

BBj Thrives on the Web

By Stephan Wald



Worldwide, far more than 1,000,000 items are ordered every year over e-commerce sites driven by BASIS products. Good portions of these orders are processed through Web shops provided by BASIS Europe. When BASIS incorporated the acquisition of PHAROS Ltd., a former BASIS partner in Europe, to the BASIS Europe portfolio in 2006, BASIS inherited PharoShop, a solution written in BBj® and PRO/5®. This solution, delivered through the Internet, integrates with third party software packages as well as software packages written in Business BASIC. Renamed BASIS Europe Web Shop, it is deployed in five different European countries and runs in four different languages – a truly pan-European solution.

The Concept is Versatile

BASIS Europe offers a solution with complete functionality to meet its customers' broad spectrum of needs. Basic functionality might start out as a powerful full text retrieval function, offering categorized browsing of items and shopping cart order processing, then evolve into a sophisticated SAP OCI interface, a shop-in-shop integration (facility for subordinated resellers such as a POS-kiosk), an interface to eBay, a compatible database for printer supplies, a reader for mobile USB barcode scanners, or even a complex result set ranking. Regardless of the level of complexity, all of these functions are implemented using the powerful Business BASIC language from BASIS.

The Technical Foundation is BBj

The toolset for the product is BBj itself, utilizing an object-oriented Web API for the creation of HTML pages. This component was recently rewritten in object-oriented Business BASIC to meet clients' current expectations of modern software development. Though the first version – dating back to 1999 – was based on the CGI-based concept of the BASIC Web Utility, the current product has nothing in common anymore with those roots. The layout of the HTML is entirely separate from the code, allowing for highly flexible and efficient development. The object-oriented API brings the HTML template to life and generates the dynamic output for the user's Web browser.

Developers can use the BBj Web API from BASIS Europe to build any kind of Web application that ranges from online shops through customer care portals to entire Web-based applications using modern Ajax functionality to enhance the user experience.

BBj is #1 in Wholesale Stationery and Office Supplies in Germany

In addition to installations for wholesaling chemical goods, automotive parts, and spare parts for electrical installations, the BBj-based solution is the leading product used in the office supply and stationery industry. Of all the German wholesalers in office supplies and stationery, 80% use the shop system for their e-commerce. This is a direct result of the widespread use of Business BASIC in Germany since the late 1980's.



The Speed is the Key to the Success

"The performance and the flexibility of this system is amazing," says G. Vricke, IT manager at a BASIS customer in Belgium. He continues, "Rarely are Internet shops handling such an amount of data this fast." In fact, average installations of BASIS Europe Web Shops represent a product portfolio of at least 25,000 items – the largest one contains 825,000 different items – all made available for full text retrieval within a fraction of a second using Business BASIC keyed files for indexing.

Written in BBj, the shop system not only uses data imported from interfaces to or stored in SQL databases, but it also takes advantage of lightning fast direct access to Business BASIC data files, hence facilitating the online access to any kind of data stored in any legacy Business BASIC application.



New Building Blocks for Business BASIC Programmers

The BASIS toolset is not specifically designed for the Web. Nonetheless BASIS Europe's Web Shop, written in BBj, demonstrates once again the power and flexibility of the programming language, delivering a powerful database-driven solution. There is no need to look beyond BBj in order to add Web-based functionality to existing Business BASIC solutions – you can stay in your familiar environment, reuse your experience, your data structures and even parts of your existing code.



For a demo, go to www.basis-europe.eu/demoshop



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Applications