

ISG positions IBA Group within the

Top

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in Mainframe Application Modernization Services

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Mainframe modernization is no longer just a binary choice between retaining the platform and making an exit. Enterprises are increasingly reshaping the role of mainframes within hybrid IT, while retaining the resilience, security and transaction integrity of the core systems. IBA Group’s positioning shows a specialist provider with a long-standing mainframe engineering experience and a portfolio spanning application understanding, modernization, migration and ongoing support.

Mainframe modernization market: Controlled change is replacing a complete exit decision

The mainframe remains a high-integrity system of record and transaction for critical workloads. The direction of change, therefore, is selective modernization — retaining and optimizing the functions that benefit from mainframe characteristics, while identifying or relocating relevant capabilities through APIs, microservices, containers and cloud services. Modernization is increasingly extending beyond code movement to modern user interfaces and a unified application lifecycle, supported by agile practices, CI/CD, automated testing and quality assurance. The target state is increasingly about a hybrid coexistence rather than a single mandated platform outcome.

GenAI and agentic AI have moved from experiments into delivery workflows. Providers are applying AI for discovery, reverse engineering, business-rule extraction, dependency mapping, documentation, test generation and code scaffolding. However, AI alone is no longer a differentiator. European enterprises are increasingly expecting an explainable, auditable and governed use of AI, in keeping with the European AI-act and supported by deterministic verification, human oversight, traceable decision-making and the required compliance.

Big-bang transformation is giving way to phased, risk-managed programs. Modernization is being structured around application-level decisions, quality gates, parallel validation, rollback options and the continuity of operations. However, regulations, and data sovereignty and residency, alongside operational resilience, have become design constraints, particularly in Europe. Persistent skill shortages are further increasing the demand for automation, knowledge capture, and modern developer experiences and delivery models that reduce dependence on individual experts.

What creates a marketplace advantage

Governed, business-aware engineering

Providers gain credibility when AI-assisted discovery and transformation are embedded in repeatable engineering processes, can preserve functional equivalence, reveal dependencies and are in keeping with business rules. Robust testing, quality assurance and human validation are especially important for regulated and mission-critical estates.

Multiple modernization paths with lifecycle continuity

Competing providers support optimization in place, refactoring, API and user-interface modernization, replatforming, rehosting, selective replacement and retirement. They find a competitive advantage by connecting assessment, roadmap, PoC, implementation, deployment and support through common governance, reducing handover risks and enabling incremental value delivery.

Skills, ecosystem and regional execution

Deep legacy-language expertise, modern software-engineering capabilities, cloud and tool partnerships, security controls, and an active talent-development model are factors that are increasingly driving buyer decisions. The market favors credible and sustained delivery over ambitious transformation claims.

Why IBA Group merits consideration

Deep legacy engineering and code recovery

IBA Group reports more than 30 years of mainframe experience, 200+ professionals and 100+ completed projects. Its expertise spans z/OS, z/VM, Linux on Z and BS2000/OSD and languages including COBOL, PL/I, Assembler, Java, C/C++, REXX and JCL. Its COBOL Code Recovery reconstructs functionally equivalent source from executables when source is missing or mismatched, with an AI option adding business semantics for reverse engineering and modernization.

AI-enhanced support and reverse engineering

IBA Group extends L2/L3 application support with AI-assisted incident analysis, code changes, testing and deployment, using an Application Knowledge Model and assistants for batch incidents, documentation and troubleshooting. Its AI-powered reverse engineering inventories active components, identifies integrations and business rules, documents actual business processes and creates migration roadmaps validated through PoCs.

Pragmatic, business-aware modernization and hybrid integration

Services include API enablement, modern web interfaces, Mainframe DevOps, CI/CD, automated testing and modern development environments. IBA Group supports workload-specific combinations of preserving core logic, refactoring or reworking code, replatforming to cloud-native environments and cloud rehosting. This enables enterprises to improve accessibility, delivery velocity and developer productivity without imposing a single modernization end state.

Lifecycle breadth, ecosystem and security

IBA Group combines modernization and migration with application and z/OS system support and structured decommissioning. It contributes to the Open Mainframe Project and Zowe; its Zowe Explorer for IntelliJ IDEA became part of Zowe core and the V3 LTS release. An information security management system and multi-location European delivery model support phased programs requiring continuity from transformation into operations.

Evidence from delivery

Provider-supplied case studies report the recovery of more than **150** missing COBOL sources and the addition of business semantics to enable a reverse-engineering phase.

A Zowe-based development modernization pilot reportedly reduced development lifecycle time by **50%** and increased efficiency and productivity by **30%**.

A separate Mainframe DevOps program improved deployment frequency from monthly releases to daily deployment, accelerated integration and user-acceptance testing by 2-3 times and reduced operational costs by **30% to 40%**

Analyst view

“IBA Group is a company to look out for in mainframe application modernization because it combines long-standing platform engineering with practical capabilities in AI-assisted reverse engineering, COBOL source recovery, DevOps and API-led integration. This approach directly addresses transformation challenges such as missing knowledge, skill shortage and slow-release processes, while supporting a phased path that preserves critical business logic and operational continuity.”



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