

## ASNA Case Study

## AiM—IBM i to .NET Framework

## Challenge

AiM developed its software for the IBM® i™ market. When the IBM® i faded as a popular business platform, AiM needed to follow its market.

“The IBM® i had started to lose its way in the latter part of the 1990s,” says Jon Dean, Technical Director at AiM Software. “The technology and user interface were perceived to be outdated and the marketing

***“By migrating our product to .NET, we’re seeing new customers, more customers, more sales, and more ways to do business. From both business and technology standpoints, the migration is proving to be a complete success.”***

Jon Dean, Technical Director at AiM Software

momentum was slowing.” By 2000, it was clear to Dean and his colleagues that they needed to revisit, and revise, their platform technology strategy.

AiM’s ERP solution included more than

10,000 programs consisting of more than 2 million lines of RPG code. This was a massive software base and AiM was concerned that any migration to a new platform would be expensive and risky.

The company wanted to offer alternative platforms—but couldn’t afford to simply abandon the 10-year investment it had in code for that platform.

The company looked at solutions including “on-the-fly screen scrapers” and front-end redevelopment with IBM WebSphere while still using the same backend software and servers.

But none of these solutions fully met AiM’s needs, as they required the continued presence of the IBM i on the backend, the complete retraining or replacement of AiM’s software development staff, loss of control over its

## At a glance...

**Customer profile:** AiM Software, located in Solihull, England, provides enterprise resource planning (ERP) software solutions with 23 modules, focusing on the manufacturing and distribution markets.

**Situation:** The IBM i platform limited AiM’s ability to attract new customers and increase its market share.

**Solution:** With the help of Microsoft® Gold Certified Partner ASNA, AiM migrated its solution code from System i to the Microsoft .NET Framework.

**Benefits:**

- Migration savings of 50 percent
- Customer training time reduced
- Customer order activity expected to increase more than 100 percent

**Products:** ASNA Monarch, ASNA Visual RPG for .NET, ASNA DataGate, DB2/400, SQL Server



solution as development was passed to offshore resources, or exorbitant investments that mitigated the financial benefits of moving to the fast-growing portion of the market. ASNA Solution

ASNA offered a series of software tools and solutions for migrating AiM's ERP solution to the .NET Framework, which would free AiM from IBM i, leverage its investment in RPG code, and produce a robust solution.

"The attraction of the ASNA tools was their ability to enable us to use our existing programming logic and source code in the .NET environment," says Dean.

Using Monarch, ASNA's modernization tool, AiM developed a roadmap to first migrate small, less complex applications in its ERP solution and then move on to more complex applications with 12,000 lines of code or more. AiM first migrated 2 of its 23 modules to perfect its migration process. For example, the AiM developers learned that performing some "mass change" pre-migration work to the original code—such as removing unused constants, fields, headings, and function keys—would more fully automate the migration process.

***"The IBM i had started to lose its way in the latter part of the 1990s. The technology and user interface were perceived to be outdated and the marketing momentum was slowing."***

Jon Dean, Technical Director at AiM Software

The migration process was largely completed in eight months. After that, AiM reviewed its .NET RPG code using Visual Studio® Professional Edition to adjust the look and feel of some of the screens. "The functionality came through Monarch 100 percent," says Dean. "The last step for us was refining the presentation."

## Project Benefits

By migrating its solution to the .NET Framework, AiM expects its order rate to double within a year, can offer its solution to new markets, and it can consider new, more profitable business models, such as "software as a service." In addition, by using ASNA tools, the migration time and cost were significantly less.

**Migration Savings of 50 Percent:** The migration was not only fast—given the application size—taking only 8 months for 20 of the 23 modules, it was cost-effective too. The migration was accomplished largely by a single developer with a

manager assisting part-time. That enabled AiM to save 50 percent of the €400,000 it would have spent to do the same evaluation process and core migration using an alternative approach.

***"ASNA enabled us to use our existing programming logic and source code in the .NET environment."***

Jon Dean, Technical Director at AiM Software

Moreover, by continuing to take advantage of its mature RPG code in the .NET Framework environment, rather than having to recreate its code from scratch, AiM extended the return on its investment in that code, and avoided an additional investment to debug and

perfect new code. This process also enabled AiM to retain control of the migration project in-house.



**Customer Training Time Reduced:** It takes customers less time to train on the new, .NET-based version of AiM ERP software because the user interface has the familiar look and feel of Windows, rather than the less-intuitive “green screens” of IBM i.

AiM customers also gain other benefits from the new, .NET-based ERP software that go beyond the easier interface, such as a more flexible work environment and integration with other Microsoft technologies.

**Customer Order Activity Up More than 100 Percent:** Within months of announcing the new version of its ERP software to the market, Dean says that the company has already seen a significant increase in order activity. He expects the customer order rate to more than double within the next 12 months, in part because customers now can acquire AiM ERP software and deploy it on their existing Windows-based hardware, rather than having to acquire IBM i hardware specifically for the ERP deployment.

### About ASNA

ASNA, provides comprehensive and flexible solutions for modernizing IBM i applications to the Microsoft .NET platform. ASNA enables companies to integrate and extend their solutions to .NET, the Web and beyond, while preserving investments in IT and human resources. ASNA solutions are distributed worldwide and used by more than a million end users.

ASNA is a Gold Level partner of Microsoft's Partner Network, Microsoft Visual Studio Industry Partner, and an Advanced Tier Member of IBM's PartnerWorld for Developers. ASNA is also a gold level partner of Microsoft's Platform Modernization Alliance.