

Making BBx Exponentially Better: BBj and BASIS Strategy

By Win Quigley and David Wallwork

As BASIS's Product Marketing Manager, Win brings BASIS more than 15 years of management experience in high-technology product and business development. David has more than 15 years of experience in high-technology product development and is BASIS' Senior Software Programmer.

You can write code more productively, you can sell applications more successfully, you can meet more end-user needs easily, and you can start doing all of this in the first quarter of 2000--with BASIS International's new generation of BBx®.

This new generation of BBx, to be called BBj™, is a superset of BBx, so all of your existing code will run as it always has and all of your data will be accessible the same as always. Using BBj, you can continue to write Business Basic code just as you always have. But added to your existing BBx capability is a whole new range of flexibility. BBj is a rewrite and reorganization of BBx from top to bottom using the Java™ programming language. As such, if you wish, you can also compile your Business Basic application with Java tools and gain all the exciting new capabilities Java offers.

You will be able to enhance your application by incorporating code written by someone else.

You will be able to package your application into a module other programmers can incorporate in their code and sell it to them through a Web site.

Software components in use at your customer's site can ultimately be integrated into your application, and vice versa, when all components can be compiled with a Java Virtual Machine (JVM).

Java Capabilities and More

Quite simply, if you prefer the way another programmer or company has implemented database management, you will eventually be able to incorporate that Java-compiled implementation into your program. If someone else likes your inventory management program, sell it to them without modification; they will be able to incorporate it into their own application with standard Java tools.

Your BBj code will also run just about anywhere; BBj is cross-platform. BBx programmers no longer have to worry about hardware/operating systems. If the platform has a JVM (and most platforms do), your application will run. If your system does not have a JVM, one can easily be obtained and installed for most computer hardware and operating systems.

BBj, however, is not just about Java. It includes many improvements any BBx programmer can appreciate. Development tools will be better. Thin client capability will be supported. Transaction tracking will be available. BBj will have sockets for easier network programming. A new BASIS Query Server that enables easy access to an SQL engine will be available. Graphical user interfaces (GUI) will be faster and easier to implement. BBj applications using the Java Database Connectivity (JDBC) can work with just about any database available.

BBj will also be much easier for BASIS to support, which means we can put resources to work on improving our products and offering new ones to you instead of spending resources to modify code to work on an ever-increasing variety of ports.

Why BBj?

Why are we creating BBj? Because it's good business.

BASIS sells a programming language and tools to make it more powerful. We don't write the inventory packages, the accounting software, the call center management programs or any of the literally tens of thousands of applications programmers have created using BBx. Our success depends entirely on the ability of resellers and developers to create and sell applications using our products. This also applies to in-house programmers who are in effect selling their code to their own companies.

The goal of BBj is to speed the creation of applications and make them easier to sell. When the application writer is more productive and the applications written are more marketable, we'll all make more money.

We have two primary design objectives with BBj: (1) all existing BBx programs and files must execute exactly as written under BBj, and (2) BBj must perform at least as fast as BBx. Once those two criteria are met, we will work to allow you to embed other Java code in BBj and to use all of the tools that make Java-based code scalable, flexible and fast.

With BBj, you will be able to offer your customers applications that incorporate all of the power and flexibility of BBx plus virtually any software component that can be compiled with the JVM. International Data Corp., a computer-industry analysis company, estimates 1.5 million programmers will be using Java in the next three years; virtually any software they create can become part of your package. Your ability to satisfy customers is dramatically expanded.

One BASIS customer is planning to use BBj to develop a national, Web-based virtual catalogue. Distributors across the country will be able to treat all other distributors' products as their own. A sale by a distributor in Florida can be fulfilled transparently by a distributor in Kansas, all using BBj components on Web sites around the country. Another BASIS customer intends to develop BBj applications that use a Microsoft package as a user interface and SQL Server for file management.

The mission of BASIS International since its founding has been easy development of software applications using a simple, robust, flexible, reliable language. BBj is the logical next step in the ongoing fulfillment of that mission.

We encourage Business Basic developers to come to Albuquerque in September for our technical conference, TechCon99, to see BBj in its beta test version. You'll be able to talk with us about these features and others you would like to see incorporated into the product.

The Features of BBJ

- **Improved Interface for Developers**

Among new interface features, you can still break out of an executing program to debug, but BBJ will let you do it by setting and clearing breakpoints with the click of a mouse. The development environment will also enable you to watch the status of variables as the program executes line by line.

- **Cross-Platform Support for GUI**

Whether you work in Microsoft Windows or UNIX, BBJ will support GUI.

- **Unlimited Precision**

BBJ's internal numeric format handles any number of digits with unlimited precision.

- **Language Extensions**

We will be continually adding extensions so that BBJ will include much of the Java syntax.

- **BASIS Query Server (BQS)**

The BQS will consist of a server and an SQL engine; both JDBC and ODBC drivers can be used with BQS. Transaction tracking will be available.

- **Better Error Reporting**

In addition to simple error numbers, BBJ will provide text to describe the nature of the error.

- **Bigger Arrays**

Arrays of virtually unlimited dimension are allowed.

- **Thin Client Capability**

BBJ will allow display on a local client with the actual program code executing on a server.

And, of course, BBJ, as a superset of BBx, will continue to support all of your existing programs.