



## The Making Of A Programmer

*By Elisabeth Monaghan*

When Kristi Guzman, a junior at the University of Texas, San Antonio, went to work as the Executive Assistant to IS Systems' President, Alex Pearson, she wanted an interesting job to help pay her tuition. Little did Guzman know that not only would this job be interesting, it would change her career path.

Kristi was among the first employees to join IS Systems when the company began in 1998. At the time, Alex Pearson was developing his company's first e-commerce package. Guzman watched Pearson and was intrigued with the process. After a few months of observing and discussing the aspects of programming with Pearson, Guzman asked if she could give it a try.

Most CEOs who are in the midst of launching a major software package might flinch at such a request. But Pearson was thrilled with Guzman's enthusiasm and let her experiment with a few programming tasks. Two years later, Guzman has developed into what Pearson considers a "world class BBx® programmer." Obviously, not just anyone can watch a programmer develop an application and figure out how to write programs. But as Pearson attests, Guzman is not just anyone. Taking a year off of college, Guzman spent 80 to 100 hours a week fine-tuning her skills. According to Pearson, Guzman compressed into one year what typically takes most programmers two to three years to learn. "I've been a programmer since 1987, and never in my career have I seen someone go from ground zero to Kristi's level of competence as quickly as she has," says Pearson.

When asked how she was able to grasp the language so quickly, Guzman asserts that receiving Pearson's encouragement was a crucial first step. Of course, her aptitude, combined with BASIS's online reference guide, enabled her make sense of the simplified syntax and data structures of BBx.

Although Pearson had to find an assistant to replace Guzman, he didn't mind. "In today's marketplace, finding or even building BBx programmers is difficult," says Pearson. "With Kristi, IS Systems has a developer who rivals some of the best out there. What's more, using BASIS' BBx tools, she's been a driving force in creating e-commerce software packages that are the caliber of Amazon.com."