IS Systems Selects BBx For Its B2C E-Commerce Package

By Elisabeth Monaghan

Since 1998, San Antonio-based IS Systems has developed highly integrated software packages and solutions for its Customers. When he founded IS Systems, President Alex Pearson set out to create customized e-commerce solutions integrated with accounting software that would provide his Customers a fast return on investment (ROI). Pearson considers ROI second only to excellent Customer service. A seasoned Business BASIC developer, Pearson developed his expertise working with Open Systems. IS Systems' OpenCommerce family of e-commerce products are tightly integrated with Open Systems Accounting Software, which is a major advantage of working in BBx®. Pearson considered BBx the key ingredient for his B2C software. "BASIS has consistently maintained its leadership position, setting standards for the rest of the Business BASIC community," says Pearson. "The technology is at the forefront of Business BASIC, and BASIS's Visual PRO/5® provides features that the competition can't beat," Pearson adds.

Since the company's inception, Pearson and his lead programmer, Kristi Guzman, have created three software packages, OpenCommerce B2C, OpenCommerce Vendors, and OpenCommerce B2B. Each of these programs take advantage of BASIS' rich set of development utilities, using them for such tasks as program editing, search and replace, and mass program updates. Their web-based products use the BASIS Web Utility for web page update and display. These are integrated with Open Systems Accounting Software on the backend.

Strengths Of BBx

Because Pearson's Customers specialize in online distribution, his company faces the double challenge of providing robust, e-commerce products to his Customers, while ensuring that the end users have a positive experience while ordering online. Pearson sites an extensive list of Visual PRO/5 qualities that allow IS Systems to meet these challenges, starting with the high transaction throughput and fast-loading pages. The average online Customer loses interest if a page takes longer than eight seconds to load. With Visual PRO/5, IS Systems' pages load in one to three seconds. This is fast, considering that a lot of these pages are fully populated with graphics, and that the process consists of looking up item availability, Customer-specific pricing, and building the page.

According to Pearson, Visual PRO/5 Mkeyed file structure clocks much faster than many competitors' products. This means Customers can access information from a large data file in an instant. This is important because many of IS Systems' Customers' sales history files are fast-approaching one gigabyte in size. The interpreter is another valuable component of Visual PRO/5, not only because of its small, quick-loading capabilities, but also because, as Pearson states, "the immediate feedback alone that it gives programmers to debug is phenomenal!"

Programmer Kristi Guzman supports Pearson's assertions that BASIS has enabled them to develop greater performing, and more powerful software solutions for their Customers. "When I came to IS Systems, I didn't know much about programming, but Visual PRO/5 was easy to learn, and the BASIS Web Utility (BWU) enabled us to create robust products quickly," attests Guzman. (Read more about how Kristi Guzman emerged into a programmer.)
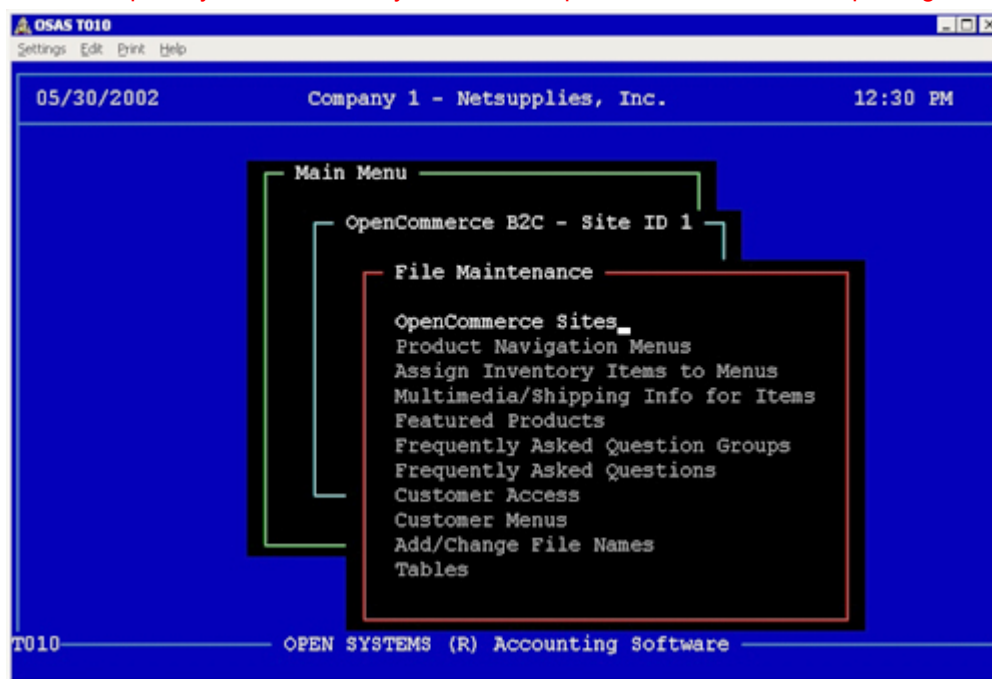
BBx And Web-Based Transaction Processing

BBx, in conjunction with the BWU, allows IS Systems to provide their Customers products via the web site which is driven completely from the Customers' accounting software, doing away with the need for a

full-time web developer on staff. Pearson goes so far as to say that the database-driven web sites that IS Systems created out-perform many Microsoft SQL/Active Server Page-based web sites. "I've spoken to a number of web developers who use Microsoft's ASP model with SQL to perform the same type of functions that I create using BASIS BWU," explains Pearson. "They are always surprised at the performance of the BWU and tell me it is much faster than what they're used to working with."
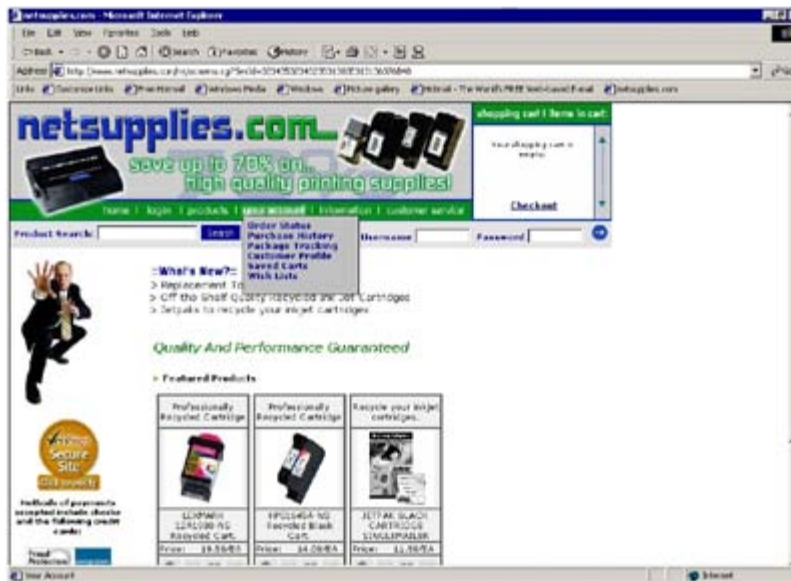
One of Visual PRO/5's key strengths, according to Kristi Guzman, is the web-based transaction processing capability. As Guzman discovered by participating in the BASIS BBx newsgroups, "A lot of BBx programmers aren't aware that Visual PRO/5 comes with the tools necessary to build web-based transaction processing systems, but it's one of the tools that was the most helpful when it came to developing the web side of OpenCommerce B2C" says Guzman. Because of the web-based transaction processing capabilities, IS Systems' Customers are able to simply add web features into their BBx-based Open Systems Accounting Software packages without having to invest in an entirely new accounting package.

This image shows the character version of NetSupplies.com's site that is integrated with Open Systems and IS Systems B2C OpenCommerce software package.

Transitioning To OpenCommerce B2C

Among the first Customers to install OpenCommerce B2C was NetSupplies.com, an online retailer of recycled ink jet and laser toner cartridges. For three years, NetSupplies had operated their online distribution with a standard ISP website using static HTML. According to NetSupplies Vice President Larry Lufsey, the transition to OpenCommerce B2C was incredibly smooth. Now, thanks to OpenCommerce B2C, NetSupplies is completely integrated with his existing OSAS products, enabling NetSupplies to make instant changes to their site, while providing real-time account information that their Customers can access whenever they choose. If Customers do have questions about their account, NetSupplies Customer Service can pull up the information and view it along with the Customer. This helps NetSupplies answer Customers' questions and resolve issues on the spot, saving time and postage, not to mention frustration.

Using IS Systems OpenCommerce B2C, Netsupplies e-Commercesite allows Cus tomers to access real time information.

Return On Investment

How does Lufsey view his return on investment? "With OpenCommerce B2C, we can now monitor our site traffic and see what the Customers are buying," says Lufsey. "The site is very dynamic and allows us to change information daily, so we can advertise specials and maintain the most up-to-date information on our site," he adds. Lufsey considers these key elements to a solid return on his investment. He also appreciates that the package, while sophisticated in its integration of accounting and e-commerce, is also easy to maintain. When it comes to overall Customer support, Lufsey says that IS Systems is very responsive and always helpful. NetSupplies' satisfaction with IS Systems OpenCommerce B2C clearly demonstrates that IS Systems is achieving its goal to develop e-commerce solutions that are tightly integrated with the Open Systems Accounting Software package.

While his mission will always be to improve upon existing applications and build even greater ones, Pearson states with utmost confidence that his e-commerce package features easily rival the likes of Amazon.com, in which case his Customers do indeed realize the ultimate return on their investment.

For more information on IS Systems
For more information on Net Supplies