

Power Training:

An Interview With BASIS Trainer Jeff Steffanina

By Amy Petré Hill

Jeff Steffanina, president of Computer Business Consultants, brings twelve years experience with BBx® to BASIS training classes around the country. Jeff began working with BASIS products in 1985 as the vice president of technical services at Applied Accounting Technology. He and his programming staff were responsible for supporting more than eighty five BBx sites. For the last four years, Jeff Steffanina has been BASIS' Authorized Trainer in the United States. *The BASIS Advantage* caught up with Jeff for a quick interview during a Las Vegas Visual PRO/5™ training class in August.

Advantage (A): Jeff, you have been BASIS' main training guru for over four years now. Why do you do it?

Jeff Steffanina (JS): I really like working with professional programmers and seeing the eyes light up when they learn something new or realize the potential of a new feature. All this GUI is just an extension of the environment they are working with right now. Showing this to programmers and seeing them apply it to create killer applications is incredibly satisfying and fun.



Jeff Steffanina interacting with a Kilauea training class.

A: Within our first few minutes of talking you have already mentioned GUI twice. This must be the hot training issue.

JS: Absolutely. GUI is everywhere and many of the people coming into the classes know they need to offer GUI software to stay alive. What I find most developers don't know is how easy it is to add GUI to their current applications. Last week I had a developer come to me and say that the Visual PRO/5 class had taken a huge weight off his shoulders. He came in afraid his company was going to go bankrupt during a long, drawn-out migration of his code, but he left feeling confident that he could do it and make a lot of money with a new GUI version of his software. That is the great thing about Visual PRO/5, you add some mnemonics into an already strong program and end up with a blockbuster.

A: Tell us a little more about the new ODBC class.

JS: Well, BASIS did an ODBC class at TechCon97 this April, and it was such a success that BASIS decided to start offering it regularly. This new BASIS ODBC Driver™ 1.1 is just fantastic. In the past, you had to deal with the issue of non-normalized data, but now, BASIS resolved this issue with views. It's great. I'm excited about sharing this technology with other BBx developers.

A: Do you have an underlying philosophy you bring to the classes?

JS: As both a businessman and a developer I know what a pain it can be to lose a productive programmer for even a day. I used to hate to send people to training. But I learned that training is the best way to get people up and running quickly with new technology. Ultimately, training saved my company money because we didn't have to go back and rewrite bad code we wrote while trying to learn new language features.

So what I try to do with these classes is make them as focused, fast, and hands-on as possible. When people leave after two or three days, they have actually written some code, see how all the new features function, and have a reference workbook. My goal is to give attendees the ability to leave the class and then immediately go home and start to code productivity.