



# ManhattanLife™

*Standing By You. Since 1850.*



## THE MANHATTANLIFE STORY

ManhattanLife is a privately held independent insurance company providing health and life insurance and annuity products. Founded in 1850, the Company's longevity makes ManhattanLife one of the oldest and most reliable health and life insurance companies in the country.

With a tagline of "standing by you," ManhattanLife has maintained core values of reliability, fairness and respect for partnership for more than 170 years.

**David Parsons, senior vice president of IT operations**, began his career with ManhattanLife 25 years ago. In that time, he's seen the company grow from 40 people in one office to 600 employees in five states. Parsons' IT team supports ManhattanLife in its mission of helping their policyholders achieve health, wealth and security.

## CHALLENGES

ManhattanLife has operated on IBM systems since the advent of the company's computer operations. For decades, universities and colleges taught students how to specialize in IBM systems, but today, that's no longer the case. ManhattanLife found that current generation students receiving general computer science degrees weren't familiar with IBM or its languages.

Transitioning to a new platform would be tedious and time-consuming, as well as an overwhelming learning curve for the entire department. **"We realized if we can't find people with this knowledge of IBM systems, we need to train them from within," Parsons said.**

ManhattanLife created a strategy to train and mentor their younger generation staff members, not only in IT skills but also "knowledge transfer about the way we do business," Parsons noted. This would benefit all levels of their workforce, including senior programmers who need to continue staying updated about technological advancements.

**"With technology, there's always something new you have to learn. If you don't stay up, you fall behind quickly," Parsons said.**

ManhattanLife was looking for a comprehensive training resource to assist them with this new strategy. After members Les Turner and JD Williams attended a function for MidRange, the team learned about IBM training with imPower Technologies.

## SOLUTION

**imPower Technologies teaches the RPG language on IBM i, giving programmers new skills and experience in this operating system.** Employees at ManhattanLife have consistently utilized this training, not only both new and seasoned programmers but also business analysts.

In March 2020, Parsons asked imPower team about training on RDi and Modular Programming, which imPower taught via live instruction at that time. **"Owner Jim Buck told me they usually do it in person, but to give them a few weeks and they'd put together a digital course for us," Parsons said. "We were the first group to utilize the online program, and it worked really well."**

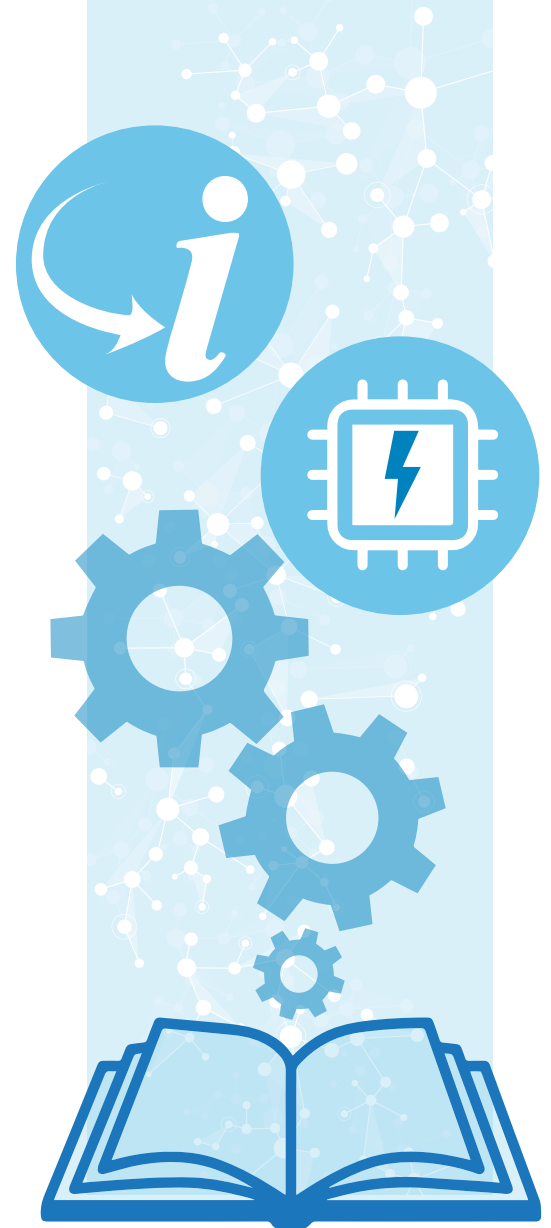
imPower's digital course combines video instruction, quizzes and lab exercises to teach RPG developers how to use IBM's RDi 9.6.x Development tool and introduces participants to the latest RPG ILE and SQL techniques.

For employees who are participating in imPower's RPG ILE training, ManhattanLife pays hourly wages, with a wage increase upon completion. Hours spent on course participation also count toward fulfilling probation requirements for new employees. Comprehension is emphasized over quick completion; employees all work at their own pace.

**"ImPower is really important to our business model now. We're so busy, we really don't have the time to directly train staff, but we knew what they needed to learn. This training gives them a uniform way to learn and makes sure they're all on the same playing field," Parsons said.**

imPower's online courses are convenient for both employers and staff. Team member Michael Gabrysch oversees the progress of mentor program and receives status reports throughout the course to monitor the staff's progress.

The quality of imPower's training is also superior to others ManhattanLife has tried. **"You don't just send imPower a check and get a link, which is part of why it's successful," Parsons said. "They're very involved; they check in with us, or get on the phone with us if we need it."**



**“With the cost of the course, we’re far ahead for our total investment and have quickly increased productivity. It’s the best training out there; I’m not sure how else you would train anyone effectively.”**

## RESULTS

ManhattanLife has seen a **100% success rate with employees training completion**, with most employees completing training within a couple of months. Even more encouraging for Parsons is what he’s witnessed while staff members are training together.

**“Eventually, I’d see them huddling up on one machine, trying to figure out something that someone was hung up on. This has really taught them how to work together as a cohesive team and improved their communication,”** he said.

**Without imPower’s training, ManhattanLife acknowledges they “wouldn’t have gotten a lot of things done that we have over the last couple of years.”** With a new group of employees now trained on RPG ILE and RDi, IT is working with the marketing department on the company’s enrollment platform to increase efficiency for processing new applications. Plans are also in place to rebuild the company’s entire annuity system.

**“Our employees perform all kinds of things they couldn’t do before. Previously, they didn’t even know what an IBM i was; now they’re able to be very productive coders on the system,”** Parsons said.

Training from within has been significantly beneficial to ManhattanLife and has improved ROI.

In the past, Parsons has experienced issues with onboarding new employees, only to spend a significant effort educating them on company practices. Rather than “breaking old habits,” today the company coaches and reinforces skills that are relevant to their current system.

**“For the price of one good contractor, you’re getting multiple folks eager to learn and contribute,”** he said. **“With the cost of the course, we’re far ahead for our total investment and have quickly increased productivity. I couldn’t be happier with the results from training.”**

As ManhattanLife adds to their employee base, they plan to continue this model of training and building mentoring relationships between new and seasoned staff members. imPower Technologies’ RDi and RPG ILE training is a valuable piece of this larger effort.

**“It’s the best training out there; I’m not sure how else you would train anyone effectively,”** Parsons said. **“This is our game plan to continue to compete in the marketplace.”**



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