

# Leading trade show production company improves satisfaction & differentiation

Fern leverages their IBM i for real-time, interactive mobile app, improving customer satisfaction & competitive differentiation

Microservices

IBM i

Services

Mobile App

As one of the largest event service contractors in North America, Fern specializes in corporate and large-scale events, trade shows, and exhibitor services. In their 110+ years of business, they have managed more than 1400 trade shows and hundreds of corporate events.



## 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 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 established an impressive track record over its 110-year history and built a sizeable company with offices across the United States. 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 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."

Fern needed mobile access to their legacy data while on the trade show floor. "We produce over a thousand events per year, and each event requires tracking hundreds or thousands of exhibitor shipments in and out of the event. At every event, exhibitors need the status of their shipments. We believed that there were efficiencies to be gained in the way we recorded and provided this information."



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**Jeff Mason, Director of Customer Technology Innovation, Fern**



## The Solution

Fern needed a better customer experience to stay ahead of the industry curve. The company turned to OpenLegacy to expose their IBM i application as REST APIs so exhibitors and event staff could have up-to-date information about shipment locations on while on the event floor.

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

This system saves significant time and eliminates duplicate data entry on each event. This time savings represents real dollar savings. An added benefit is delighting customers. Benefits include:

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

“Our efforts in this area help ensure we continue to lead in customer technology offerings, and allows us to innovate further,” says Jeff.



## The Result

### Deployment in less than a month

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

### Leveraging legacy system in innovation is critical

For Fern, the implications were tremendous. “The expanded ability to send this type of data instantly to the IBM i opens the door to several other innovations on our list. OpenLegacy made 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.”

### About OpenLegacy

OpenLegacy’s Digital-Driven Integration enables organizations with legacy systems to release new digital services faster and easier than ever before. Connecting directly to even the most complex core systems, OpenLegacy automatically generates the digital-ready components needed to integrate legacy assets into exciting new innovations. With OpenLegacy, industry-leading companies release new apps, features, and updates while spending a fraction of the time and resources, so they quickly and easily become digital to the core.