

Customers Inform BASIS

By Elizabeth Barnett

One of the initiatives BASIS is taking to strengthen our partnerships and provide better service and tools to the Business Basic community is the formation in the second half of 1999 of the BASIS Customer Council.

"I was happy to be asked to serve on the council," says Ralph Lockhart, Executive Vice President of Operations for Addon/Accu-Med, providers of information systems for home healthcare facilities. "I'm glad BASIS is interested in listening to its customers, asking us what makes us successful and what BASIS can do to enhance our success. I believe BASIS is employing a winning strategy that will make us all more successful."

BASIS goals for the council are to provide more open lines of communication for customers and focus product development on customer-driven features, say Jane McKenzie, Vice President of Sales and Marketing, and Investment Account Managers Mike Young and Gale Robledo. "We need to have specific product direction and vision from our customers," Gale explains. This will be particularly crucial for BASIS' flagship product, BBj™.



Council member Joe Taylor, Chief Executive Officer of AddonSoftware, providers of general accounting systems, says his goals are two-fold. One is to get more in tune with what other BASIS customers are doing and how they are using BASIS products. Joe says hearing his council colleagues' input "really helps to put things in perspective. In business, you tend to think your own experiences are

unique and often, they're not." Another goal is to know what's going on with BASIS and be able to share his ideas and influence development. "Our own VAR council has been very helpful. We use them to test the waters and sometimes it's changed our whole direction," he admits.

Another council member, Ray Hrdy, Vice President of Technology for DISC, a distribution systems software developer, sounds similar notes. Ray says he's looking to learn about BASIS product direction as early as possible. "Then I can plan how it'll affect my company," he explains. "I'm also looking to provide feedback to BASIS, to let you [BASIS] know about impediments to our plans that BASIS can help us with."

Like Joe, Ray says he's also looking to other council members for information, advice and to share development experience. "I want to know what their plans are for the future, what they're doing or not doing and why." Of particular interest to Ray are how council colleagues are developing for the Internet and how they're handling competitive threads such as lack of GUI and 4GL/relational database issues. He is also hoping to glean information with which to benchmark things like typical application development times, quality improvements, creating documentation, etc.

In addition to Ralph, Joe and Ray, council members include Michael Bertini, President of Open Systems, Inc.; Kandy Chenjireddiar, Assistant Vice President of Citicorp's CEEMEA (Central and Eastern Europe, Middle East, Africa division) Information Systems; Donna Green, Vice President of Engineering for Health Systems Design; Len Krause, President of Computer Dynamics; and Jos Schrier, President of Aucon B.V.

Jane is a standing member of the council, representing BASIS, and other BASIS personnel from President George Hight and other senior management to sales representatives are brought in to participate in discussions, as subject matter dictates.

Members were selected based on certain criteria, the most important of which was that they are pro-active in their own development efforts. "We were really looking for customers who want to move forward with their own products and ours," Gale says.

Other criteria were that they represent major industries for Business Basic, have strong applications and are leaders in their respective vertical markets. "Volume was a consideration," Mike explains, "in that most of the council members have thousands of people driving their needs. Through them, we're getting the feedback from the entire channel."

Council members were chosen and invited last summer, and the first organizational meeting was held during TechCon99. Since that time, the council has met by teleconference. Plans are to hold teleconferences once or twice a quarter. Meetings are taped and transcripts provided to all members.

Ralph says he finds the teleconferencing interesting and valuable. "The council discussions provide me with insight into the various businesses that make up the council. I identify with some of the council members whose challenges and businesses are similar to ours," he says. "I'm glad BASIS is interested in listening to all of us and providing the tools to benefit not only our company and its customers, but many thousands across the globe. It's nice to be listened to."