OSI Solidifies OSAS Investment with BBj

By Susan Darling

Open Systems, Inc., in Shakopee, MN, develops accounting software and business applications for small- to medium-sized businesses, making the necessary technology choices to keep their application software convenient, competitive, and current. Their flagship application, OPEN SYSTEMS Accounting Software (OSAS), is the ideal solution for users of one or more of these operating systems: Windows, Linux, UNIX, MAC, AIX, or Solaris. OSAS is one of a few major accounting software suites in its market category to run on the Linux and Mac platforms. Visit them online at www.osas.com.

Solid business planning helps shape and direct a company's future. That most certainly is the case at Open Systems, Inc. (OSI).

Solid History

Beginning in 1976, Open Systems' founding programmers wrote fundamental accounting packages for a Cado environment, and later packaged it for other companies such as Rexon. As the new PC world began to surface in the early 1980s, OSI saw great potential in this environment for their accounting applications. Though the industry was filled with many operating system fragmentations and unique versions of DOS, they discovered Business BASIC and its ability to port to many platforms. As a result, OSI wrote their first Business BASIC version of their OPEN SYSTEMS® Accounting Software (OSAS®) application in Control C Corporation's Business BASIC, then eventually in SMC Thoroughbred, to offer additional platform flexibility.

By the mid 80s, the newly formed BASIS International Ltd. introduced Business BASIC eXtended (BBx®) with even greater portability and extended utilities and features, as the name implies. OSAS quickly moved to BBx and began their longstanding relationship with BASIS. Dave Link, Vice President of OSAS Product Development, says, "*BASIS brought us a much more robust suite and a one-stop shop with a lot more ports on various platforms. Where we used to have to use various vendors to support all the platforms, BASIS supported the ones that were important to us at the time.*" Before long, GUI technology emerged, so naturally OSI joined the graphical world by upgrading to Visual PRO/5®.

Solid Planning

As the success of OSAS grew, OSI continued to look to the future for new and rising technology. Their management team saw the need to enhance the architecture and technology behind the product in order to move forward to the next
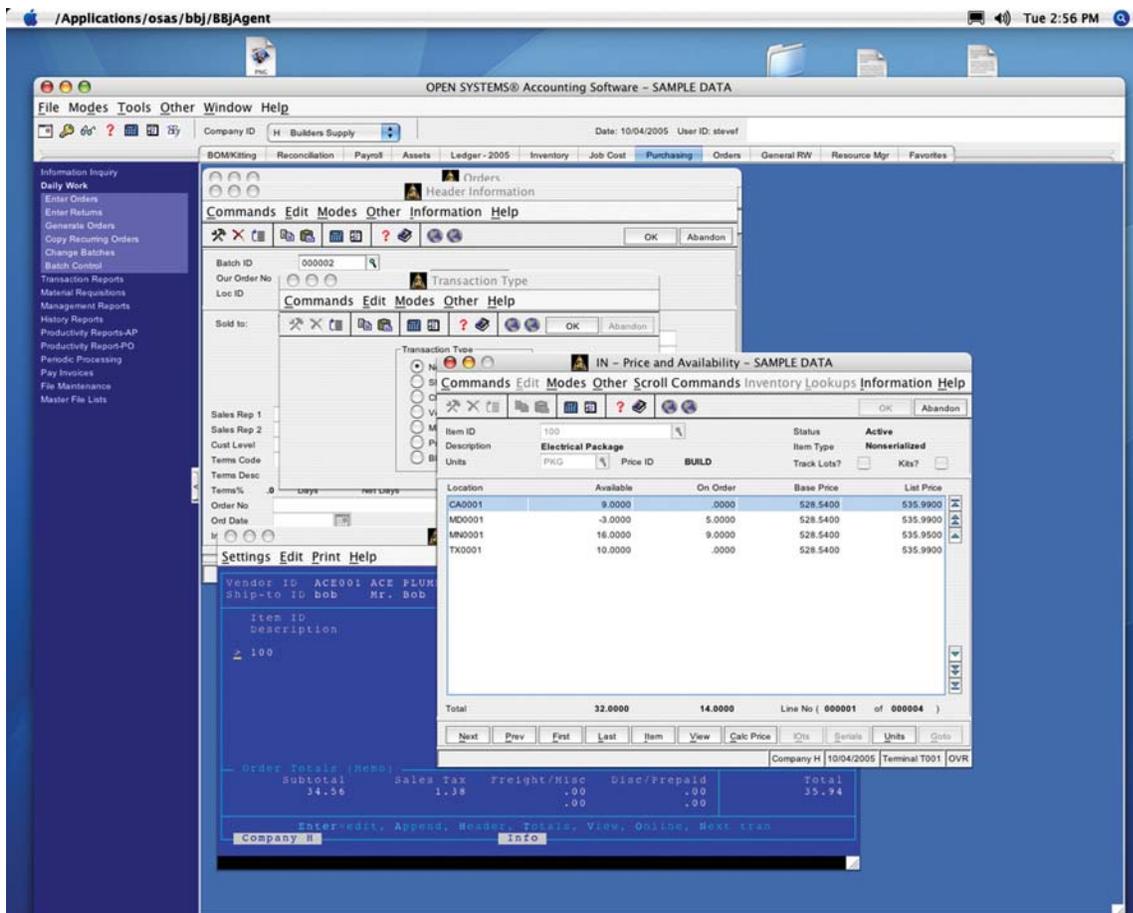
Figure 1. OSAS 7.0 running on the Mac OS X

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> *"We are excited about the OSAS 7.0 product on the BBj platform. We believe that the BBj language brings the OSAS product line and our reseller channel not only new exciting technology for our existing clients, but also opens up the door for many new growth market opportunities."* **— Michael Bertini, CEO**

generation's technology. They felt the world was moving to Java for greater portability and Internet connectivity. Coincidentally, BASIS saw Java in their future as well, and began planning their next BBx generation – BBj®, the "re-named" Java-based BBx PROGRESSION/6. With mutual interest in the future technology, OSAS began meeting with BASIS' development staff and senior engineers, as early as 6 years ago, to look closely at the direction BASIS was going and to see if their futures continued to align.

Solid Decisions

Though OSI invested their OSAS product heavily in BBx technology, they kept options open to investigate other possible solutions. If they had to migrate their millions of lines of code to a non-BASIS language, they would meet the challenge of this daunting task. They were in search of the best solution with the greatest potential.

The more they investigated other Business BASICs and other platforms, the more obvious it became that BASIS was their perfect fit. BBj was, by far, the best solution for many reasons. First, and most obvious, was the seamless growth path from Visual PRO/5®, allowing them to leverage their existing technology and their own legacy code. BBj also allowed OSI to continue offering their customers support on multiple platforms; platform portability continued to be key. The list of supported platforms included two new ones – Mac OS X (see **Figure 1**) and GUI Linux – and opened up an exciting new market potential.

Solid Migration

With the choice made, and the work ahead, OSI began the migration of their millions of line of code across 17 products in their application suite. Dave shares that excluding the enhancements to the software, they had very little work to do and their code changes were minimal. He explains, "*We already made many changes in the code to accommodate the graphical world, so mostly we had to write code for the new features we added to the software, and some minor modifications for syntax changes and the minor differences between BBx and BBj. We included a number of new features.*" He continues, "*For the most part, the changes required were pretty straightforward. And you guys [BASIS] have been great to work with, helping us through the process and getting us to a point where we have a deliverable product to offer.*"

Solid Future

OSI released OSAS version 7.0 this past September for controlled distribution with general release to follow in 30-60 days. This new generation of OSAS offers more flexible deployment than before, 3-tier architecture, enhanced connectivity to the ODBC/JDBC, and Web services.

How have OSI's customers responded? Dave explains, *"We have been building up to this for 2-3 years, notifying the channel it is coming, preparing them for the move to the new technology. There is a great deal of excitement about the new user interface that takes advantage of the MDI control, and the jump to Java that opens the doors to great connectivity options."* With this notice of the forthcoming new technology, customers got a head start on their learning curve. OSI provided many opportunities for hands-on and tele-training to help customers learn about the new installation paradigm, learn how to optimize system settings, and understand more about networking.

Mac

Windows

UNIX

Paul Lundquist, Vice President of Sales, recently traveled the country to present OSAS 7.0 to thousands of customers during OSI executive briefings. Paul reports that *"Indications are the adoption rate [of 7.0] will hit an all-time high. We expect this product will be a significant part of our 40% growth projection for 2005/2006."* Paul continues, *"BBj enlarges our pie as we can now offer a packaged accounting solution for the Mac and Linux desktop where one just did not exist before."*
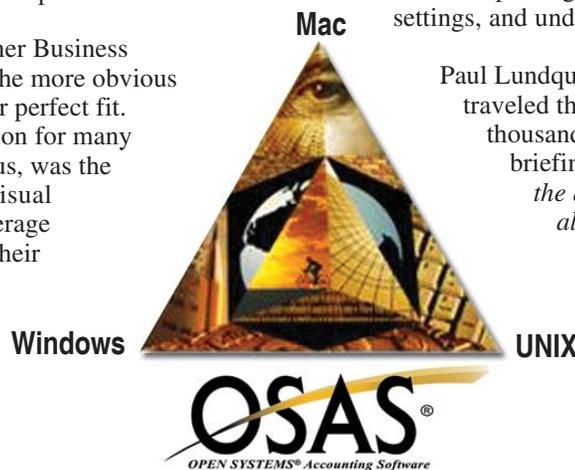
Solid Advice

As Vice President of OSAS Product Development, Dave shares this brotherly advice to other developers *"If you have taken a look at older versions of BBj such as 1.0 or 2.0 and haven't decided to move in that direction, take another look at revision 5 or 6. I see a lot of performance improvements, overall enhancements to the product. Migrating is a process… it is not automatic, but with help from the BASIS team, you are really not alone, it is a partnership destined for success."*

Summary

During their solid history that even pre-dates BASIS, OSI's single largest investment continues to be their intellectual property. Considering this investment and the sheer size of their installation base, their future looks very bright with BBj. This newest generation of BBx will certainly extend their growth and market share far into the future, creating an even greater return on their solid investment in BASIS technology.