Jennifer Ward Bio:

I have always loved working in and around technology I know this because 20 years on and I’m still drawn to it, so much so that I’m doubling down, and investing in a programming course to retool my skill set to be a developer. My start in IT was in supporting airline systems, providing helpdesk support, system maintenance, it’s here I realized I had a knack for working with technology. Timing is everything, and the role in airline systems support gave me the basic skills to take on a testing role in the great Y2k effort. I was part of a team that ensured airline reservation systems would be up and running when the clock turned 2000.

A natural progression from Y2k was the role of QA testing. As a QA analyst, I grew my knowledge of the IT life cycle and technology itself, testing hotel software to launch a new hotel system used in over 8000 hotels and also interfaced to several other equally complex systems.

As a Development Manager I gained SDLC experience as well as requirement gathering, project management. In this role I was able to manage the SDLC phases and accomplish the customization, integration and rollout of third party software to hotels nationally. Also during this time I completed my bachelor’s degree in Technical Management applying what I learned in class at night to my daily tasks and goal.

Development Manger taught me lessons in leadership and how teams can come together to provide solutions, and so onwards and upwards to a more strategic role. As a product director as well as keeping some of the functions of my previous role I gained responsibility of directing the product roadmap. Working closely with senior leadership, and stakeholders to shape the how what and when of technology solutions for our business. I accomplished two major projects during this time, development of the next generation of integrated hotel software and a major system upgrade to centrally hosted solutions. This role for me was an education in working through many teams and leadership in order to provide solutions and guidance for the organization.

I like being part of a team whose goal is to create solutions that are simple yet powerful. To provide cutting edge technology that doesn’t get in the way of actually doing business requires a diverse team of knowledgeable individuals set on a common goal. A side note on lessons learned, trying to do everything yourself may work but the personal cost is high and the end product will always benefit more from checks, balances, and continual review and input from stakeholders. I have learned from mistakes and failure to accept the roadblock, failure or whatever; regroup, be flexible, and above all be able to quickly come up with an alternative plan

I feel like that actor, acting all his life but when asked about acting, his answer was, “ I love acting but what I really want to do is direct” . That’s me been directing the development and the requirements gathering but I like the aspect of speaking through code language to create useful applications