# Celebrating SysAdmin Day 2021 – SolarWinds TechPod 046

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## Episode Transcript

**Announcer:** This episode of TechPod is brought to you by SolarWinds Server & Application Monitor. Easily manage all your servers and apps with over 1,200 monitoring templates across your private, public, and hybrid cloud environments. Visit SolarWinds.com/SAM.

**Leon:** It’s the most wonderful time of the year (singing).

**Kevin:** Do do do do do (singing). Wait, wait, wait, wait. It’s July, Leon.

**Leon:** Yeah, but this is a podcast. Time has no meaning.

**Kevin:** Time is a river, this life is a journey, the door is ajar. Fair point but we’re not recording a Christmas-themed episode here.

**Leon:** I’m staring at you in Jewish right now.

**Kevin:** Okay, I can feel it hitting me. So let me rephrase, we’re not talking about a Christmas-themed episode or Hanukkah or Kwanzaa or Ramadan or Diwali or insert holiday here.

**Leon:** It is a big holiday this month, it’s SysAdmin Day. <Waaaaah!!> The crowd goes wild! < Sys-Ad-Mins! Sys-Ad-Mins! Sys-Ad-Mins! >

**Kevin:** All right, all right. Fair point, I mean, that is a big deal for a lot of people who listen to TechPod. So how are we going to celebrate this festive occasion that is SysAdmin Day?

**Leon:** Duh, we’re going to talk to three superstar sysadmins and find out their heroic backstory, how they keep their skills sharp and what ticks them off. I mean, what makes them tick.

**Kevin:** Or possibly a little bit of both. But can we also maybe get some normal questions in there, like advice they have for people getting into IT today?

**Leon:** I guess so. All right. I guess we should get this started. Ready?

**Kevin:** Sure.

**Leon:** I’m Leon Adato.

**Kevin:** And I’m Kevin Sparenberg and the other voices you’ll hear on this episode today are Jennifer.

**Jennifer:** Hi, my name is Jennifer Aguilar. I’m the Senior Network Administrator for the El Paso County 911 District. I’ve been in the IT world for about 25 years now and just having the time in my life very privileged and proud to be here today.

**Kevin:** Thanks, Jennifer. We also have with us, Kimberly.

**Kimberly:** Hi, I’m Kimberly. I’ve been in IT for almost 20 years now. I am currently working for a very large financial institution, working with the Atlassian products of JIRA, Confluence, and Bitbucket administrating those and growing those for our environment.

**Kevin:** And last but certainly not least, we have Tannia Rodriguez. Tannia.

**Tannia:** Hi, I’m Tannia. I’m a Systems Engineer here at SolarWinds. I help all of our engineering infrastructure and support their lab test environments.

**Leon:** Awesome. All right, so that was just a quick intro, but before we get into the main part of the SysAdmin Day conversation, I want to give everyone a chance for some shameless self-promotion. So this is a chance to hear a little bit more about the work you do, where you’re doing it. If people can find you on the social medias of the various kinds and maybe a project you’re working on, or just something that you’re really passionate about. Let’s go ahead and start off this time with Kimberly.

**Kimberly:** Yeah, so as I mentioned, I’ve been doing IT for almost 20 years. I started off working for AOL CompuServe, running some of the old CompuServe 36-bit stuff, have moved up through different things. I work worked with you, Leon, for a while working with the SolarWinds products. I’ve been a UNIX and Linux admin. I spent a lot of time doing application support these days with the Atlassian products of JIRA, Confluence, and Bitbucket, integrating those, growing them to the clustered environments, even playing with some of their cloud product off and on. That’s kind of where my passion is these days working with those products.

**Leon:** Wonderful. And if people want to find you or find more of your thinking or stuff.

**Kimberly:** They can find me on LinkedIn under Kimberly Deal. I post there often with mostly Atlassian things but occasionally just general IT and SysAdmin and women in tech items.

**Leon:** Awesome. Okay, next up, Jennifer, why don’t you tell us a little bit about what you’re working on?

**Jennifer:** Well, so the 911 district is a function of the whole community here. We service the whole geographical area of El Paso in the El Paso County. We have 100% virtualized environment, which I’m so proud of because I took the folks to a virtual world before they were ready to go. I feel like we are doing something very special for the community with the manner in which our infrastructure is set up. You go to other organizations and you have say Houston for instance, they have different 911 centers that are run in different applications, different radios, different phones. Here we run the same phone system, same computer-aided dispatch system and same radio system throughout the whole geographical areas. So, that allows us to get to the emergency much quicker than most communities. So I’m really proud to be a part of this.

**Leon:** Awesome, awesome, okay. And Tannia, tell us a little bit about the kind of work you’re doing, where you’re doing it, all that good stuff.

**Tannia:** I’ve been in the IT space just for three years. So still working at my first job here, but I’m part of a bigger IT team. So the specific team I work at is systems dev team. So I help support all of the infrastructure for product development teams and the lab environment. So I’m really grateful for my first job to have access to all of the lab infrastructure just because it’s been more of a playground where I’ve gotten my hands on different vendors, different technologies. So that’s kind of what I’ve been doing for the past two years. This last year, I’ve focused more on cloud computing and supporting workloads there. So I’m just also having the time of my life just learning new technologies and growing.

**Leon:** Wonderful. Okay, and just to round things out, Kevin and I, I’m Leon Adato. I’m a Head Geek. Yes, that’s actually my job title here at SolarWinds. You can find me on the Twitters, which I say to horrify my children @LeonAdato. You can also find me on THWACK.com. Yes, that’s actually our user forum, THWACK.com @adatole. So if you want to find out some of that stuff, and I talk too much, so I’m going to stop. Kevin, what about you?

**Kevin:** I also talk too much. So, I’ve been in SolarWinds for seven-plus years now. I was a former customer for about eight before that. We jokingly say I have a title de jour, basically whatever needs to be done, I’m done. I’m incredibly technical, but most of the days I spend on THWACK, I can be found on the tweets and on the THWACKS @kmsigma, K-M-S-I-G-M-A. So we kind of want to level set the stage here. So, the question is, what is a typical day like for you? And why don’t we go ahead and start with Tannia this time?

**Tannia:** So my typical day starts with logging in, checking emails, and after emails, it’s mostly IT tickets. So kind of prioritizing those, as those come in or as issues have been escalated. That could entail just scheduling remote calls throughout the day or for other days of the week. I work with a lot of teams, global teams, so sometimes it takes some time to coordinate those calls. I’m also responsible for data center operations. So, like I spoke before, I support like the lab environment and development workloads. So, that could either mean deploying a new system for teams or just kind of following up on issues that they have in the lab.

**Kevin:** Okay, cool. But your title doesn’t actually say system administrator anywhere in it, right? So are you or are you not a systems administrator?

**Tannia:** It doesn’t say systems administrator. I’m a systems engineer, but a SysAdmin is more than just a title. So, short answer, yes, I’m a systems administrator. I do manage different systems for our team, but that’s just like one of the many roles and hats I wear. So, I probably touched like database, network administration, just kind of collaborating with all sorts of teams in IT, so yes.

**Leon:** I feel like we have a commercial, SysAdmin it’s not just a job, it’s an adventure.

**Kevin:** Yeah, well, I mean, we always talk about a lot of hats. And this is just one of those examples. So Kimberly same kind of talk, what’s your typical day?

**Kimberly:** So I mean, I think almost all of us start off that day with a cup of coffee and reading our email and see what kind of came through over the night. So check the logs and see what the system is had to kind of say and do over the night, right? Is it happy? Is it very unhappy? Did somebody try to run something they shouldn’t have? All of those kinds of things.

**Kevin:** Putting out fires, making sure emails are good, everyone is happy. But does your title say SysAdmin anywhere in it?

**Kimberly:** It doesn’t and I don’t know that any of my titles have actually called me is system admin. So it’s interesting how to watch how the titles have changed because when I got into IT, I was operations so I was in system operations, I was chasing that system admin title because that’s what everybody was called. That was the pinnacle at the time. And as I chased that system admin title, the title started to change and become systems engineer. And so okay, great, I’m going to chase that systems engineer title. And I don’t think I’ve ever actually reached that one either. I’m currently an infosec engineer, because the servers and things that I take care of are in a security environment.

**Kevin:** Excellent. All right. So Jennifer, what’s your typical day like? And are you a SysAdmin or are you not?

**Jennifer:** My job is I’m basically responsible for our budget for new technologies in the current technologies, and basically the overall direction of the infrastructure. It’s been an unbelievable journey to see where we were and where we are now. My job day to day is basically to monitor the infrastructures and then back everybody else up. I kind of steer the ship. So, like I say, I’m just having a great time here, being allowed to work with other people in the outside world to bring some of the best technologies forth, not necessarily cutting edge, but bring the best technologies for our community. And I’m really proud to be a part of this operation.

**Leon:** Amazing. Okay. So SysAdmin Day really is focused on appreciation for the whatever your job title is, but as a SysAdmin, we all know that. So how would you want to be appreciated? What is the best expression that you can think of, for the organization to really recognize the work that you’re doing?

**Jennifer:** I’ve got such an unbelievable employer and I couldn’t say that about two years ago. Two years ago, there was a lot of micromanaging, there was a lot of dissension. I think a lot of egos involved. The culture has definitely changed in this operation. It started at the top and as we actually got together and put together a strategic document. We put together our goals and values. We have done such an amazing transition here in our operation, that every day, I feel appreciated, every day I hope each and every one of these people here feel appreciated. We’re not smothered with obstacles, we’re not told how to do our jobs. This has opened up new opportunities for each and every employee here. We’re now thriving, we’re coming up with ideas outside the box, because we’re not kept inside a box.

**Kevin:** So as SysAdmins everywhere, people always run into challenges, but what has been your biggest challenge over like the last, I don’t know, 18 months or so?

**Tannia:** My biggest challenge has just been work-life balance. So dealing with COVID, I know that’s affected everyone differently. But starting working from home full time, it just felt like my work was bleeding into my home life. So it was hard to take time off, like have those mental health days off, just even if there was nowhere to go or trip to take or anything like that, I thought it was just harder to take those days off when working was basically a good distraction, just keeping busy. So working on that was kind of the biggest challenge I dealt with. So just kind of keeping my priorities straight, taking care of yourself. So just good advice for everyone.

**Kevin:** Thanks. I think all of us dealt with one level of that or another.

**Kimberly:** It’s really hard to talk about the last 18 months and not mentioned COVID. Right. I mean, that’s everybody has got something to say about that whole experience. It’s not anything any of us have ever kind of been through before. I was already working remote full time when that hit. So it was really odd, because everybody is like, oh, working from home now. I’m like, I’ve been doing that for over a year now. And so my work itself didn’t exactly change, I still had, I had set boundaries for myself, when I started working from home of this is my lunchtime, I leave my desk, this is my end time, I leave my desk. I mean, my workday didn’t start stretching into my regular day or anything like that. So, I already had that in place. So I think for me, the team stuff was really big because my team has always been kind of loosely together.

We’re friendly with each other but we don’t have a lot of social time together because we all work on disparate apps for the most part and just don’t even have a lot of overlap in our day to day. So one of the things I created for us was at Fridays at 3 because well, nobody wants meetings on Fridays, right? So blocking out time on Fridays to just have a social water cooler time. And it was really great, because we could just get on there and talk about anything. We talked about gaming, we talked about the boats and sailboats. We talked about conspiracy theories and everybody’s favorite one is. We just had a good time. And it was also nice that if we had a really busy week, we could spend five minutes catching up with team stuff real quick, and then go back to social. Or if there was a bunch of people out, it would be just like, “Hey, let’s just cancel this meeting, everybody just take a little early on Friday and call it a week.”

**Leon:** Yeah, cancel the meeting, but leave it on your calendar. Just leave it on the calendar, block the time out. Yeah, absolutely. That helps me pivot into another question, which is that I think that as SysAdmins, we spend a lot of time focusing on the problems, the issues, the “Failures” that we have to address. But we aren’t so good about recognizing the successes. So what are some ways that you make it a habit, you build the habit of recognizing when something went right, somewhere along the way? And Kimberly, you had a really unique story about that before we started recording. So I just, I’m going to make you go first. And like, what’s some of the ways that your team does that?

**Kimberly:** So I’ve made sure to personally so when we do something big like upgrade our application, in an enterprise environment, we don’t wear a lot of hats, we have our specific jobs. So, when I do an upgrade, I have to involve. So, I’ve maintained the application side, we also have a system support site that has root level access. And we have a database side that takes care of all of our back-end database pieces, I have to have a member of each of those teams involved every time I upgrade. So when we do the upgrades, and they go well, or even sometimes when they don’t, I make sure to send out a thank you note to everybody involved calling out their contributions, and making sure that I copy their management structures so that everybody could see what they’ve been doing and how they helped my team succeed.

So there’s that piece. The other thing that I’ve been doing is after we do something like this, we have a retrospective just like you look at it, like a sprint software development team and things like that. So I started doing retrospectives after we do a big event like these. And the structure of the retrospective allows us to call out what we did right, what we did that was a win and acknowledge those wins. And I think that that has been really helpful because we don’t just have an after-action meeting and go over all of the things that went wrong, or we forgot, or didn’t do quite right. We actually call up the things we did do right, and then we can go through that and say, “Okay, well, this worked out really well. Let’s make sure we plan to do it that way the next time.” So, it improves our team by celebrating our wins and seeing what we can bring that forward into the next one.

**Leon:** So Jennifer, you said, what caught my ear was that you celebrate everything with cake, and I just want to hear more about that, because cake.

**Jennifer:** One of the ladies that works for us is a phenomenal baker, so we celebrate everybody’s birthday number one. There’s only 14 of us here, so you’ve got to understand this is administration and technical people. There’s seven people on the technical side, and the rest of them are administrators. I like to celebrate everything. So, smaller achievements to me are just as important as those big ones. And that just encourages the employees to want to do more want to do better, continue to take the initiative that they’re doing. We’ll ask them to bake a cake or we’ll have a barbecue. We do like to socialize. The cake is just a big we all look forward to that because we know what’s homemade, and it’s going to be really good. So, it’s just a way to, we all get excited. We’re like little kids, so it seems to be working out really well.

**Kevin:** Mmmm cake.

**Leon:** (laughs) Exactly. All right, Tannia, you have a story about cake or chocolate or any of that stuff. I mean, help me out here.

**Tannia:** No desserts, I mean food. Well, my team will plan out lunches out if someone either got promoted or there’s a birthday or any sort of excuse to just kind of go out and try a new place out. We’ll just have like the group lunch. I feel like we need to start something about baking cakes. I don’t know who would take that on though. (laughs)

**Kevin:** Leon, you know anyone who make cakes?

**Leon:** I might know somebody who makes cakes, and they need to get out of my house. So that’s fine. Okay, so that sort of covers the today part of how we deal with things today. And now I want to sort of look back into how your careers began and what some of that was like. So, Kevin, why don’t you kick that part off?

**Kevin:** Sure. I think everyone always has a really interesting story about their journey to IT, some are more traditional, some are a little kind of off the wall at times. But I want to ask all of our guests, how did you get started in IT and is anything today like completely different than when you got started? Or, what changes have you seen in that time? And we’ll kick off this time with Tannia.

**Tannia:** I guess I had a traditional start. So I’m only three years to my IT career. But I started as an R&D IT analyst. So, like I mentioned before, like I had minimal IT knowledge, but I had like a software development background, mostly from like college internships and projects and that sort of thing. So I had technical skills, but not really IT-specific skills. So I kind of just got my hands on different hardware and software and just kind of deployed everything from scratch, and got familiar with different systems. So I think the first year I borrowed like someone’s CCNA book and just kind of started reading about networking and routing, and kind of getting myself familiar with that, so that was a good start for me just because I was managing, like lab network equipment.

But aside from that, I kind of started getting familiar with servers and different storage arrays and helped manage different lab environments and help teams put solutions together for them. So now I guess, the three years, like I haven’t seen a lot of change. But I did work on like tape backups, so I helped transition that to cloud backup. So that was a good learning experience and exposure until tape backups, but that’s all I could think of that, that I’ve seen changed in that short amount of time.

**Kevin:** And Kimberly, you are kind of at the other end of the spectrum you’ve been, I don’t mean to say that in a negative way. You’ve been in IT for a while. So how did you get there and what has really changed over the course of your career?

**Kimberly:** Yeah, I mentioned in a conversation with you guys earlier that I’ve been in IT for almost 20 years, and it just doesn’t feel that way at all. And part of that has to do with all that change that comes with working with tech, it just moves so fast. But when I started in IT, I really feel like I started on working with some dinosaurs, which I love dinosaurs. Anyway, my favorite dinosaur is the Stegosaurus I hope everybody has a favorite dinosaur.

**Kevin:** Archaeopteryx. Sorry, everyone just doesn’t have that right at the tip of their tongue.

**Kimberly:** (laughs) I’m so sorry. When I first started in IT, I worked for AOL and I often will talk about it as AOL CompuServe because really, I worked with a lot of the people who started CompuServe and it is literally the best IT environment I can ever imagine starting out working in. There was a mix of, it was very diverse. It really shocked me when I left there that the rest of the IT world was not that way. It was very supportive. It was very if you wanted to learn something, learn it, go do this, try this out. There were a lot of people who really encouraged exploration. It was just an amazing place to work. But when I talk about dinosaurs there, I worked on the old 36 bits CompuServe host that you would think of if you ever had CompuServe that you use your PPN you came in or message boards, that was that old hardware. But that hardware also ran other things other than just kind of the bulletin boards.

One of the systems, they’re still in the early aughts ran a scheduling software for airlines, so pilots and flight attendants, they would bid on their routes, and it all ran through those systems and you would just, you’re like wait, this runs from AOL, and they’re running on this old stuff? And they still hadn’t ported it off of it, they were starting to port off of it kind of the mid-aughts. So, there were still people working on that old stuff. But while I was there, it gave me the opportunity too to learn about new stuff. So I worked on Unix, and I worked on Linux. We were bringing in Red Hat. And if anybody remembers Mandrake, that was one of the other flavors they were running there. And I got into that, I learned about some new hardware from HP, it was their blades, which it’s everything is old is new, again, we’re starting to see some of that same kind of interface with systems that HP brought out in the 2000s.

So, I feel like where I worked, we were so ahead of everybody else. We were doing third-party hosting for everybody. So like when the cloud came out, I was very confused by it, because I’m like, wait, it’s just third-party hosting, kind of. And I mean, and it’s definitely grown past that now but in its infancy it was glorified third-party hosting, and I was so confused as to why this was a big deal, because that’s where I started. That’s what I was doing when I got into IT.

**Kevin:** Yeah, I know, great stories. And, Jennifer, how did you get started in IT and what’s different today than it was when you got started?

**Jennifer:** When I started college, I started for computer science, and it was a small college in the Midwest, and phenomenal opportunities. So this was one of the first college campuses that was fully computerized. It was running off of AS400 located in the college library. Every computer dorm room had a dumb terminal in it and so about the second year ran, I started working for the food service. So through that we worked, I was privileged. And again, I can’t preach about work ethic enough. But they pulled me in and I helped the, it was called Air Ray Services when I first started for him and then eventually turned to Aramark Corporation, but I helped them totally computerize the campus dining.

There were multiple sites, and we programmed all the recipes, were able to maintain and manage the food costs. It really gave me an overall good perspective, not only got me excited about computers too, but gave me an overall good perspective on business management. So I’ve taken those two talents together to really maximize what I can do with technology and how much we can pay.

**Leon:** So, that gives us a view of how you got here, your so-called IT or superhero origin story. But I want to look ahead a little bit into what being a SysAdmin and not 10 years from now, but maybe three months from now, what you’re looking at in the future, where you’re going. And I’m going to start off with a very specific type of question. Again, given that we have three amazing and talented women who are working in IT and given that women in tech face very specific challenges, do you have any lessons or insights that you want to share with the TechPod audience in that regard? And Tannia, because you’re relatively new on the scene, and some of those experiences maybe more current, as far as that goes, I’m going to force you to go first, sorry, not sorry.

**Tannia:** So I guess starting in IT, I’ve only been three years but I’m like one of the only females in my immediate team. But so I can understand where some women might see that and think like, do I belong here kind of question that. But I think it’s important to have like a good relationship with your manager and your team. So they kind of offer that… I guess you would say mentorship role or even just kind of give you advice, right? So since I started right out of college, I was basically just learning everything as I went and kind of just took my learning by the hand and just went with it. So any advice I would give others would be to just own the space, go for the promotions or go for the trainings, feel empowered, and know that you deserve to be on the team and that you have a lot to offer that others may not. So yeah, so feel confident in yourself is what I would say.

**Kimberly:** Yeah. It’s really interesting, I kind of talked about it in my superhero origin story of where I started. And I just didn’t realize that being a woman in tech was supposed to be any different than just being a person in tech. It wasn’t until I kind of got out there and to some other places. And then I didn’t even recognize necessarily when maybe something was being kind of changed, because I was a woman, right. So, it took me kind of a long, it wasn’t like, I discounted anybody else’s stories entered either. I mean, I definitely knew what it was like to be in a male-dominated field and some of those things that kind of came with that. So it’s not like I ever thought those experiences didn’t happen to other people. I just didn’t realize kind of the scope of it and I honestly think it’s gotten worse instead of getting better. And maybe that’s just a perception because more people are willing to talk about it, I’m not real sure on that.

But I definitely have to say that I have more experiences with that now, as I’ve gotten older and have gone more places in tech than I ever did when I first started. So it’s really kind of a head-scratcher of like, why is it this way? I think about back to my childhood, I was born in the late 70s, so had some of the 70s, early 80s going on. And I just remember like looking at pictures of myself as a kid. I wasn’t dressed in girly colors, I was just in colors that were popular of the time. Yeah, I had girly toys, I had My Little Ponies and Care Bears. Right.

**Leon:** And you had dinosaurs, because dinosaurs.

**Kevin:** Because dinosaurs, of course dinosaurs.

**Kimberly:** Yeah, I had dinosaurs and Matchbox cars, and Pogo sticks, and just all kinds of the active things, too. So I feel like where my childhood fit is more ideal than where kind of childhood is now with, you walk down the aisles of the toy store and you’ve got Disney Princesses everywhere, and doll babies everywhere. And I’m like, “Okay, well, where’s the active stuff?” And it’s set over in the aisles, where like, all of the boys stuff is. I want to see, I love it when I go to like Target or something and I see kids picking out whatever they want, because they’re kids getting to play with what they enjoy and what they what they like. And I think that we could carry some of that back into IT too and then into jobs. I do what I like, I do what I want, not because I’m anybody but myself.

**Jennifer:** My advice is to be passionate about your job, but kind of keep your emotions in check. I’m a very high-energy individual, and so in my former years, I think I was a little bit too emotional trying to get the point across. I’ve had my dealings, but I’ve won some battles and lost some battles. And the biggest thing I tell you on the battles that you lose, just don’t dwell on and move on. But definitely keep your emotions in check and try to be consistent with your behavior. That’s where I’ve learned the most just to let it roll off the back, they have a saying down here, don’t wear a hairy shirt. It just don’t let things ruffle your feathers, move on and again, respect one another and you get so much more out of each other.

**Kevin:** Awesome. So to not boil it down but to kind of take this back and to summarize it as briefly as we can. So for people who want to start now, gender notwithstanding, what is the one thing tech or not that they really need to know? Kimberly.

**Kimberly:** I think the one thing that you’re going to need to know is you’re going to make mistakes. Everybody makes mistakes. It’s just human to make mistakes. The thing that you want to do is you want to own that mistake. A lot of people over my career I have seen try to hide tiny mistakes and very, very big mistakes. And the thing is, it’s going to be found eventually. What helps all of us is if you own that mistake, because then we know what happened, when it happened, how we can fix it, how to help you fix it, what impact that’s going to make. You can learn from that mistake. You can help other people learn from that mistake. So you share your knowledge by making that mistake.

**Kevin:** I think that is excellent and sage advice. I think everyone is, people make the mistake of make the mistake, make the mistake of thinking that people IT are prone to mistakes, but we’re not any more than anybody else. And I think it’s really something you need to take that you know, if it is a mistake, you can find a correction for it. So thank you. That’s a great non-tech thing for people wanting to start in now. So Jennifer, how about you? For people who want to start now what one tech or non-tech thing do you think you would really want to impart on them?

**Jennifer:** I think you need to bring work ethic to the table and check your ego at the door. Life’s so complicated outside of work, don’t let work be your complication. And if it is, it’s time to find a new job. Kimberly, I love it. You have to own your job. You have to own the good, the bad, the ugly. And I’m just like you, Kimberly, as soon as I’ve done something, boom, here, red flag, I did this, we need to recover from it. Man, I too I’ve never been fired from any job for making a mistake. I don’t think you’re doing your job if you’re not making mistakes, you could become complacent. So just own your job.

**Kevin:** And Tannia, for you being relatively new to the space, what would you tell people to bring in either tech or non-tech when they want to start on this career path?

**Tannia:** I would like to emphasize, I guess your non-technical skills, in IT you’re talking to people all the time and different teams. So, just bring on or work on your communication skills would be my word of advice. You’ll talk to people from all sorts of backgrounds, different global teams with different languages, there might be a language or culture barrier there. So, just have patience with others and just work on your communication skills. Just because I’ve had just problems, the root of problems be a misunderstanding or miscommunication. So just work on your people skills, which I guess you don’t think about when you think of people in IT.

**Kevin:** I think you are 100% accurate in that. It is something that a lot of times people myself included in this there are times in my career where I was much more comfortable talking to a computer, and less comfortable talking in front of even three people.

**Leon:** A lot of times for me it was because I had really mean things to say to the computer, and I wouldn’t have said that in polite company. Anyway, all right, so we are down to the final question. I know that as a SysAdmin sometimes it feels like the only thing people remember you for is the last miracle you pulled out of your ear or other orifice. And sometimes nobody remembers past the last failure, as we’ve talked about a bunch of times, which makes it all the more important to promote, not just the last thing you did, but to continually promote the things that you’re doing and working on and things like that. But it sometimes feels really disingenuous, like you’re being a show-off, or you’re bragging, or you’re just being a jerk. So I’m going to open this out to any and all. But how do you promote without feeling like you’re falling into that trap of being egotistical or trying to shine a spotlight on yourself? How do you find a way to blow your own horn?

**Kimberly:** That’s a hard one. It really is. And I think self promotion unless you are practice at it is hard for everybody. There is that balance between being overconfident and over selling yourself and under selling yourself. So, one of the things that I do you talk about speaking in front of people, I run a user group locally in Columbus for the Atlassian tools. And it’s interesting because when I first started to run that I was brand new to the tool-set, I knew less than zero on it and I started this user group. And everybody shows up to this user group. And they’re like, “Oh, you’re the leader. You obviously know all of this stuff.” And I didn’t, but I fell back on one of my original things I learned about being a tech is to say is never quite say I don’t know, it’s I don’t know about that, or I’m not sure at the moment, but here’s how I can help you find out about it. And I go find the resources and I pass them on.

So I think when you’re trying to self-promote, it’s not necessarily standing up in front of people and saying, “Oh, I’m so great, I know all of this stuff.” It’s with a little bit of a laugh here, “I’m so good and I can help you learn all of this stuff.” And the more that I help people learn, the more I learn, and the more people come to me as an expert, and more than just tooting my own horn is discovering my own worth and knowing when those things change. I think a lot of times, I think all of us have trouble kind of with that salary negotiation, right? Like, what am I really worth? And I spent a lot of time talking to other people in my field. And asking them, how much do you make? Where are you from? Are you in California? Are you on the East Coast? Are you in the Midwest? What does your job look like? And hearing out where my job fits in that, and then I go to my management, and I say, “Hey, I think I’m worth this.” And this is what these jobs are paying, and just kind of put it out there of like, hey, you need to match. This is my worth. This is me.

**Leon:** I think an important point to bring out in that is that just like admitting your mistakes, when you have that conversation, the response wasn’t to flip the table and scream, “Get out of my office. What are you…]?” Like it was a conversation, it happened. I think we are always afraid of this huge negative reaction that honestly never comes. Right?

**Jennifer:** I always, it’s something that driven into me is you just have to lead by example. And I always I’m a firm believer that your actions always speak louder than words. And so it’s not really self promoting, I’m just doing my job. I can cover a tremendous amount of territory and help a lot of different people. And it’s, I’ve evolved into that ability over the years and it comes very natural to me. So only these last couple of years, I’ve had some really nice articles written about me, and I’m like, wow. People do recognize your actions, although they may not say it. So I think in the best way to self promote is just, again, that work ethic and the willingness to help others, and the willingness never to turn your back on anything or anyone.

Everything is a game to me, so I’m having a good time, no matter, you told me to go clean the toilets. I’ll clean the toilets with the same attitude. I have when I configure the network. So being consistent in your behavior, being consistent in your actions promotes the hell out of yourself. That’s just set a good example and I think the recognition will come.

**Kevin:** Well, I personally have absolutely loved this conversation. And I appreciate everyone carving some time out of their calendar to make sure we could get this down on “Tape.” So thank you so much for being part of TechPod today.

**Jennifer:** It’s been a privilege and an honor. You all made my day and I’ve had a good time, thank you so much.

**Tannia:** Thank you for having me. Thank you to Kimberly and Jennifer. I feel like I took away a lot of information from you two.

**Jennifer:** Girl, you have a long way to go and hang in there.

**Tannia:** Thank you.

**Kimberly:** I just want to say thanks for having me. It’s been great. I don’t feel like I ever get to talk to you guys enough. I feel like we need to schedule a podcast recording every other week to so I can hang out with everybody. But it’s been great. I love having these conversations. I love hearing from people with different experiences and different backgrounds than I do. I just I wanted we have a lot of conversation about what it’s like to get into tech. And I can’t wait to have more conversations with people who are new and people who are looking to get into the tech. So it’s always an exciting day for me when I get to talk to somebody new and see what they’re learning and what they’re excited about.

**Leon:** And thank you to everyone who takes the time to listen to SolarWinds TechPod. We know you have a choice in podcast carriers and we appreciate your patronage. If you enjoyed today’s episode, leave us a comment and let us know what you liked. If you have ideas for future episodes, we’d love to hear that too.