# Leading Trade Show Production Company Improves Satisfaction & Differentiation

## Fern Leverages their IBMi for Real-time, Interactive Mobile App, Improving Customer Satisfaction & Competitive Differentiation



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Jeff Mason
Director of Customer Technology Innovation, Fern

## The Challenge

Fern may not be a household name, but chances are that you've been to a major event managed by this leading producer and provider of trade show services. When you walk into a major convention center with thousands of booths and tens of thousands of people, there's a good chance Fern is behind the scenes making sure the show is visually appealing, the attendee experience is productive and memorable, and the exhibitor booth materials arrive to the right place at the right time.

Fern has established an impressive track record over its 110-year history and has built a sizeable company with offices across the United States and hundreds of employees. However, like many established companies, Fern faced challenges when it came to connecting modern devices to their legacy IBMi (AS/400).

"My job is to keep Fern on the forefront of our industry wherever technology touches our customers," says Jeff Mason, Director of Customer Technology Innovation. "Some of the innovative concepts that excited us as a company required that we use modern devices to access and edit data that only existed on one of our legacy systems. We needed to improve our access to that data."

One of Jeff's top priorities was to enable remote access to their legacy data via a mobile web app from the trade show floor. "We produce over a thousand events per year, and each event can require tracking hundreds or thousands of exhibitor shipments in and out of the event. At every event, exhibitors want to know the status of their shipments. We believed that there were efficiencies to be gained in the way we recorded and provided this information."

## About OpenLegacy

OpenLegacy accelerates delivery of innovative digital services from legacy systems in days or weeks versus months. Our microservices-based API integration and management software reduces manual effort by automating API creation, simplifies the process by avoiding layers of complexity, and improves staff efficiency and API performance. Our software directly accesses and extends business logic to web, mobile or cloud innovations in the form of Java objects, REST APIs or SOAP. Most importantly, this process is not only fast, easy and secure, but also does not require special staff skills or changes to existing systems or architecture. Together, business and IT teams can quickly, easily and securely meet consumer, partner or employee demands for digital services without altering or replacing core systems. Learn why leading companies choose OpenLegacy at www.openlegacy.com.

## The Solution

Fern's business drivers were to deliver a better customer experience and stay ahead of the industry curve. The company turned to OpenLegacy to expose and extend their AS/400 application as REST APIs so exhibitors and event staff could have more instant and up-to-date information about shipment locations on their mobile phones from the event floor.

"Traditionally, paper forms and manual processes have been used across the industry to record incoming shipments. Though we have evolved the process in years past, we felt that there was still room for improvement to achieve the customer experience we wanted to provide." says Jeff. "Now, at the dock, we can scan and record the shipment with a very user-friendly mobile application, photograph it, and even notify the exhibitor automatically that their freight has arrived using email or SMS. This is a big part of our service to exhibitors, so having it done efficiently, accurately, and with an audit trail is extremely important."

It's likely that this system will save significant time and eliminate duplicate data entry on each event. This time savings represents real dollar savings, not counting the value of delighting customers. Benefits include:

- Increased traceability
- Reduction in insurance claims
- Documented processes
- Instant customer notification
- Competitive services
- Immediate ROI

"Our efforts in this area helped ensure that we continue to lead in customer technology offerings, and allows us to innovate further," says Jeff.

## The Result: A Path for More Innovation

"I was impressed with how fast we got everything deployed. In less than a month, OpenLegacy was able accomplish our objectives through a modern REST API," said Jeff. The bulk of the time was spent defining the parameters that will make up the inputs and outputs from the AS/400 and training on the new system. The creation and implementation of the API took just one hour.

For Fern, the implications were tremendous. "The expanded ability to send this type of data instantly and directly to the AS/400 opens the door to several other innovations on our list. OpenLegacy was critical in making it happen and making it happen quickly. We look forward to expanding our usage of OpenLegacy in the near future as we continue to push the boundaries of the customer experience that can be expected in this industry."

## OpenLegacy
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