to think about becoming a full-time consultant. To accompany his talk, he wrote a 400-page guide for the industry.

He left Datatech and got into consulting.

He also concentrated more on his teaching, mentoring and writing, which he says was his way of giving back to the community. In order to further his reach, he spoke at a number of trade shows. For a long time, he worked an average of 20 hours a day, seven days a week, he says.

“Personal time was maximized into quality time.”

After teaching for 25 years, Ibaraki decided he needed to spend more time with his family. He currently consults and works on various boards. But he says, he continues to educate others through the interviews he does for the Canadian Information Processing Society (CIPS). The interviews focus on passing knowledge about best practices onto the community and are posted on the CIPS Web site.

“I'm still teaching, but in a different way.”

-- Poonam Khanna

Comment: info@itbusiness.ca

On Wednesday: Winners of the IT Manager and IT Mentor of the year.

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with an outsourcer?

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