

## **Enhancing Your Web Site as a Recruitment Tool by Implementing Chat Technology**

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### **Abstract**

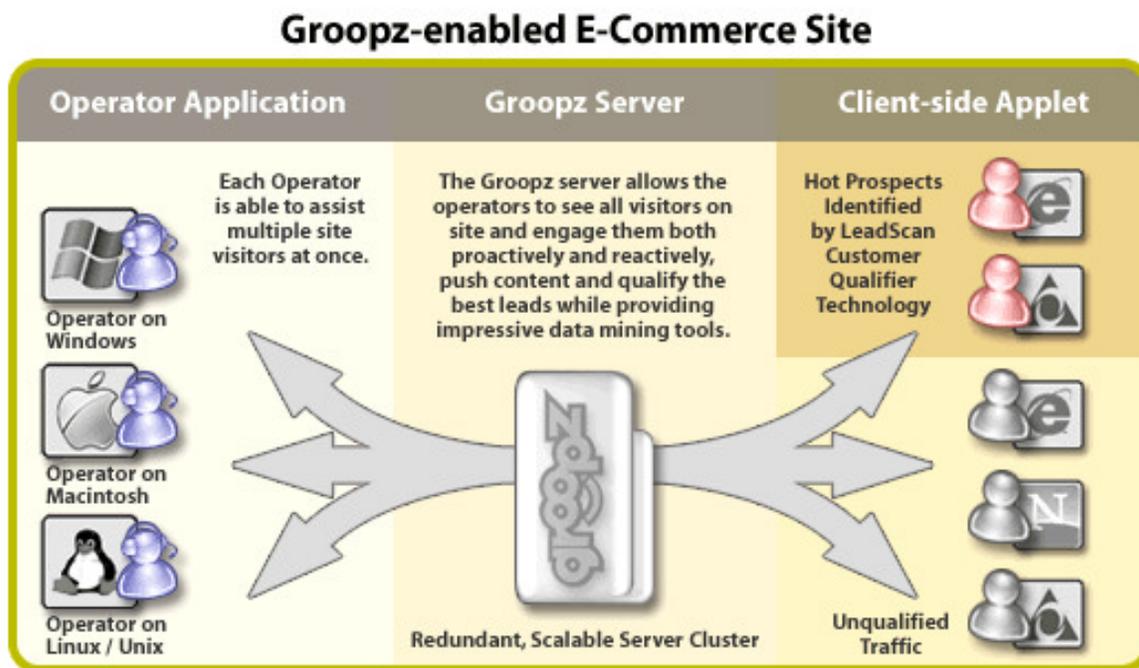
By nearly all accounts, the Web has overwhelmingly become the primary resource for prospective students to research potential college choices. Using this medium, however, prospects are able to do their research independently and privately, without having to contact the institution via phone, mail or email to make a formal inquiry. Consequently, many potential inquiries, applicants and students are nameless, faceless web visitors whom recruitment personnel generally have no way of contacting or pursuing with their typical follow-up process. Using Groopz e-commerce software, recruitment staff can overcome this disadvantage by monitoring usage of their web sites and proactively or reactively contacting web visitors. Using this “instant message”-style communication tool, they are able to take online customer service to new levels. In many cases, it allows a staff member to engage in conversation with a casual passer-by, resulting in new recruitment opportunities. Since implementing Groopz on the Philadelphia Biblical University web site, countless visitors, who otherwise may have remained nameless and faceless, have turned into formal inquiries, applicants and students.

### **Introduction/Background**

Philadelphia Biblical University is an independent private Christian university in southeastern Pennsylvania. The University has a full-time equivalent student body of approximately 1,400 students at the graduate and undergraduate levels. Since implementing the university web site in 1997, the Internet has become and increasingly indispensable recruitment tool. In an effort to make the site more interactive and effective, Groopz E-Commerce software was implemented, allowing enrollment management staff to monitor web usage and proactively contact web site visitors as well as reactively providing increased levels of customer service by responding to online inquiries in real time.

## Product Information

Groopz E-Commerce software (<http://www.groopz.com>) is commercial software produced by Digi-Net Technologies (<http://www.digi-net.com>). The software is sold by licenses on a concurrent user basis. Digi-Net offers the product as a hosted solution (with annual renewal) or as an outright purchase (with annual technical support agreements). The operator software (for monitoring web traffic and engaging in real-time conversations) is freely available for a variety of platforms. The server software is also available for multiple platforms, though not using their *recommended* configuration increases the likelihood of complications.



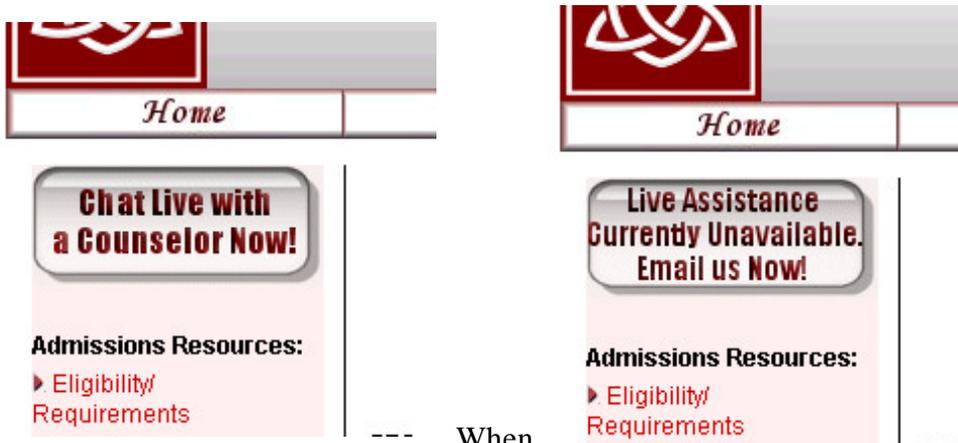
## Product Usage

Using the operator console, university staff members can monitor traffic on the web site for Groopz-enabled pages. Pages are enabled for Groopz by including a small snippet of code on each page which ultimately invokes a java application and either displays an image for the users to see and click on or a hidden applet which allows operators to seamlessly monitor traffic. On the page, the code might look like the following:

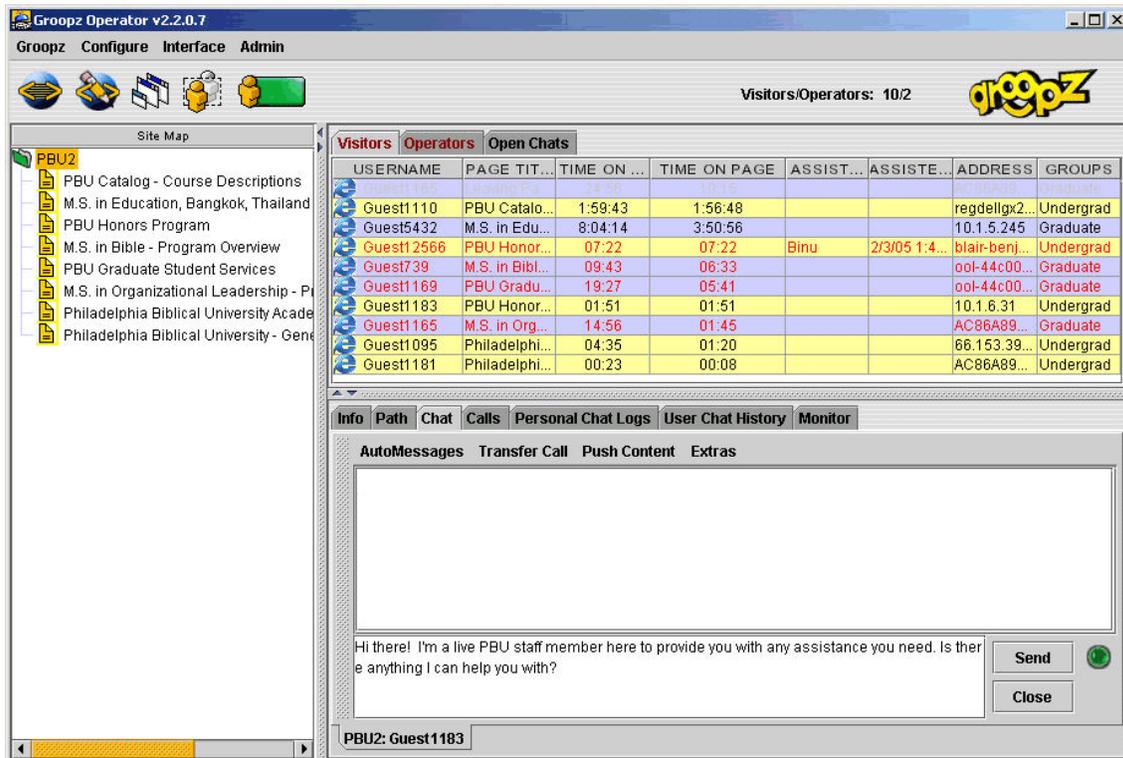
```
<script language="JavaScript">  
customParams = "<param name = groups value = 'Undergrad'>";  
</script>  
<script language="JavaScript" src="http://groopz.pbu.edu/groopz-ug-pbu.js">  
</script>
```

The java applet invoked by this script generates an icon on the page that would appear as shown below. The icon/image displayed is updated on the fly based on operator availability. The example to the right shows what the user would see when there is no operator logged into the operator console. The example to the left shows what the user will see the instant an operator logs

in and becomes available. (The page refreshes/updates on the fly courtesy of the Java applet)



When an operator is logged in, they see a screen as follows. Web visitors are highlighted/color-coded based on their affiliation, which is determined by parameters in the applet on the page. At PBU we categorize our visitors based on their level, such as undergraduate, graduate, etc. so that an appropriate enrollment counselor can handle the requests.



The interface is customizable to show various types of data about both the operators and users. Notable info includes the page on the site they are currently viewing, the time on the page, the time

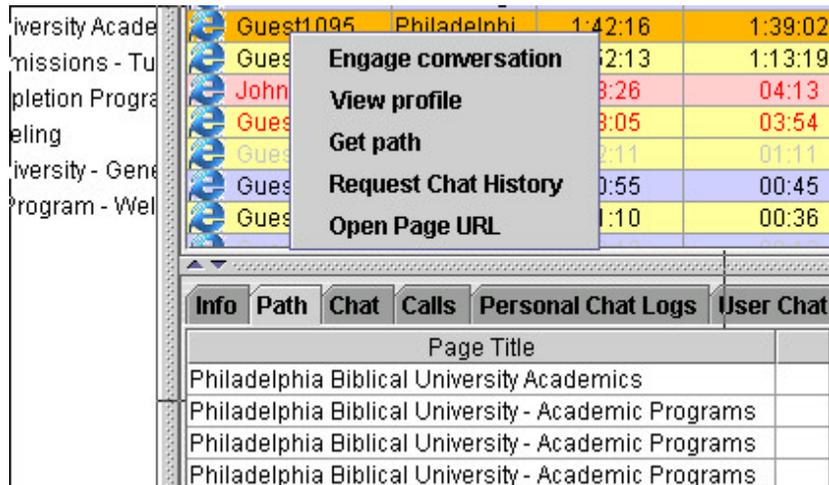
on the site overall, their IP address, and more. If the operator selects a user, additional info is provided in the bottom window. For example, on the info tab the operator can see the following:

Attribute	Value
Username	Guest1183
Time on Site	1:26:15
Page Title	PBU Honors Program
Address	10.1.6.31
Chats Opened	1
Language	English
Operating System	Windows XP 5.1
Browser	sun.plugin
Groups	Undergrad
Assisted on	4/21/05 2:57 PM
Referrer	none
Time on Page	1:26:15
Affiliate	none
Assisted by	Blair

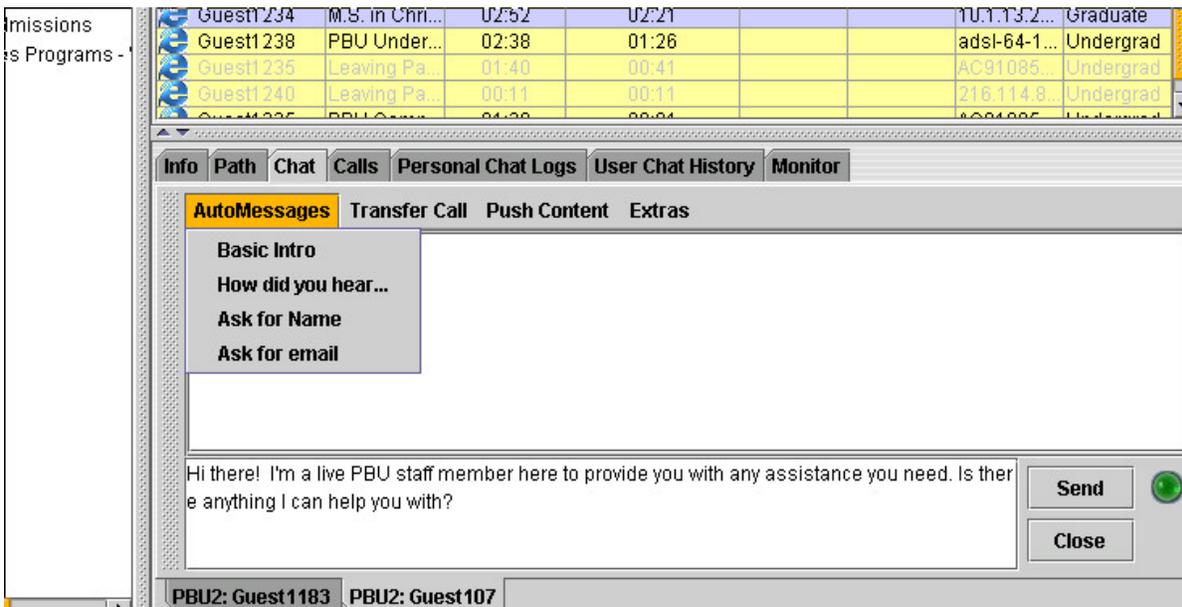
If the operator clicks on the “Path” tab, additional info relevant to the user’s path through the site is shown. This can help the operator to get a good idea about what the web visitor is specifically interested in.

Page Title	Time	Length	Group
Philadelphia Biblical University Academics	4:23:49 PM	00:01	Undergrad
PBU School of Music & Perf. Arts - Admissions Req...	4:19:34 PM	00:05	Undergrad
PBU School of Music & Perf. Arts - Admissions Req...	4:19:00 PM	00:19	Undergrad
PBU School of Music & Perf. Arts - Degree Program...	4:18:53 PM	00:05	Undergrad
PBU School of Music & Perf. Arts - Degree Program...	4:17:57 PM	00:12	Undergrad
PBU Curriculum Summary - Music Performance - Pi...	4:17:55 PM	00:00	Undergrad
PBU Curriculum Summary -	4:17:44 PM	00:09	Undergrad
PBU Curriculum Summary - Music Performance - Pi...	4:17:41 PM	00:02	Undergrad
PBU School of Music & Perf. Arts - Degree Program...	4:17:34 PM	00:05	Undergrad
PBU School of Music & Perf. Arts - Program Overview	4:17:12 PM	07:31	Undergrad
PBU	4:16:32 PM	00:38	Undergrad
PBU School of Music & Perf. Arts - Program Overview	4:16:22 PM	00:08	Undergrad
PBU School of Music & Perf. Arts - Degree Program...	4:16:20 PM	00:00	Undergrad
PBU Curriculum Summary - Music Performance - Pi...	4:14:16 PM	02:02	Undergrad

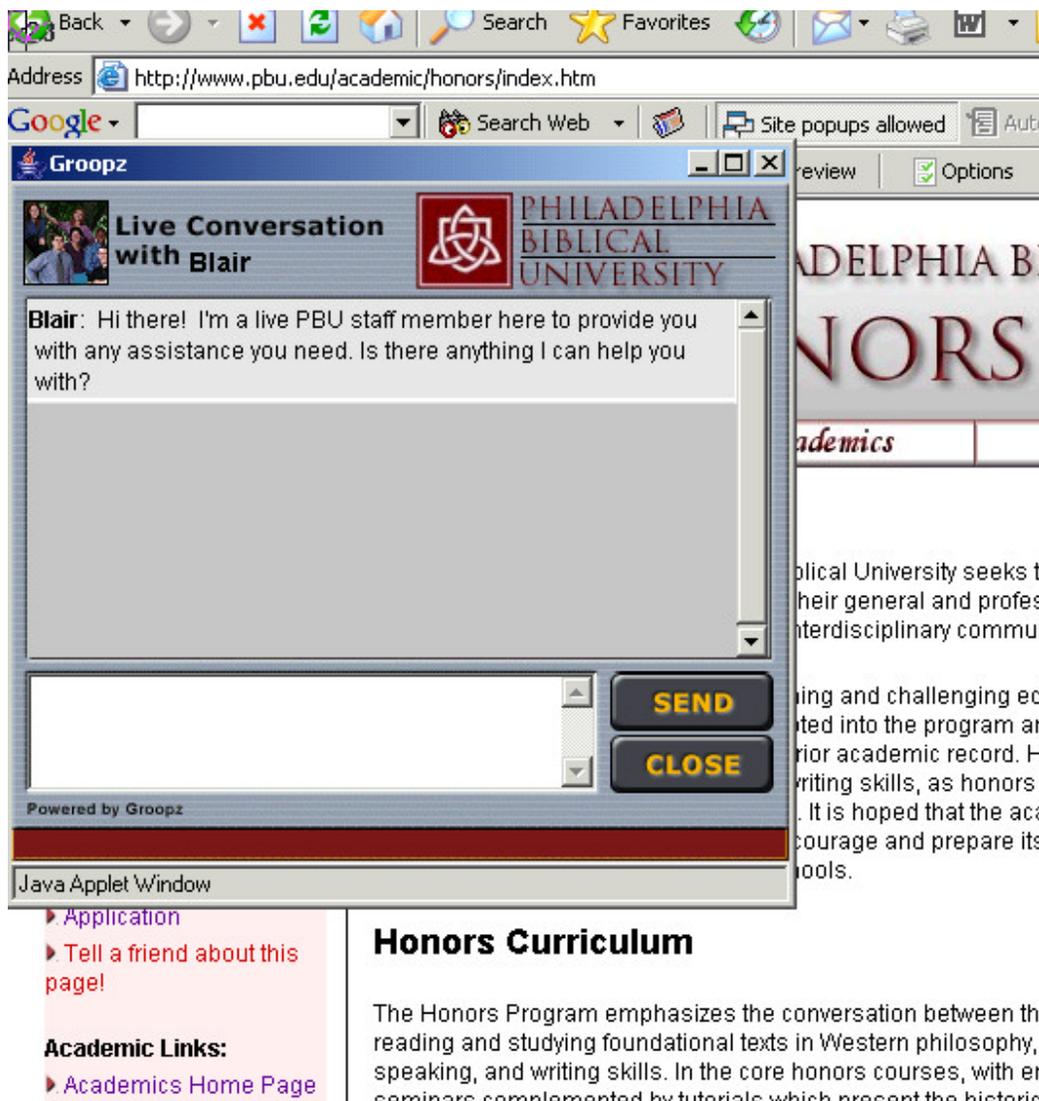
If an operator desires, he/she can initiate a conversation with the user in an instant-message fashion. This ability is the primary advantage of this technology because it affords the operator the opportunity to initiate contact with an otherwise nameless and faceless web visitor. This is accomplished by selecting the user from the user list, right-clicking on it, and choosing “engage conversation.”



This will bring up the chat window on the operator console. The software has the capability of saving commonly-used messages, such as introductions, etc. to save repeating redundant tasks.



Once the operator hits the “send” button to transmit the message, a window will appear on the user’s screen to initiate the chat.



When the conversation ensues, the operator can store info collected from the user to personalize the experience. After the user provides his/her name, the operator can store the info in the operator console on the “info” tab. This will subsequently display the name in the conversation dialogue, replacing the generic Guest101 label.



**Live Conversation with Blair**



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**Blair:** Hi there! I'm a live PBU staff member here to provide you with any assistance you need. Is there anything I can help you with?

**Guest107:** Hi, I'm interested in your honor's program. What are the entrance requirements?

**Blair:** OK, great. I can help you with that.

**Blair:** May I first ask your name?

**Guest107:** Sure, I'm Hubert Simms.

Guest107	PBU Honor...	19:26	15:15	Blai
Guest1242	PBU Under...	10:28	09:15	
Guest1244	M.S. in Org...	05:54	05:51	
Guest1236	Leaving Pa...	01:10	00:43	

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Java Applet Window

Info	Path	Chat	Calls	Personal Chat Logs	User Chat History	M
Attribute 149x296						
Username		Hubert				
Time on Site		19:26				
Page Title		PBU Honors Program				
Address		blair-benjamin				
Chats Opened		1				
Language		English				
Operating System		Windows XP 5.1				
Browser		sun.plugin				
Groups		Undergrad				



**Live Conversation with Blair**



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with any assistance you need. Is there anything I can help you with?

**Guest107:** Hi, I'm interested in your honor's program. What are the entrance requirements?

**Blair:** OK, great. I can help you with that.

**Blair:** May I first ask your name?

**Guest107:** Sure, I'm Hubert Simms.

**Hubert:** I'm a senior in high school

**Blair:** OK, great.

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SEN  
CLOS

In the course of the dialogue, the operator can do other things, such as “pushing” pages to the user. For example, if they inquire about tuition rates, the operator can “push” the tuition page to the user, causing that page on the site to load in their web browser.

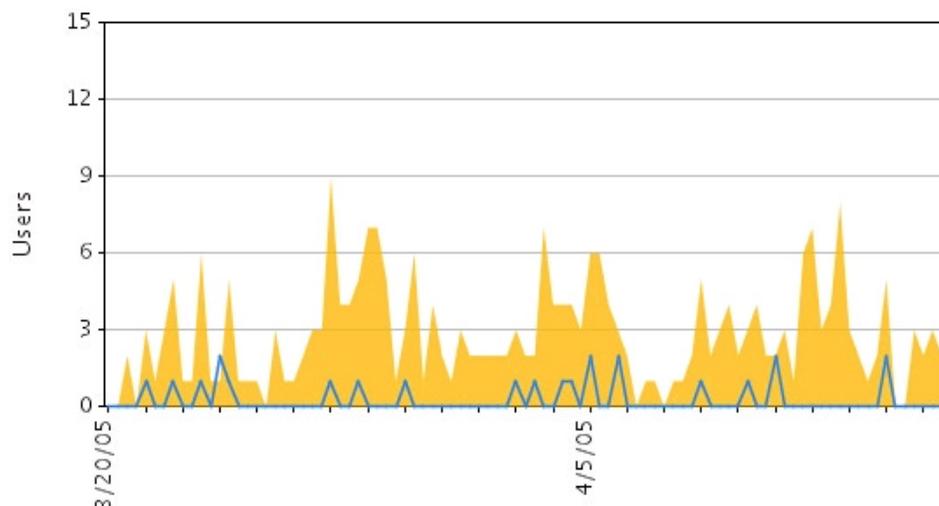
Additionally, if multiple operators are logged in, they can transfer calls/conversations to one another. If an operator is configured with the necessary privileges, he/she can also monitor the conversations of other users for quality control.

An add-on component to the Groopz server software allows for additional reporting and statistics via a separate web interface.

### Operator Activity List

4/1/05 12:00 AM to 4/30/05 11:59 PM				
Name	Proactive Attempts	Proactive Successes	Reactive Requests	Reactive Successes
<a href="#">Shua</a>	7	3	2	0
<a href="#">Christina</a>	22	9	1	0
<a href="#">Baron</a>	57	18	11	10
<a href="#">Blair</a>	1	1	2	1
<a href="#">Gaynell</a>	8	0	1	1
<a href="#">Binu</a>	18	9	10	6
<a href="#">Christina</a>	30	12	1	0
<a href="#">Christina</a>	13	3	0	0
<a href="#">Katie</a>	59	25	8	2
Totals	215	80	36	20

### Chart



## **Pros & Cons**

### Pros

- Digi-Net has a fairly responsive technical support staff who are helpful when problems arise.
- The software is reasonably priced, allowing us to implement this solution without breaking the bank.
- Prospective students and web visitors have been almost unanimously impressed with the technology. The feedback we get is almost always very positive.
- Numerous formal inquiries have resulted from proactive contacts from web visitors.
- Users appreciate the personal aspect of support that it allows our staff to provide
- Once the server software was up and running with all of the bugs worked out, it requires very little attention.

### Cons

- Lack of consistent standards w/ Java-based technology resulting in some erratic behavior. While the Groopz chat window has little-to-no problems on the user end, sometimes the “push pages” feature doesn’t work.
- Configuration for an in-house Groopz server was cumbersome and frustrating. The documentation provided by Digi-Net was anemic and outdated at times. Getting all of the bugs worked out was exasperating. While the Digi-Net staff was courteous and professional, the solutions and patches provided were often untested and ineffective.
- Documentation was also outdated and counterproductive at times.
- Product has not been improved or updated much at all during the two years that we’ve been a client. Some minor bugs and enhancement requests were submitted, but were not acted upon. Apparently Digi-Net is focusing its energies on a new product to succeed Groopz, which will contain its functionality and then some. (Current Groopz clients with active service agreements will be entitled to the new product.)

## **Summary**

All in all, PBU has been satisfied with Groopz and considers it a valuable component of its web site and online services.