

Bugs Beware: BASIS Forms New QA Team

By Amy Petre Hill

Program bugs beware, you can run but you can't hide from the new BASIS Quality Assurance Exterminators!

In February, Craig Dill, Teresa Dominguez, and Mike Paulsen came together to create BASIS' new Quality Assurance (QA) department; a department dedicated to squashing product bugs before they reach BASIS customers.

QA has always been an important part of BASIS' product development process, but until the QA department was formed, products were tested by the Technical Support department. While the number of BASIS products was small, this testing system proved thorough and efficient. However, as the number and sophistication of BASIS products increased, more time and more refined tests were required to check the products thoroughly.

The QA department was instituted to provide both the time and testing expertise BASIS' new products require. According to George Hight, BASIS President, "We recognize that the complexity of our products is increasing, that these products are now communicating with Windows, UNIX, and Novell NetWare, environments that are also growing in complexity. In order to improve the quality of our products, we decided an entire department devoted to QA was needed."

A new QA lab area has already been assembled using the hardware platforms and operating systems most often used by BASIS customers. The QA members will use this lab to analyze every product with a combination of elaborate automated and manual tests.

Mike Paulsen, a QA technical analyst explains, "One of the goals of the department is to automate as much testing as possible. The QA department can set up a specific automated testing program that will pound on a product feature for days, until the smallest problem is found. At this point, we have an automated testing system to check the products run on Windows operating systems, and a core set of tests that run on all platforms that we have used for some time."

Although the QA department is responsible for testing products at every stage of development, QA will also work closely with the Technical Support team to solve problems in current products and provide answers to customers' questions. All of the QA staff members come from BASIS' Technical Support department and are sensitive to the needs of customers. Craig Dill, who oversees the QA department as Manager of Engineering Services states, "QA is in constant contact with Technical Support. In fact, all Technical Support employees work, on a rotating schedule, in the QA department. That means in the near future, when you call Technical Support to ask about a problem, you

will be talking to a person that has written a testing program and actually worked on a problem in the QA lab."

Each of the QA team members have extensive testing experience and expectations they bring with them to their new jobs. Teresa Dominguez, a ten year veteran of the BASIS Technical Support department, has seen the creation and development of every BASIS product. Her experience has taught her that the QA department will constantly change, adapt and improve: "Quality Assurance is a never ending process because you're always going to come up with new environments to test, new hardware platforms to look at, and new operating systems to inspect. There will always be something new."

Mike Paulsen comes to the department with testing experience gained while working at WordPerfect's Albuquerque office. There he debugged the WordPerfect grammatical testing tool. He looks forward to working more closely with the products and producing automated tests: "I like taking the time to learn the products and I like the satisfaction I get when I run a test that will really show all the problems and free up QA to work on other projects. Automated testing is going to be very important."

Craig Dill, a BB^x user since 1989, has served as the Manager of Technical Support and now oversees the new QA department. He is excited about the new department and wants all the customers to know, "BASIS is very serious about quality assurance."

