The Benefits of Staying on the IBM i Platform and Connecting to IBM i Native Shipping Software

There are plenty of important decisions people make throughout their lifetime: staying in a current job or pursuing a new career, relocating to a new city or staying near family, committing to a long-term relationship or flying solo. For shippers in the retail, manufacturing, healthcare and third-party logistics worlds, the weight of important decisions is no different. The choices made can have profound and lasting impacts, especially when selecting the right platforms for your business operations.

Much like choosing a career path or deciding where to settle down, choosing the best platform for your business can dictate efficiency, reliability, and ultimately your bottom line. In a rapidly evolving shipping environment, efficiency and adaptability are crucial for industry success. And with a plethora of technology solutions on the market, one platform has stood the test of time, offering stability, reliability, and robustness: the IBM i platform.

In this blog, we'll explore how the IBM i platform continues to provide stability and innovation in the ever-evolving supply chain industry, and why integrating it with cutting-edge shipping software can propel businesses towards optimal efficiency and lasting success in the competitive world of logistics.

The IBM i Platform

IBM introduced the IBM i platform in 2010. Throughout the years the IBM i platform has evolved through many versions (the AS/400, iSeries and System i), ensuring that as things advanced in the technological world the platform would remain a dependable, user-friendly, and robust system. Its evolution has proven its standing as a versatile solution "designed to adapt to the ever-changing needs of both business and computing" (ibm.com) across various industries, including supply chain and logistics.

With the IBM i platform's strong relevance and adaptability, it's no surprise the platform continues to provide a stable foundation for businesses' operations today. It serves as the backbone for countless companies' daily operations from inventory management to order processing and transportation logistics, ensuring smooth workflows and timely deliveries. IBM i offers the stability and security that makes it a platform uniquely suited to handle the complexities of the modern supply chain with ease.

Key features and strengths of the IBM i platform:

· Full stack integration

· Object-Based Architecture

· New Technologies for Business Value

· Simplified Systems Management

· Cloud Deployment Options

Common Shipping Challenges and Pain Points

As we mentioned before, important decisions can hold a lot of weight when it comes to how it affects your shipping operations. The reality is, not every business can make the best decision every time. With the combination of supply chain unpredictability and ineffective business decisions, shippers often encounter a variety of challenges that hinder efficiency and delay growth. Some of the common challenges and pain points shippers face include:

· **Manual Data Entry:** Manual data entry can be a significant headache for shippers because much like any manual task, there is a high risk for errors and inefficiencies. Relying on manual methods for operational tasks like entering shipping addresses, shipment details, and tracking information doesn't just leave plenty of room for error. These are time-consuming tasks that can slow down operations, causing delays in order processing and fulfillment, ultimately negatively impacting customer satisfaction.

· **Integration with Homegrown/Outdated Systems:** When dealing with homegrown and outdated technology, it is inherent that shippers will face an assortment of challenges. These nearing-obsolete systems rarely possess the scalability, flexibility, and compatibility needed to seamlessly integrate with advanced technologies and third-party platforms, tarnishing operational efficiency, agility, and growth. In addition, these systems can be costly to maintain and often have very few contacts for support. Relying on outdated systems limits access to advanced capabilities necessary to meet many of today's shippers' needs, respond appropriately to dynamic market conditions, and remain competitive.

· **Inefficient Processes:** For shippers trying to make the most of their operations and budget, inefficient processes are their worst enemy. Poor communication, manual inventory management, trying to ship from multiple carrier-provided systems, and substandard route planning are all examples of processes that take away from operational efficiency. Inefficient processes not only cause longer delays and can damage your reputation amongst customers, but their cumulative impact can drain profit margins.

· **Limited Visibility:** In an industry where change is constant, real-time visibility is vital for businesses to stay in the game. The lack of real-time visibility into shipment statuses, inventory levels, and transportation networks can severely hinder your decision-making abilities and responsiveness. Shippers who are unable to proactively address issues, delays, inventory shortages, and customer complaints, are put in a position to lose customers and profit. Ultimately, limited visibility puts your business at risk of being affected by supply chain disruptions, meeting customer demands, and maintaining a competitive edge.

With a laundry list of challenges and pain points shippers commonly encounter, the need for a solution to overcome these hurdles is evident. To not just survive, but thrive in the dynamic parcel market, shippers need a modern, integrated shipping software solution that can seamlessly integrate with existing systems, automate tasks upstream, streamline workflows, and provide real-time visibility. By leveraging advanced shipping software native to the IBM i platform, businesses can take on these shipping pain points effectively, optimize their daily operations, and put their business in a position for long-term success.

The Benefits of Connecting to Shipping Software on the IBM i Platform

Utilizing a native IBM i shipping software platform provides businesses with a centralized solution for managing their day-to-day shipping operations. For shippers seeking to streamline their operations, enhance efficiency, and drive business growth, this connection offers a multitude of advantages including some of the following key benefits:

· **Seamless Integration with Existing Systems:** With native IBM i shipping software, businesses get the benefit of a seamless integration between their large technology systems and streamlined operations. By integrating shipping software with your existing Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP), Operations Management System (OMS), and/or Warehouse Management System (WMS), businesses can create a unified view of their supply chain processes. Doing so helps ensure data consistency and accuracy across each platform, enabling real-time communication and collaboration between different departments.

· **Improved Efficiency with Task Automation:** A huge advantage to integrating shipping software with the IBM i platform is the automation of manual tasks. Repetitive tasks such as order processing, label generation, and shipment tracking can be time consuming, and simple errors can be costly. Automating tasks like these eliminates reliance on manual labor and creates an environment for faster order processing, resulting in quick fulfillment and increased customer satisfaction.

· **Enhanced Security with IBM i-Compatible Shipping Software:** Security is a top priority when it comes to shipping operations, especially when dealing with sensitive customer information and payment details. Integrating shipping software with the IBM i platform adds an extra layer of advanced security functionality, including data encryption, single sign-on user authentication, object authority access and more, guaranteeing data integrity and adherence to industry security standards to protect your business and customers.

· **Scalability and Accommodation of Growing Shipping Volumes:** When businesses grow, their shipping volumes increase in tandem, making scalability essential to accommodate evolving business needs. When you connect shipping software to the IBM i platform, businesses have the ability to scale their shipping operations swiftly without compromising their performance. Whether handling a few shipments or thousands, IBM i-compatible shipping software can effectively manage the increased workload, ensuring smooth and efficient order processing, tracking, and fulfillment processes.

· **Cost-effectiveness and Cost-Saving Benefits:** Leveraging the existing IBM i infrastructure for shipping operations can produce significant cost-savings. When you integrate shipping software with the platform, businesses can avoid high costs associated with investing in new hardware or software licenses and implementation. Additionally, the streamlined workflows and increased productivity that comes from connecting shipping software with the IBM i platform leads to savings in labor, reduced errors, and optimized transportation costs.

IBM i and Shipping Software: A Winning Combination

Still standing with its impressive history and robust functionality, the IBM i platform offers a comprehensive solution for businesses looking to streamline their operations and navigate the complexities of the dynamic shipping landscape. By connecting shipping software to the IBM i platform, business can overcome common pain points such as manual data entry, inefficient processes, and limited visibility, ultimately enhancing efficiency, reducing costs, and improving customer satisfaction.

With features like task automation, enhanced security, and scalability, IBM i native shipping software, like Varsity Logistics' industry leading multi-carrier shipping software, enables businesses to optimize their shipping strategies, adapt to evolving business needs, and set themselves up for long-term success. By leveraging the power of the IBM i platform in combination with top-tier shipping software, businesses can stay ahead of the curve, drive growth, and achieve excellence in their shipping operations without having to look far.

Learn more about Varsity Logistics' suite of parcel and LTL solutions by visiting

https://varsitylogistics.com.