

CenterPoint Energy Accelerates Secure App Delivery



About CenterPoint Energy

CenterPoint Energy is an electric and natural gas utility company that operates in eight states from the gulf coast of Texas to states boarding the Great Lakes. They have been in business for more than 140 years and employ over 14,000 people. The company delivers millions of customers natural gas and metered electricity.

The Problem: Getting Apps into the Hands of Users

Because technology is improved and changes quickly, many businesses are face undesired functionality issues with legacy systems they have in place. Replacing a legacy system to achieve the functionality offered by today's tech, is extremely expensive and most opt to not make the changes. In addition to replacing a system, companies face the cost of educating employees and risk downtime during the migration.

Because of the legacy system they had in place, CenterPoint Energy was unable to have a framework that provided the functionality they needed for the technology they wanted to build. CenterPoint Energy wanted to build a mobile app that would allow their field workers to work in real-time with the back office. They wanted the app to be capable of processing work orders, checking inventory for parts and keeping customers up to date on services and repairs. The application would speed up many processes and increase the company's overall efficiency.

CenterPoint Energy also had plans for additional technology, but wanted to create the structure needed to support a mobile app that could relay data in real-time and while remaining in compliance with the security parameters around the data passed through the application.

So, CenterPoint Energy needed Bowdark to build compatible middleware that delivered the functionality they desired. Through integrated middleware, Bowdark was expected to solve the problems of slow data transmission, hindered communications, slow work order processing, lack of live updates, and the inability to track mobile application user input.

The Solution: A New Platform for App Delivery

Fortunately for CenterPoint Energy, their SAP based legacy system could be augmented with middleware to deliver the capabilities they were looking for. Bowdark built a middleware ware platform, essentially enhancing the legacy system so that a new application and future technology could operate as desired. In short, the solution included:

- Building a middleware platform to support application operations and functionality
- Building an application with all needed functions and an optimal user interface
- Integrating the application with the current legacy system

The Process

To start, Bowdark worked closely with CenterPoint Energy's IT architecture group to understand their integration challenges. From there Bowdark designed a platform flexible enough to address the flexibility, security, and simplicity issues CenterPoint Energy was experiencing.

Based on system analysis and working with each department to better understand what they needed from the application, Bowdark decided to build the app outside of the existing SAP framework using open enterprise technologies. The team also recognized they needed to unlock SAP API access with third-party microservices using A2X-Style integrations to achieve the desired results while keeping the current SAP infrastructure intact.

The main reason for using open enterprise technologies was because SAP-based solutions would have been cumbersome in that they require more workload execution to get the same job done. In other words, open enterprise technologies would lead to faster and more secure data transmission. So, instead of employing SOAP operations that generate many RFCs, they used the lightweight integrations mentioned in the solution section that work with REST APIs.

During the entire process, Bowdark kept CenterPoint Energy stakeholders regularly apprised about the project and addressed stakeholder concerns about functionality and security. Additionally, the process mentioned above occurred in sync with the delivery of application wireframes and descriptions of what the product could do as it was developed.

The Results

The middleware platform delivered by Bowdark allowed CenterPoint Energy to run the new application, also built by Bowdark. Most importantly, CenterPoint Energy now has a platform from which they can build other new technologies without having to replace their legacy system.

Bowdark delivered the application within budget and within the six-month timeframe allotted for the project to be completed. CenterPoint Energy has not reported any problems with implementation since its deployment.

Bowdark continues to work with CenterPoint to update its SAP frameworks as well as to improve user applications for functionality.

About Bowdark

Bowdark is an IT management consulting firm with extensive Microsoft and SAP integration experience that works with companies in the utilities, aerospace and defense, manufacturing, distribution and public sector industries. The group has worked with many utility companies on their second-wave digital transformation.

It has been their experience that enterprises that integrated SAP architectures when the technology first came around have had a tough time upgrading legacy systems and providing services that consumers and employees have become accustomed to from other places. Bowdark works with companies to solve these problems by building innovative and impactful software solutions.

Their establishment in 2006 has allowed them to follow every nuance of progress in the SAP and Microsoft worlds. This gives them specific knowledge of each iteration generated and the changes that need to happen to make add-ons perform as expected, no matter when the system

was installed. They also work to upgrade systems and create reusable assets so that upgrades and changes in functionality are easier in the future.

Visit bowdark.com today to discover how your company can integrate systems and build applications that save time and draw consumer interest.