

BB^x® Lives!

George Hight, president of BASIS International Ltd., kicked off the TechCon97 General Session by presenting BASIS' overall vision for the future. The following is a reprint of Hight's complete speech.

Welcome to the birth of *Volcano*[™].

The image of the *Volcano* is very appropriate when applied to the development of Business Basic. It is a language that has gone through periods of explosive activity followed by periods of relative dormancy.

The most recent eruption of the language occurred in 1985 when BASIS created BBx. Overnight, applications that were trapped on proprietary mini-computer hardware were freed. With BBx, applications could be transported to a whole new generation of hardware platforms. BBx developers could finally choose the hardware solutions that best fit their customers' needs, knowing that their applications' functionality would remain intact.



Today we are approaching a similar seismic event.

With *Volcano*, BASIS is opening up the language and freeing developers from monolithic Business Basic solutions. Now developers will be able to choose user interfaces and file systems while preserving the core functionality of their BBx applications. This new freedom opens tremendous opportunities for growth to both BASIS and its developers.

So where exactly is this amazing opportunity? It is found in the large installed base which today numbers 100,000 sites using PROGRESSION/4® and PRO/5® development environments, and nearly 1.5 million end-users. Thousands of businesses are running your applications, programs that have proved themselves over time. These powerful business applications have contributed to the success of these thousands of businesses, and replacing them poses significant risks and costs.

There is the financial risk if a new system fails to perform the critical business functions needed. There is a career risk to those within a company if they make a sweeping decision to go a new system that leads to undesired results. And there is the cost of retraining employees to use a new system.

Today we have the opportunity to solidify our relationships with our current end-users because we can deliver the new user interfaces and better access to information while preserving the vital business rules that make the systems work. We have the opportunity to remodel our end-users' existing systems and make them new, rather than rebuild from scratch.

The business rules and business processes that make the software solid have not changed. What has changed is the need to provide the information using industry-standard interfaces and the need to interact with other industry-standard file systems.

How is BASIS taking advantage of this opportunity? Like the *Volcano*, BASIS started by tearing down the old and the ineffective, and then rebuilding itself. At times, the seismic shifts in the company have resulted in problems that we are not proud of. However, from all this motion and rearrangement have come lasting changes and a new level of maturity here at BASIS.

We have shaken things up and transformed BASIS into a software company that can compete outside its present market niche. We have brought in new blood and initiated new processes to generate a new generation of products.

The results are products that are opening up the language through access to external objects such as OCXs, DLLs, and ActiveX components. These new products also offer better utilities such as ResBuilder™, DDBuilder™, and a future integrated development environment (IDE). There are also better runtime tools such as PRO/5 Data Servers® and a future new interpreter. In addition, we have developed strong connectivity features that support industry standards like ODBC and SQL.

While these products are offering tremendous new capabilities to our current customers, they are also breaking out of the traditional Business Basic frame of reference and giving developers the chance to succeed in the larger market of mid-sized businesses. Now you have the opportunity to go after larger customers, interact with other user interfaces created by languages such as Visual Basic, or with relational database systems from companies like Oracle, and become part of a larger corporate solution.

You can start taking advantage of these new opportunities today by starting to use the new BASIS products. The BASIS ODBC Driver™ is a great revenue avenue for all developers because of the growing demand for business decision support data. Using our new DDBuilder utility you will be able to easily create a data dictionary for your applications, and the new ODBC Driver 1.1 will allow you to seamlessly deal with non-normalized data. You will be able to offer your customers powerful new capabilities while also getting ready for the new IDE.

Take the Early Access code you have received today and start the migration of your application to these new interfaces. Start building the visual resources you will need in your applications. Use GRID, TAB, and INPUTE/INPUTN controls to create pleasing user interfaces while preserving the business rules and logic that make your application work. See how your applications can interact with the Internet and your Intranet. Use HTML as your GUI interface in your applications and instantly begin delivering products many of your customers are looking for.

The next Business Basic eruption is building-slowly, quietly. We know it is there, and we know it will happen.

For years the powerful BBx applications that run so many successful businesses have been residing quietly in the background, sometimes unnoticed and unappreciated. You have created these software jewels. The revolution in user-friendly interfaces and Web browsers is providing all of us with a unique opportunity to let those jewels shine. We have the opportunity to exploit the strength of our business knowledge and provide uniquely powerful business applications to a whole new mid-size market.

So today, we stand on the edge of another Business Basic eruption. Just as we did with the BBx revolution twelve years ago, we are opening up the language even further and offering new options for Business Basic developers. We are going to once again blow open the Business Basic market.

BBx Lives!