

# Getting Started in JBuilder 4

product review by Adrian Rye

When I was asked to review *Getting Started in JBuilder 4* by Margie and Charlie Calvert my first reaction was: Excellent, here's a perfect opportunity to:

1. Get a new book (I like books);
2. Learn about JBuilder from a Delphi guru;
3. Have a play with JBuilder 4 (as recommended by other respected BUG members).

I must admit that my heart sank a little when a CD turned up instead of a book (did I mention that I like books?). Oh well, at least it saves my wife despairing at the sight of yet another computer book. [See our section on *eBooks! Ed.*]

## On with the review

It turns out that *Getting Started in JBuilder 4* is the latest addition to the *Referentia Learning System – Interactive multimedia training designed to get you productive fast!*

This is a series of CD based training courses that all use the same interface and style of presentation. It includes:

- *Borland e-Learning Series for JBuilder 4*
- *Referentia for GoldMine*
- *Referentia for Seagate Info 7*
- *Referentia for Seagate Crystal Reports 7*
- *Referentia for Seagate Crystal Reports 6*
- *Referentia for JBuilder 4*
- *Referentia for JBuilder 3*
- *Referentia for JBuilder 2*
- *Referentia for AutoCAD 2000*
- *Referentia for AutoCAD Release 14*

Referentia themselves seem to make a big play about the consistency of presentation and how you might want to swap from one training course to another. Although this may appeal to large companies with a corporate mentality I found it an obstacle. I would prefer more focus on content and less on marketing hype (but more on that later).

## Installation

With a title like *Getting Started in JBuilder 4* and a skill level of *Beginning JBuilder Users*, I expect to be mollycoddled. I want the process to be as easy and painless as is possible, and if it weren't for one small detail I think Referentia would have achieved it. What is that detail? ... Nowhere on the CD, packaging, readme or web site does it mention that it does not come with JBuilder and that you will have to source that for yourself. It may seem obvious to you, but I just wanted to get on with things, and this was another obstacle.

## JBuilder 4 Foundation

For those of you who don't have a copy of JBuilder 4, you will be pleased to know that the Foundation version is available as a free download from [www.borland.com](http://www.borland.com). It comes in three ZIP files *jb4docs* (39mb), *jb4fndwin* (38mb) and *jb4samples* (5mb) and took me the best part of a weekend to download. Although it is free, you do have to register for this copy of JBuilder 4 to get a release key – yet another delay.

The other downside is that due to the limited functionality of the Foundation version you can only work through 16 of the 25 tutorial lessons (see later).

## Structure

A week later I finally get to have a play with *Getting Started* .... It opens up with a browser type interface with five options showing on the Home page: *Tutorials*, *Fast Answers*, *Concepts*, *Using the Referentia Learning System* and *Orientation Animation*.

Starting with the last one – the *Orientation Animation* – Although I found this to be a useful introduction to what the system is and what it does, it was too generic. I think that it would be improved by referring to the specific training course I'm looking at rather than the whole series.

The *Using the Referentia Learning System* section gives basic instructions on how to use the training package. Once again it is generic.

*Concepts* is the most disappointing part of the whole package. It contains just six short pages on Debugging, Events, JavaBeans, Object Orientated Programming, The Layout Manager and Visual Development. Not impressed.

The *Tutorials* section is divided up into seven sections of two to six lessons. These sections include: *Overview of the Environment*, *Tools for Creating Projects*, *Writing and Debugging Code*, *Working with Databases*, *Creating and Using JavaBeans*, *Creating and Using Applets*, and *Additional Topics*.

## The Tutorials

Each lesson leads you step-by-step through the techniques and procedures necessary to perform the task in hand. The video shows you what to do and the narrative follows the text. There is also a *Try It* mode which fires up JBuilder and allows you to practice what you have just learned.

Referentia recommend that you run on a screen set at 1024 x 768. I would go further and suggest that to get the best out of a training tool like this you really need an option to run it over two screens, one showing the training material the other JBuilder.

I liked the way the package kept track of the lessons I had done and that it explicitly highlighted which features were only available in JBuilder 4 Professional and Enterprise.

*continued*



## Getting Started in JBuilder 4 *continued*

As for the content and the style, I found the whole exercise too ponderous and confusing. I am new to Java, not to Integrated Development Environments (IDEs). I didn't want to go through every step of how to set a property or drop a component on a form.

### Summary

I approached 'Getting Started with JBuilder 4' from the point of view of a Delphi Developer wanting to learn something new and wanting to find out how transferable their skills are.

I was very disappointed, and typically, my biggest disappointment was based on one of my own, unfounded assumptions. So let me make this very clear - *Just because it has Charlie Calvert's name on the package doesn't mean that it contains any useful cross training information for users of other Borland products (CBuilder, Delphi or Kylix).*

Although I can see a market for this product with large company IT departments or College Careers Offices I would not recommend it to anyone who has been using another IDE for more than a week.

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