Daniel Newman: Hey everyone. Welcome back to another episode of The Main Scoop. I am your host, Daniel Newman, joined by the other host, Mr. Greg Lotko. How are you doing?

Greg Lotko: Good to be back.

Daniel Newman: Yes, good to be back. It's another great day to be scooping.

Greg Lotko: And we've got an interesting twist on our format. We've been mixing it up lately.

Daniel Newman: It's been a lot of fun. We've been on quite a journey together. We've had lots of great guests, many great conversations. We've done it all over, at some point, probably all over the world, but we've been all over the United States together, scooping away, and one of the things that we find ourselves talking to the guests a lot, we find ourselves talking a lot in the community, is about the workforce itself. Workforce resilience, training, skills. Greg, if you want to have an industry continue to innovate, continue to have an impact on the world, you got to keep the talent coming. You got to keep it fresh.

Greg Lotko: Agreed, agreed. And this is very much misunderstood in the Mainframe space. People say, oh, there aren't skills or there aren't people that want to do this, and nothing could be further from the truth. We've absolutely seen this. There's a lot of new blood, people coming from other careers or early in their career, interested in learning about the Mainframe and investing in themselves for a career.

Daniel Newman: Well, just like any type of work or any type of job or any type of skill, sometimes it's about the training. Sometimes it's about the skills you learn. Sometimes it's the background. Sometimes it's the variety. And for instance, sometimes it's like in our case, it's going from being in the question asking seat to the question asked seat, and maybe finding someone that could do our job better than we could do it.

Greg Lotko: So that's about turning the tables here.

Daniel Newman: You see what I just did?

Greg Lotko: So with us today, we have the leader, our Director of Education and Skills Development at Broadcom for the Mainframe Software Division, Lauren, welcome to the show.

Lauren Valenti: Thank you for having me.

Daniel Newman: Well, so we kicked this off, got it underway, and it sounds to me like you wake up and every day you think about skills, you think about training, you think about workforce development. Interested sitting over here, Greg, like I said, we're usually the ones that ask all the questions. I think we're going to give her a chance to sit in our seat, but while we're still here, how did we do? Did we get that off to a good start? Are those three things that are on your mind each and every day, Lauren?

Lauren Valenti: Yes, absolutely. And working with our customers closely in identifying their challenges and how we can work with them to be able to address those challenges. What we're finding, though, is it's not about finding the skills as there are a lot of people out there today that have the skills. It's just a matter of getting the right training. What we're really seeing is how our customers might be a little, with the planning itself, succession planning, that's where they're lacking, a lot of that. And what we are trying to do is come up with offerings, not just us, but IBM, BMC, we're all trying to help our customers in instilling or offering education or even programs that could help them with the short-term fix and then the long-term fix.

Greg Lotko: So what you're saying is the aptitude, the capability is there.

Lauren Valenti: Yes.

Greg Lotko: The people are there. They just have to understand that these opportunities are available to them and they need companies that need these skills to invest and plan for the future as well as to work with partners to train them. And you have a couple of people that are going to join you today. That's why you were talking about, we're going to mix things up. We're going to turn over the program to you and let you bring on a couple of those people that are the future.

Daniel Newman: Are you sure? We're ready? We're ready to turn over the helm of The Scoop?

Greg Lotko: I'm going to sit over there with my feet up and just watch her do the heavy lifting.

Daniel Newman: High foot?

Greg Lotko: There you go. All right.

Daniel Newman: All right. Let's do it.

Lauren Valenti: Well, now that they're gone, welcome. Why don't you tell us a little bit about yourselves?

Adia Lemessy: Hi, my name is Adia Sakura-Lemessy. I'm a recent graduate from Albany State University in Albany, Georgia with a Bachelor's in computer science. And now I am a new Vitality Resident, part of Cohort 7.

Liam Glynn: So I'm Liam Glynn. I've been in the Mainframe space now for almost three years. I implement software with 21CS, and I started back in June 21 after graduating college with a computer science degree.

Lauren Valenti: That's great. Now, how did you first know or learn of the Mainframe?

Adia Lemessy: So I suppose I'll go first. Really, my first introduction to the Mainframe was through a friend I had who was an IBM Z Ambassador. This was during junior year of college. She talked to me about it sometimes, but it never really went through. It was in one ear out the other, something something big computer, runs credit card transactions, I think? And I didn't know more about the Mainframe until during the spring of my senior year. I graduated in the fall. So, during that spring, there was SHARE happening during our spring break. This was last year, SHARE Atlanta, and one of my professors told me about it, said he was taking some students from the computer science department.

I was like, "Eh, well, whatever. I guess I'm not doing anything for spring break," but I didn't really think that much of it. But then once I actually came to SHARE and got an opportunity to meet and interact with these people who were so passionate about this technology, people who had long-standing careers going back 20, 30, 40 years or more, that's when it was like, "Oh, I think I get it now." And at that point, I didn't get the computers yet. At that point I just understood there's something about this community that I think has a space for me. And then from the conference, someone I networked with offered me an internship. And after that internship opportunity, that's when I really knew, I was like, "I like this technology. This is what I want to do with my career." And I looked into the Vitality Program and now I'm here.

Lauren Valenti: That's great. Great journey.

Liam Glynn: Right. That's great.

Adia Lemessy: Thank you.

Liam Glynn: For me, I actually was offered a couple of Mainframe courses in my college, which is very, very foreign concept in most places. It was actually a lifelong Mainframer, decided to link up with my school, and he taught one class a semester in the Mainframe space. I took an intro to enterprise systems, and what really got me was I took a cobalt class after that and I was like, "Wow, I've never even heard of this. And he's telling me it's the backbone of the world." So it was really interesting to have the opportunity to get a look in. And I interned as a support engineer for a non-Mainframe company. And then once I had finished college and I graduated, I got the opportunity to work support for 21CS, and I jumped on it, given my very little Mainframe experience and the rest is history.

Lauren Valenti: That's great. So with all the technologies out there today, especially the cloud, all that exciting technology, why choose the Mainframe? Why did you choose?

Liam Glynn: Well, everybody in college, I want to go be a Java developer. I want to create video games. I want to develop front-end UI, that kind of thing. And that stuff really never piqued my interest the same way as the first time I was using a green screen, because that's not something that's regular. Nobody even knows what ISPF is. And it was super interesting. Then as opposed to the regular, I'll call it the regular route of just go and get your computer science degree and getting into the development space in the SaaS world.

Adia Lemessy: To be honest, for me, I knew that I wanted to do cybersecurity. That was my concentration in college, and I hadn't thought that much about what I was going to do with cybersecurity. Honestly, I figured I was probably going to go to grad school straight out of college anyway, thought maybe by the time I do that, I'll know what I want to do. And I never really considered Mainframe before the conference because I didn't realize that cybersecurity was its own full space within Mainframe. And now that I know a little bit more about it it seems really obvious that there would be, but having such a surface level understanding of a Mainframe, I thought, if you want to work on it, you're probably going to be a systems' programmer.

I don't think I want to do that. Spoiler alert, my opinion's changed. But in any case, once I realized the world of the Mainframe is very large and vast and that a lot of the things that I could have potentially done on, I guess, the regular world of computing, a lot of the skill sets that I could have applied were actually applicable to the Mainframe. And then once I discovered that I liked working on the systems, working in ISPF and TSO because I like that kind of problem solving, trudging through the mud to figure out how it works, that's what really sold it for me. I was like, "Okay, now this is how I know what I want to do."

Lauren Valenti: That's great. And now with you, I know you've been working on the Mainframe for a while now. How do you move yourself from sufficiency to proficiency?

Liam Glynn: Got to read the manuals. Biggest thing, everyone says, read the manual. The thing about the Mainframe space is everything pretty much is documented and everybody in the space has so much experience that it's really important early in your career to just listen, take a step back and kind of understand what everybody's telling you. It may seem like a foreign concept at first, but it all does make sense.

Lauren Valenti: And coming to conferences.

Liam Glynn: That does help.

Lauren Valenti: Conferences, I'm sure are educational.

Liam Glynn: There's so many people that I've met here, that I've connected with afterwards and I've been able to talk to and coming to these things, it really shows you the vastness of the space itself. And three years ago, I didn't even know Mainframes existed.

Lauren Valenti: And how do you keep yourself up to date with or upskilling yourself? Do you use any additional tools?

Liam Glynn: I am a big fan of Interskill. That's a great, great website with a lot of education on there. Beyond that, just getting your hands dirty, getting in there, breaking things, fixing things, and, like I said, learning from those around you because the best resource is your mentorship.

Adia Lemessy: Absolutely.

Lauren Valenti: And what about you? I know you're participating in the Vitality Program, so tell us a little bit more about that. How has your experience been thus far?

Adia Lemessy: Thus far it's been, I would say that it has been very good, very informative, but it has been, at times, a little overwhelming. Not so much that it's like I'm drowning, but as in, wow, there's a lot to cover here. I understand now that there is how it takes decades for people to really get a high level of proficiency in this space. But actually as you were saying, that thing about going from sufficiency to proficiency, I like the way you phrased that. It actually makes me think about, I guess the non-technical response actually, beyond just the reading the manuals, the practice, writing programs and all that. Absolutely true. That is important, and I agree.

But also for me personally, a lot of it is just a mindset that I am capable of doing that, as in not thinking that where I'm at is just so base level that I feel worried about it. Like coming into a new field, you're like, ah, so much information. And it can feel like, I don't even think I'm going to be able to scratch a 10th of this stuff, right? But actually believing, no, I can. Every person that is good at anything had to start without knowing anything and realizing that is a big part of what allows me to, as you were saying, upscale myself, is realizing I can, if I put in the effort and the work and believe in myself on top of all those other things, because it's very easy to become stuck in a self-defeating mindset. And that can make actually trying to learn that extra information so much harder, when you think that you can't do it or it's insurmountable.

Lauren Valenti: And when you feel awkward, it's usually, that means you're growing, right?

Adia Lemessy: It's like acknowledging that imposter syndrome when you enter a new space and dismantling it and realizing, no, I have a space here. I do belong here. I just have to find my footing. That's all.

Lauren Valenti: That's right. So what do you think your career trajectory will be?

Liam Glynn: It's hard to say. It's already changed so much since I walked in the door. I always thought I'll just be a support guy forever, and I'll debug programs, all of that. But now I'm implementing, same vein where I'm dealing with customers and I'm helping them along the process. But I mean, in Mainframe, sky's the limit right now. It seems there's so much coming down the pipeline in terms of modernization. Hopefully that gets more people on board from the younger crowd.

Adia Lemessy: I mean, I would say that at the moment, I do know that I would still like to do something in the security space, but honestly, I'm feeling pretty open. I do think that I really enjoy working hands-on with the technology. And so my roles might be a little bit more in the background of things as opposed to sort of in the foreground. But really I'm just rolling with all the new information that's coming in, and I'm taking it one step at a time, because I understand

for myself, as much as I really hold on to this idea of having really concrete long-term plans, a lot of times those shift and are very malleable. So now I've taken to a perspective of, when I know, I'll know. The same way through college, I didn't really know exactly what I wanted to do until one day it was like, this is it. This is the thing. And so I just kind of wait for those moments because when I really get that big spark of inspiration, I go towards that.

Lauren Valenti: I love that approach. I really do. Because you get to learn the different aspects.

Adia Lemessy: I really do feel ...

Lauren Valenti: Different aspects of the Mainframe. And then you decide, Hey, where do I really want to be?

Adia Lemessy: Exactly. So you were saying sky is the limit. So I understand there's a lot I can do and a lot that I can learn, so I'm just going to roll with it until I know where I want to be exactly.

Liam Glynn: See where it takes you.

Adia Lemessy: Exactly.

Lauren Valenti: So what would you say to others that maybe they are new to the Mainframe or don't know anything about Mainframe at all, that would motivate and inspire them to have a career in the Mainframe?

Adia Lemessy: I suppose I can take that one first, if you don't mind.

Liam Glynn: Sure.

Adia Lemessy: But really I would say the big thing is that even if you don't know anything coming into it, don't be afraid to come in any way. Don't be afraid to ask questions, talk to people. I have found, from my experience, the Mainframe community is very welcoming and open to new faces, new people who are interested. You have a very passionate and forgiving community. It's all right if you don't know much about the technical stuff yet. There are people willing to teach you.

There are people willing to answer your questions, no matter how surface level you might think they are, get out there and ask them anyway. And if you take that perspective, I think that's true of the Mainframe in particular, because we have such a nice community. But I also think it's not a bad perspective to take in life, to not be afraid to get in there. If you're interested in the field, come on in. Like I said, nobody knew everything at the start.

Lauren Valenti: If anything, you're carrying your toolbox. You just keep collecting the tools as you go.

Adia Lemessy: Exactly.

Liam Glynn: Right. I would just say, ditch the fear of failure. Just jump right in. It's very intimidating. There's so much to learn.

Adia Lemessy: It can be.

Liam Glynn: There's so much history in this space, and like we said, so many people that know so much, it makes you feel like, “God, I don't know anything. How am I ever going to live up to this?” But just jump right in.

Lauren Valenti: Let me be bold. Where do you see yourself in the Mainframe trajectory?

Liam Glynn: There's so much space to grow in the space, and I've already been surprised so many times that it's hard to say where I'll end up, but I know that I'll be in the space. I don't see myself retreating or changing career paths. It's a great, great community. It's a great, great working space. And things like SHARE are awesome. There's so many opportunities to gather experience from people who've been at it their entire lives.

Adia Lemessy: I mean, I personally, especially when I first entered, and I'd get that interview question of where do you think you want to be? What kind of roles are you looking for? And I generally saw myself as someone who would be more behind the screen, right? So as I was alluding to earlier, I do see myself as potentially a system's programmer. But to be honest, I actually have received the feedback that I would be very good at being more on the front end, doing more of the communicating. It was suggested by one person that I would be good as a project manager. So I do see it as a perfectly viable option and something I would be open to doing in the future as I gained some more experience.

Lauren Valenti: I could see you being an advocate for the Mainframe.

Adia Lemessy: I would love to, actually.

Lauren Valenti: Think bigger. Think bigger. Well, thank you so much for your time.

Liam Glynn: Thanks for having me again.

Adia Lemessy: Thank you.

Lauren Valenti: You both are an inspiration, and we hope that you continue advocating for the Mainframe.

Adia Lemessy: It's been great being here.

Liam Glynn: Thanks for having us.

Greg Lotko: Wow, that was fabulous. The energy, the enthusiasm from both of them. Who would've thought spring break for Mainframers. That's great. I mean, I love to see that the future of the platform that they're investing in themselves, that they're taking the time where instead of going out partying, I'm going to go to a conference, I'm going to meet people, I'm going to learn about future opportunities for my career. And then the maturity and the poise of both of them to realize and sense, “Hey, this is a community that's willing to give back, to help me learn,” to recognize that anybody who's gone into anything new, they don't know anything to start. They have to learn. We all learned. And then the future is just endless. All the different opportunities and recognizing, hey, I've done support, or I've done this, and maybe I want to be behind the screen, I might want to be in front of the screen. That's the stuff that makes you really understand the future and that this platform is going to be in fabulous, fabulous hands.

Daniel Newman: It's like the little secret of life that no one told you is what you do during your college spring breaks could be the difference in your career, but we may have just witnessed ...

Greg Lotko: In a variety of ways.

Daniel Newman: We may have just witnessed a few future CEOs up here.

Greg Lotko: Absolutely. Absolutely. Your takeaways, Lauren?

Lauren Valenti: I mean, the passion that came through with both of them is unbelievable. The fact that they know that you have to build your toolbox, as I always say, you have to build up your skills in order for you to get to that next level. So the fact that they are looking at career progression, where they want to go, that to me means even more. And the advocacy that they are doing for the platform is unbelievable.

Greg Lotko: That there's a foundation and continuous learning. Fabulous, fabulous.

Daniel Newman: I just really enjoyed how, and I think you used the words too, Greg, but how articulate for young professionals these days.

Greg Lotko: Articulate and eloquent.

Daniel Newman: I have at least one in their early 20s at home, and she continues to impress me, but they really grew up not actually speaking as much. They text each other. And so when you hear young, articulate, very competent and ...

Lauren Valenti: Confident.

Daniel Newman: ... confident.

Lauren Valenti: Confident.

Daniel Newman: And skipping spring break to do a Mainframer conference, I'm like, "You might want to hire that young person."

Greg Lotko: It's impressive. Absolutely impressive. So let's wrap it up.

Daniel Newman: Well, Lauren, I just want to say, how did you, well, first, did you like sitting in the host seat?

Greg Lotko: Do you want our jobs?

Daniel Newman: You want our job?

Lauren Valenti: I'll do a little bit more of these, but, I wouldn't mind taking it eventually. That's my career progression.

Greg Lotko: Bingo. That was great.

Daniel Newman: She said she wants your seat.

Greg Lotko: You want my seat or his seat?

Lauren Valenti: I'll take your seat.

Daniel Newman: She doesn't know as much about mine. Lauren, thanks so much for stepping in.

Lauren Valenti: Thank you. Thank you for having me.

Daniel Newman: Playing host.

Greg Lotko: It's an absolute pleasure.

Daniel Newman: All right, everybody, thanks for joining us for this episode of The Main Scoop. We hope you enjoyed learning for some of the young up and coming professionals in the Mainframe space. For this episode, for Greg Lotko and myself though, it's time to say goodbye.

Greg Lotko: Dan Newman.

Daniel Newman: It's me. Subscribe. Visit us often. See you later.