It All Began With A Phone Call...The Creation Of BASIS International Software GmbH

By Falk Spitzberg
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I have created business software with BASIS products for more than ten years. Since 1991, I have run my own company out of my home in Wiedenbrueck, a small town in northern Germany. For the last two years, I have worked with BASIS to help promote and support TAOS: The Developer's Workbench®. Some of you in the U.S. may know me as the "TAOS Guru."

17 March 1998

It's the day before CeBIT and I'm rushing around, trying to get everything ready for the show. The fair claims to be the largest computer show in the world, and with 7,250 exhibitors and 600,000 expected attendees, I believe it!

The traffic is bad. After losing two hours in a traffic jam on the Autobahn, I make it to the exhibit complex in Hanover. Germany. I'm lucky and get a parking spot close to the entrance, and I don't have to walk more than a mile to reach the BASIS booth.

When I arrive at the booth, I'm very glad to see that it is set up and ready to go. All around me, the pounding of hammers and whining of saws mixes with a few strains of music and rehearsed speeches, filling the air with the roar of last-minute construction. People rush by with signs and pictures. The entire exhibit hall looks like a huge human anthill.

In thirty minutes, I have all the materials put together and the demos running as they should. As I start to leave, Larry Eads and Jayne McKenzie arrive, looking very tired. No surprise considering that they have just spent fourteen hours on a plane traveling from BASIS' headquarters in Albuquerque to Germany. Even though they are tired, they are excited and ready for the show.

18 March 1998

Jayne, Larry, and I arrive at our booth at exactly 9:00 am--just in time! We don't expect many visitors this morning because of the

traffic jam outside Hanover, but only ten minutes later, the first customer enters the booth. He was very smart and took the train to Hanover. I give him my first presentation on Visual PRO/5® 2.0 and he is amazed. "When can I buy it?!" is his first question.

I'm still explaining the new Visual PRO/5 resource builder, ResBuilder™, when the next customer arrives. I'm glad there are three people staffing the booth because the customers just keep coming. For the next eight hours, there is a never-ending line of people waiting eagerly to see the new BASIS products.

Customers keep coming! Everyone wanted to see the new Visual PRO/5 2.0.

Oops, it's already 5 p.m. Jayne and Larry are completely surprised that the day has gone so quickly. They have never met so many BASIS customers in the first day of a tradeshow.

19 March 1998

Today everything in the BASIS booth is moving just a little bit slower, and we have a chance to take a lunch break. All three of us are getting very positive feedback from customers, and we start discussing how we can build on this excitement. We discuss ways to serve the German market best in the future. There are many loyal customers in Germany and Austria who deserve the best service possible. What about opening a BASIS company here in Germany? With the right people on board, we could provide first-class service from Day 1.

Later in the day, Jayne kills the battery in my mobile phone talking about the idea with George Hight, the President of BASIS. He thinks a German office is an excellent idea and promises to see if it is possible.

20 March 1998

Today is Jayne's last day at the show. She's going to spend the rest of the week visiting BASIS' distributor in France.

We meet several customers who are very impressed with the power they get with Visual PRO/5 2.0. Many of them have been hesitant to step into the world of GUI development, but pressure

Jayne and I discuss the possibility of a BASIS company in Germany.

from the market makes it impossible for them to wait on GUI development any longer. In some industries, it's simply impossible to sell character-based applications, no matter how strong they are. It looks as if the timing for the new product line is perfect.

21 March 1998

Now only Larry and I are left and Larry's feet are hurting him terribly. A gentleman working in a nearby booth jokes that he is almost ready to shoot his feet just to get them out of their misery. There are not too many customers today. Hundreds of kids collecting mouse pads, CDs, and pens roamed the booths.

22 March 1998

Today the show brought in about 150,000 visitors, and I am convinced a big portion of that crowd came straight to the BASIS booth. Larry and I work very hard all day to keep the line of waiting customers short.

23 March 1998

Larry is a lucky man. Today is his last day at the show. He will certainly need a break to recover. We both agree that the show is a success, and despite sore feet, we look forward to coming to CeBIT next year.

24 March 1998

Today is the last day of the show and I am here alone. I do a few demonstrations for the BASIS customers that come by the booth and start to get materials packed up and ready to go.

Larry and I go "western" on his last day at the show.

Suddenly my phone rings. It's George Hight calling to congratulate all of us on the huge success of the CeBIT show. He also tells me

that BASIS has decided to create a subsidiary in Germany to care for the customers in Germany and Austria. I look at my watch. It's 10:00 a.m. here in Germany, which means it's 2:00 a.m. in Albuquerque. Must be tough being the president of an international company.

At the end of the day, the show finally closes its doors. It is a huge success. I enjoyed speaking with all the customers, but I'm happy to be returning home. I know that tomorrow the real work begins.

25 March 1998

Now that the German company has been approved by BASIS, we have to set up the company as quickly as possible. After several phone conferences and dozens of emails, we coordinate our schedules and decide that George needs to come to Germany in April to deal with legal issues and help get the company started.

20 April 1998

George arrives by plane into Frankfurt, and we start going through all the details involved in creating a German company. With me is Herbert Schmitz, the new sales manager and leader of this new company. He has worked for years as a sales manager for a former BASIS distributor and knows the German and Austrian Business Basic community very well. My duty will be to provide customers with technical support and training. Herbert and I have worked together in the past, and we're confident that this new company can succeed.

Now we just need to take care of procuring a few minor items, like an office, computer equipment, letterhead, business cards...

1 June 1998

Today is the big day. BASIS International Software GmbH is officially open for business. We now have an office in Wiesbaden close to the Autobahn and only twenty minutes away from the airport in Frankfurt. We even have a new office manager helping us get started.

Our first big project is hosting our first annual developer conference. We have already sent out invitations to all our German and Austrian customers, and back in Albuquerque, George Hight, Jayne McKenzie, and John Schroeder, BASIS' Chief Technical Officer, are getting ready to show the new 2.0 products. The show will start on 8 June.

I'm amazed how far we have come from that first phone call to George just three months ago. Our hope is that this conference will prove to be as successful as CeBIT and that we will have an
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