OSAS Mixes GUI With Character

By Elizabeth Barnett

Thanks to BASIS' Visual PRO/5® and some clever utilities, Open Systems, Inc. is helping its OPEN SYSTEMS® Accounting Software (OSAS™) customers take a flexible "mix-and-match" development approach to GUI and character-based applications.

OSAS users may not need the fancy graphical hardware and software right on the factory floor, but they do have needs for report generation using spreadsheets and for viewing data in more graphical ways. "There's a sizable market out there that needs both Windows and character-based applications," says Dave Link, OSAS Product Development Manager. "And there are very few players who can accommodate both."

As a developer of accounting and business management software with more than 250,000 customers in 90 countries, Open Systems has customers spanning a wide variety of industries. Company President Michael Bertini says Open Systems is committed to preserving its support for its UNIX-based customers. Because of that, Open Systems had to find a way to satisfy customers who wanted to retain the "horsepower" of UNIX but couple it with the GUI offerings of Windows. With the help of Visual PRO/5, Open Systems has been able to balance these competing needs with the OSAS product. "Visual PRO/5 allows us to use the same data processes in both character-based and Windows environments," Dave says, "and create for our customers a kind of `mix-and-match' solution."

The project began with OSAS 6.0, the first use of a Windows menu system and a print preview program in the OSAS product line. But with OSAS 6.1, slated for release in August, the goal is to have graphical and character-based elements in the same program, Dave says. "We're not making intrusive changes," he explains. "Because our customers modify our product, we don't want to make them redesign their modifications." It helps that the OSAS program code itself follows rigid standards. This allowed the OSAS programmers to build a set of utilities in Visual PRO/5 to read through the OSAS program code and build GUI resource files automatically. One of the utilities reads the program code and builds prompts into windows; the second records input types and characteristics during data entry to build data controls.

While the utilities are cleverly designed, Dave says coding them wasn't as difficult as it would have been without the BASIS resource conversion utility in Visual PRO/5, which converts ASCII resource files into `.brc` files. "That is a BIG plus," he says of the conversion utility. "From there, we basically just make pixel adjustments and tweak the files in ResBuilder™."

Open Systems, Inc. is a leading developer of accounting package software. The 22-year-old company is headquartered in Shakopee, Minnesota, and has two product lines, OPEN SYSTEMS Accounting Software (OSAS) and TRAVERSE®. OSAS 6.0 is available on DOS, Windows 95, 98 and NT, UNIX, Linux and AIX systems. Modules include general ledger, accounts receivable, accounts payable, payroll, inventory, bank reconciliation and others. TRAVERSE is its Microsoft-based product line. Open Systems can be contacted at 800.328.2276 (in the U.S.) or through its Web site at www.osas.com.