Question 1: Tell me about your proudest professional achievement.

I guess my proudest professional achievement would have to be “K-Code”, basically a rules validation engine.

Early in my career, our small company developed a claims product for hospital claims entry. It followed the format of the UB forms of the day, did some simple validation, and built a file that would be transmitted to the payer. It was good enough that we developed a working relationship with the Indiana Blue Cross/Blue Shield.

As we added additional payers and new states, the program grew with the additional validation requirements and expansion was becoming cumbersome. I pulled out the validation code as a side project and reformatted it as tables. These were integrated with some decision logic and computational abilities, which I presented as an alternate way to handle the validation. It was simple enough that it didn’t require programmers for the most part, and it was easy to extend validation to new payers simply by adding the appropriate tables.

Management liked the idea, and so “K-Code” was born. (I didn’t name it.) It facilitated the validation process so that we could bring in new business quickly and payer analysts could add deeper edits to improve on claim acceptance rates. To compensate for the larger tables, I wrote a compiler to build our growing library of EDT files and allow for more complicated branching and computational abilities. This library of EDT files was then also integrated into the clearinghouse our company was developing. For my efforts, I was awarded the company’s first Technical Achievement Award.

Would I do the same thing today? Probably not. There are better tools available. But it was novel enough at the time that because of it and our clearinghouse, our company was acquired by Blue Cross of Western Pennsylvania shortly thereafter. In fact, I think the demonstrated agility of the system also helped make a sale to a South Dakota hospital chain on one of our visits to Blue Cross of Iowa.