History Highlights: CSI Worldwide

A Tale of Two CSIs

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times…"

While Charles Dickens wasn't writing about trade shows, his words echo the rhythm of the live events industry. We've seen years of growth, innovation, and global reach — and we've endured recessions, shutdowns, and seismic shifts in how events are produced. Through it all, one thing has remained true: the strength of this industry is built on the people who show up, solve problems, and build trust — show after show, year after year.

Few companies embody that legacy — and its evolution — quite like CSI Worldwide.

The Beginning: A Craftsman, a Client, and a Realization

In 1965, before founding a company, Steve Cahill was a skilled craftsman working in and around the live event space. That year, he developed a working relationship with Panasonic, supporting their exhibit programs and earning a reputation for quality and precision.

Through that work, Steve gained a front-row seat to the exhibitor experience — and what he saw was a problem no one seemed eager to fix. Even major brands, with carefully designed exhibits and big investments, were often left to fend for themselves once they arrived at the show floor. Labor was inconsistent. Support was minimal. Exhibiting companies were expected to navigate it all on their own.

It wasn't that service didn't exist — it just didn't extend to the exhibitor. While general contractors focused on delivering for show organizers, exhibitors often lacked the guidance and accountability needed to succeed on-site.

Steve saw an opportunity to change that — not by replacing the system, but by filling the gap. In 1972, he founded Convention Services, Incorporated — known from the beginning as CSI — with a mission to deliver comprehensive, hands-on, personalized service to exhibitors. It wasn't just about installing booths. It was about showing up with purpose, solving problems on the ground, and building relationships that lasted beyond teardown.

Growing a Legacy: 1972–2002

Over the next 30 years, CSI built a reputation for being steady, skilled, and service-driven. The company became one of the earliest and most respected I&D providers in the country, not just for the quality of its work, but for the caliber of its people. CSI crews became known

for showing up early, staying late, and stepping up when things didn't go as planned.

More than a service provider, CSI became a proving ground. Many of today's most respected labor managers — and several I&D companies — can trace their roots back to CSI. Whether through direct employment or mentorship under those who came up through CSI, its influence can be found across cities, venues, and decades.

A New Chapter Begins: 2002–2021

In 1988, after retiring from the New York Police Department, Dave Centrowitz began working for CSI — bringing with him a steady, no-nonsense leadership style and a strong sense of service. Over the years, Dave became deeply involved in the company's day-to-day operations, learning every aspect of the business from the ground up.

In 2002, Dave officially acquired CSI and ushered in a new era of ownership. With his guidance, the company expanded its national footprint, invested in long-term client relationships, and reinforced its commitment to treating every exhibitor with care and consistency.

Today, CSI is led by Dave Centrowitz and powered by his two sons, Jeff Centrowitz and Mark Centrowitz, who bring their own expertise, innovation, and deep respect for the company's legacy. Together, they continue to guide CSI with a focus on long-term relationships, operational excellence, and personal pride in the work.

As CSI expanded, it remained a true family business — in ownership, culture, and daily operations. Spouses, siblings, cousins, uncles, and lifelong friends have all played a part in building the company. As the team often says, "If we didn't love what we do, we wouldn't bring our loved ones into it."

A Broader Vision: 2021–Today

In 2021, CSI launched its General Service Contracting (GSC) division — not as a reinvention, but as an extension of everything it had always done well. Led by seasoned industry professionals, many with long histories at ESCA, the division was built to meet a clear need: provide exhibitors and organizers with the same level of attention and professionalism across all services, not just labor.

What makes CSI's General Service Contract offering distinct is the foundation it's built upon. The same specialized, client-facing crews who have led complex builds and supported major pavilion installations are now delivering full-service support, from signage and furnishings to freight and floorplans. It's hands-on, high-touch service at every level, led by teams who

know the floor inside and out.

CSI's GSC and I&D divisions operate as one, united in values, standards, and execution. Both represent the company's future, side by side.

Trusted Nationwide. Relied Upon in New York.

While CSI supports events across the country, it has become particularly trusted in New York City — a market many contractors avoid due to its complexity, dynamics, and logistical challenges.

CSI, however, has leaned in. With deep experience, established relationships, and proven results, the company has become a go-to resource, not just for its clients but for other contractors as well. Many national general service contractors entrust their New York–based work to CSI, knowing it will be executed to their standards without the need to establish local infrastructure.

That same commitment carries through in every market CSI serves, coast to coast.

Built by Family. Sustained by People.

What truly defines CSI is its people. It is, in every sense, a family business — built by generations, powered by relationships, and held together by shared values.

That commitment extends beyond the company. Throughout its involvement in the industry — and especially through ESCA — CSI team members have contributed to shaping the future of the profession through leadership roles, including:

- Bobby Lee, former ESCA board member
- Lenny Servedio, former ESCA board president
- Larry Grossenbacher, 2029 ESCA president-elect
- Allie Wrede, ESCA Rising Leaders Committee member

Their involvement reflects CSI's belief that building a better industry requires shared leadership, long-term vision, and showing up not just on the show floor, but in the conversations that move us forward.

Still Building, Always Evolving

After more than five decades, CSI Worldwide continues to deliver on the vision that started it all: show up, solve problems, and support every exhibitor with care, skill, and professionalism.

The industry may change. Timelines may tighten. Technology may evolve. But one thing remains constant: CSI will be there — building with intention, growing with purpose, and leading with people.

CSI Worldwide. Complete Trade Show Services.