New Concepts In BASIS Licensing

By Elizabeth Barnett

BASIS now uses a licensing system called FLEX*lm*, developed by GLOBEtrotter Inc., in all of our products. While FLEX*lm* is rapidly gaining market share in the software industry at large, it is very new to us and to the Business Basic community. In this article, we attempt to outline what's new and how things have changed.

Activation Keys To License Authorizations

In BASIS product revisions earlier than 2.10, products were activated using a 13-character "key" that shipped with the product. The product installation procedure would prompt the installer to enter the serial number and activation key information, which would complete the product installation. Once the product installation was complete, everything was ready to run.

With FLEX*lm*, products are activated by a license file obtained through a registration, or more accurately a request-and-receipt, process. This registration process is done before product installation and may be done by e-mail, fax or over the Web. Essentially, what must happen is:

- Installation of a BASIS License Manager (BLM) if purchasing counted licenses (see the new terms)
- The request and receipt of the individual product licenses
- Installation of the individual product licenses
- Installation of the BASIS product. If counted licenses are purchased, this part of the process includes the creation of a special pointer file, BASIS.lic, that specifies the name of the machine running the BLM.

This process adds some new procedures (specifically, the BLM setup, the license registration and the configuration of the product pointer file) to the product installation process. These new procedures are really system administration tasks. They aren't difficult, but they do take a little more time and effort than the previous activation key method. But in return for a little more time on the front end, customers:

- Gain the ability to better track and manage their software assets
- Can implement more flexible license configurations
- Can save money when purchasing counted licenses for networked UNIX terminals, workstations and/or Windows seats.

New Concepts and New Terms

The FLEX*lm* terms "license manager," "counted" and "uncounted" are new to BASIS licensing. Here's what they mean.

License Manager

FLEX*lm* uses the term "license manager" to denote an application that tracks:

- the number of counted licenses that can be used anywhere in a network
- which machines in the network are using those licenses at any one time

A license manager coordinates the issuing of these licenses to requesting clients.

The BLM is BASIS' version of the FLEX*lm* license manager. In the FLEX*lm* manual available in our online documentation (www.basis.com/devtools/documentation/index.html), the BLM is what FLEX*lm* calls a "vendor daemon." (A daemon is a program that runs in the background, with no user input or intervention.)

Counted Licenses

FLEX*lm* uses the term "counted" to denote a license that is tied to the computer running a license manager, such as the BLM, in a network. The license manager coordinates the use of counted licenses as they are needed throughout the network. Because counted licenses are only in use when a terminal, workstation or PC has an active BBx session, as soon as a terminal or PC closes its sessions and no longer needs a license, that same license can be used at another seat on the network.

BASIS sells counted licenses as "multiuser" licenses because the same license can "float" and be used by more than one UNIX terminal or Windows seat in a network (although not at the same time). PRO/5® and the PRO/5 Data Server® are sold only with counted licenses and therefore require the BLM. Visual PRO/5® and the BASIS ODBC Driver® can use counted licenses or uncounted licenses.

Uncounted License

FLEX*lm* uses the term "uncounted" to denote a license that is tied to the computer running the BASIS product. This license does not require a license manager because it is "fixed" to a unique seat (the machine running the BASIS product) and cannot be used by any other machine in a network. It is possible to have many machines, on or off a network, each running with their own uncounted license. BASIS sells uncounted licenses as "single-user" licenses because the license can be used only by a unique Windows seat. The only BASIS products that are available as uncounted are the single-user Visual PRO/5 and the single-user BASIS ODBC Driver.

The BLM And Product Pointer File

The BLM software may be installed on the same server as the product(s) or on a dedicated license server, but because individual clients (workstations, terminals or PCs) will need to request their licenses through the BLM, it is necessary to choose a single machine where it will permanently reside. It's possible to move the BLM, but during the product installation, a product pointer file, BASIS.lic, is automatically created that will recognize the BLM machine and request its license from the BLM. Therefore, you have to install the BLM before you install individual products, and if later on you want to move the BLM to a different machine, you must also change each product pointer file. In addition, because counted product licenses are tied to the machine where the BLM is running, moving the BLM to a new machine may make it necessary to request new licenses for all your BASIS products. So, it's important when installing to choose a single machine where the BLM will permanently reside.

New Installation Guides Available

We've tried to make the installation and licensing scripts as easy to use as possible. We've also created comprehensive installation guides, one for the UNIX and one for the Windows environments, that step through and explain the procedures of this new process. Each comprehensive guide is less than 10 pages. We strongly urge anyone installing BASIS products to read through the comprehensive guide at least once to understand what's happening in the process. These installation guides are available on our BASIS product CD-ROM and on our Web site at www.basis.com .