

Heilind Electronics Bets on BBJ and its Thin Client Capability

By Elizabeth Barnett

Heilind Electronics, one of the top 20 electronics parts distributors in the country, generates in excess of \$300 million annually in sales revenues. To help continue to increase those sales, Heilind needed a way to give its salespeople remote access to the data necessary to manage the quotation application. Enter BASIS BBJ® and its thin client capability.

"Heilind's decision to use BBJ was based on the flexibility its thin client afforded in deployment of remote systems and on the fact that BBJ provided a clear development path that the company can count on in the future," says Chris DeMerchant, a consultant to Heilind and the project lead in the BBJ development.

The Massachusetts-based company has been using BASIS PRO/5® to manage the accounting, inventory and invoicing of its electronics parts since 1993. The character-based system handles all Heilind's business processes, from order entry to inventory control to sales analysis. The system also includes some manufacturing applications. Some 600 users in about 20 different locations nationwide and in Mexico send queries and data via telnet sessions to be processed at a central server at the company's

The responsiveness of its salespeople is a big part of the reason why Heilind is so successful. The company, which specializes in the distribution of interconnect/electromechanical parts, prides itself on its regional stock availability, technical support and Customer

responsiveness. Heilind salespeople are highly-trained to answer all Customer questions, even the most technical.

One of the biggest tasks for salespeople is responding to Customers with quotes. Heilind sales staff use a variety of Excel spreadsheets to work out quotes, but these are no simple spreadsheets. Some of them have up to 5,000 line items that must be filled out, Chris explains. Sales representatives open telnet sessions to query the system and then manually fill out the spreadsheets with the information supplied by the PRO/5 application. Heilind now looks to BBJ for deployment of a remote application that will speed up the process.

Heilind is combining BBJ with sdOffice, an office automation product developed by BASIS Solution Partner Synergetic Data System Inc. and available from BASIS. Among many other functions, sdOffice performs spreadsheet loading and field-level data formatting under program control from the BBJ host application using live, in-memory data. A salesperson can plug in a part number, and BBJ will automatically populate the other fields in the spreadsheet with real-time information from the database. *"The rep can query a single field, such as the part number, and BBJ will pull in all the different pricing options, manufacturer's information, lead times, minimum quantities, etc."* Chris says. *"It also gives them the ability to do 'what-if' scenarios with the data."*

The payoff for Heilind is in salespeople's time, productivity and responsiveness, and it is a huge payoff. *"What used to take a rep a week to do will now take about an hour with BBJ,"* Chris estimates. Heilind's sales representatives are so excited about the new BBJ application that they are *"chomping at the bit to get it,"* Chris says. *"They can't wait."*

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