

# Volcanos Everywhere!

## A Discussion of BASIS' New Marketing Strategy

At TechCon97 BASIS International Ltd. unveiled more than the **Volcano™** technology plan; the company also revealed their marketing strategy at a session hosted by Amy Petré Hill and Maile Foster. After the conference, the **Advantage** sat down with Petré Hill to discuss the company's marketing plans for 1997 and how these plans will affect customers.

**Advantage (A):** At TechCon97 the **Volcano** video, the promotional materials, this magazine, and the BASIS booth displayed a more concentrated marketing presence than we have seen at previous conferences. What has changed in marketing at BASIS?

**Petré Hill (P):** Everything! Okay, not quite everything, but the way marketing is viewed and the way marketing works within the company has radically shifted.

In the past, BASIS didn't really do much market analysis, advertising, or public relations. The company was actually able to flourish on the strength of its products and reputation. But last year, it became clear that BASIS needed to rethink its assumptions about marketing.

The result has been a real commitment from BASIS' management to serious marketing for the **Volcano** products. In addition, marketing and sales people were made full members of the product development teams. That made a tremendous difference in the quality and the quantity of marketing we could do for each of the products. We were able to develop marketing plans that integrated into the overall product plans.

**A:** So what exactly is the marketing plan for 1997?

**P:** Well, typically, a company's marketing plans are as confidential as its product development plans, so I can't tell you everything we are going to do, but I can offer some of the directions we are heading in. This year most of our focus is in three distinct areas- advertising, public relations, and the Internet.

**A:** Okay, let's break it down and start with advertising. What kind of advertising is BASIS planning on doing and why?

**P:** We have various advertising campaigns planned for this year and most of them focus on image development and direct-mail advertising. Today I can talk about the new corporate image.

With **Volcano**, BASIS is giving its developers the opportunity to go after mid-sized companies that were never before accessible. Our



developers will be sitting in the boardrooms of hundred- million-dollar companies, along with vendors like Microsoft and Oracle, explaining why their software-written using BASIS products-offers the best, most cost-effective business rules processing technology for their industry. Chances are, these mid-sized companies will have never heard of BASIS, even though they will know about the Microsoft front-ends and Oracle database components our products will work with. We want to give our customers professional, informative marketing tools they can use to educate these mid-sized firms and win the sale.

This year we hired an Albuquerque advertising firm to help us create a distinctive look for BASIS that stacks up against the look of the "big guys" from Seattle and San Francisco. We are then going to take that new look and use it to create a whole new range of marketing materials that combine BASIS' new corporate messages with solid product information.

**A:** And the direct-mail advertising?

**P:** Look in your mailbox around the beginning of Autumn.

**A:** In addition to advertising, you mentioned that BASIS is going to do public relations. What exactly does that mean? What can customers expect to see?

**P:** Although most people know what advertising is, the whole concept of public relations is foreign to many smaller businesses. Basically, public relations is the art of carefully crafting stories about your company, your industry, and your products, and then getting those stories out to the right people. In BASIS' case, the right people are the software analysts and the software press, who in turn get the message to the most important people-our developers, end users, and potential developers.

Because BASIS and the other Business Basic vendors have never done concentrated public relations work, our technology is largely unknown to the software press. This year we are expending lots of effort to reach out to the media, form relationships with reporters, and show our products. This year we have already done a "media blitz" in which we sent at least one press release a week about our products, the **Volcano** strategy, or TechCon97 to our targeted publications for five weeks before the conference. We continue to send the press a new release each month so the software press can see how **Volcano** is developing and we can continue to educate them on Business Basic and BASIS. So far we have been able to talk about BASIS and our technology to publications like **SCO World** and **Datamation**.

This September, Dan Rask, John Schroeder and I are planning to go on a nationwide analyst and press tour to talk to key editors and leading software analysts in person to show them the **Volcano** strategy. I think the press will be very interested when they see how large our market is, and how successful our customers have been using our tools.

**A:** What is BASIS marketing doing with the Internet?

**P:** Intel CEO, Andy Grove, has said that the Internet is going to be the single largest influence on the computer industry. He's absolutely right. In order to be a viable online resource for our customers, we have made some major investments in the BASIS Web site. We now have a full-time Webmaster, we are improving our hardware and boosting our bandwidth, and we have recently redone the entire site. In the future, we are going to have even more product information online. Our goal will be to provide our customers the most current information and downloads from BASIS, 24 hours a day.

**A:** You've said many times that the ultimate goal of BASIS' marketing plan is to help developers make the sale to their end users. How can these developers make the most of the marketing work you are doing?

**P:** That's a very important question, and there are actually many ways for our developers to become involved. The **Advantage** magazine is a great place to get the attention of fellow Business Basic developers and users. You can write a story about your products, like Allen Miglore did in this issue, you can offer your success story to the **Advantage** staff to write, or you can advertise in the magazine.

Developers can also work with us as a public relations partner. Many reporters not only want to hear about the latest technology, they also want to know how real companies are making that technology work. That means they want to talk to developers and end users. Over the past couple of months we have developed some PR partnerships with companies like Innovative Systems and Health Systems Design. When periodicals like **Datamation** and **Information Week** have talked to us, we have also arranged for them to speak with these companies about how they use our technology in their products. It's a win-win situation for everyone involved. We would like to form similar partnerships with other customers. Developers who are interested should just give me a call.