

Gordon Banner

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Gordon Banner is a systems administrator with over 15 years' experience of IT infrastructure in blue-chip companies, and knowledge of an exceptionally wide range of technologies. He has worked in support and engineering roles with Unix/Linux, document management (Documentum) and also with web servers and related systems.

His particular speciality is streamlining the infrastructure management of an enterprise-scale installation. He has designed and implemented systems such as monitoring, configuration management, and backup, which have run problem-free, 24x7, in critical situations.

His wide range of skills gives him an excellent basis for investigating new technologies and advising on, designing and implementing new systems. With a strong focus on the work of the support team, he ensures a product is stable and maintainable, reducing costs and improving the end-user experience.

Key Skills

Unix/Linux platform

- UNIX administration – AIX (to v4) and Solaris.
- Design/installation/maintenance of applications on AIX, Solaris, Linux.
- NFS, NTP, DNS and other common services

Web services

- Support/configuration of Apache & Tomcat webservers
- Load balancers (Cisco & F5), proxies, reverse proxies
- Troubleshooting in firewall, DNS, TCP/IP, browser, etc

Programming

- Expert Perl programmer, object-oriented and multi-threaded techniques
- XML and RDBMS data design, SQL
- Design for uptime & high availability
- Java and various scripting languages

Systems Management

- Optimising a product installation for:
 - manageability – reduced administration effort
 - uptime – high availability through data replication and service redundancy
- Practical approach to Configuration Management and the CMDB
- Better support through ITIL and structured procedures

Documentum

- In-depth architecture and technical support

Skills in Depth

Unix/Linux platform support

Started working with AIX in 1993; since then has supported AIX, Solaris and Linux at the OS level, in environments with hundreds of machines. Familiar with the usual OS services and enhancements – NIS, NFS, HA clusters, disk mirroring, etc.

Has also supported many apps running on those platforms. One example is the introduction of Eurex and Xetra electronic trading platforms to Morgan Stanley in London, overcoming the challenges of non-standard OS requirements and DMZ installation and nurturing them from experiment to critical business component.

Enhancing the support environment

In all roles, has focussed on reducing support costs while improving customer service.

E.g. for Documentum in Morgan Stanley, designed and implemented a new infrastructure around robust configuration management and high availability. This enabled the installed base to grow massively (three times the number of docbases, many times the number of documents and users), while improving uptime and confidence, but with no growth in the support team.

Has designed & documented support procedures; has trained and overseen support teams.

ITIL certified, with a proven track record of using configuration management (CMDB) to enhance service, not create a white elephant.

Programming and application design

Has written thousands of lines of Perl, including critical systems that have run bug-free, continuously, for years – e.g. a monitoring system for the Documentum environment which used redundant services to failover across reboots and power loss, without interruption of service.

In Perl, has used object-oriented techniques heavily for many years, achieving a good level of reuse of libraries. Has trialled Perl multi-threading.

Good understanding of Java, though less practical experience. Other languages used include ksh, TCL/Expect, PHP.

Understands the importance of good code version control – has used or supported Continuum, Perforce, Subversion, CVS, RCS.

Documentum & Content Management

Owned the technical aspects of Documentum in Morgan Stanley for several years with ultimate responsibility for availability of over 100 docbases, including several business-critical systems. Owned the vendor relationship for technical matters such as bug escalation and feature requests. Advised and supported internal developers.

Responsible for deep-dive troubleshooting, e.g. recovering corrupt databases due to disk failure and software bugs; also performance tuning, and investigating new versions and features.

Maintained a Perl interface for Documentum which enabled admin scripting and application development to proceed much faster than using the underlying C libraries or IDQL/IAPI.

Web and network services

As senior member of a web service team, supported many technologies, including Apache webserver, Tomcat, Cisco and F5 load balancers, Inktomi and iMimic proxies. In-depth troubleshooting across all these, plus firewall, DNS and network issues.

Also dealt with IIS, SiteMinder, Akamai DNS switching, and Morgan Stanley's extensive client-facing web application platform.

Advised and supported web application developers.

Other technologies

Not a Windows administrator, but has a solid grasp of the Microsoft platform for practical use, how to integrate with "open" systems, and in some depth how Microsoft technologies contrast with the alternatives.

Good understanding of databases and data design; some performance tuning work; plenty of SQL use. Used mostly Sybase but also some DB2 and MySQL.

Familiar with XML data formats and SOAP.

Other "soft" skills

Provided support for many different types of customer – developers, support teams, and of course end-users, whether shy or pushy, novice or experienced. This includes the highly-stressed environment of a large trading floor.

Huge experience of global teams: has been responsible for the work of people in New York and Asia; colleagues in web teams were spread across 8 different time zones.

Extensive experience of interviewing job candidates at graduate and more senior levels, for technical skills and personal fit.

Has led formal training sessions in the classroom and online. Confident presenter. Enjoys teaching junior colleagues in less formal ways. When Morgan Stanley started a new web team in Budapest, he devised the training plan for the first recruits and mentored the first one.

Extremely quick and thorough in evaluating new technologies – has often been asked to participate in initial meetings with prospective vendors in order to assess the potential pros/cons of a product; equally, participated in internal review sessions for new ideas and designs.

Career to Date

Contracts

MW Kellogg
Dec 2007- Feb 2008 Short-term vacation cover in Documentum team;
debugged replication and index server issues.

Morgan Stanley

May 2004 – March 2007 Web operations team
July 2000 – May 2004 Document management engineering team
Dec 1997 – July 2000 Unix operations & projects team

IBM

Oct 1994 – Dec 1997 RAF LITS project support team (AIX & OS/2)
1990 – 1994 Various “student” placements in IBM departments

Education and interests

1995 – 1998 Open University – Maths and Computing – 1st class BSc.
1991 – 1993 Oxford University – Two years studying Japanese
1983 – 1990 Warwick School – GCSEs and A-levels.

Enjoys: Choral singing, amateur drama, cycling.