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Screen Porch LLC. announces Caucus™ 3.0 - Conferencing for the Web

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SCREEN PORCH, INC. ANNOUNCES CAUCUS™ 3.0 - CONFERENCING SOFTWARE FOR THE WEB

AVAILABLE for immediate download:

- Caucus brings visitor interactivity to every Web site
- Caucus is scalable and customizable - from a single Caucus Discussion Object(tm) to a full-blown Conference Center

WASHINGTON, DC, March 27, 1996 - Screen Porch LLC. today announced the release of Caucus 3.0, an innovative conferencing software environment for the World Wide Web. Available on the World-Wide-Web today, Caucus creates discussion conference centers at Web sites. Caucus templates - included with the product - enable immediate out-of-the-box conferencing. These templates are easily customized to reflect the visual identity and the interactivity needs of the host organization. Caucus includes software development tools to create thorough-going custom conferencing applications to meet a wide range of organizational requirements.

"The Web can be much more than an interface to information," explained Tom Mandel, president of Screen Porch LLC. "It can enable groups of people to interact in a way that actually creates information rather than just presenting it -- we developed Caucus because we saw the potential for this kind of interactivity at virtually every Web site we visited."

"On the Metanet," a world-wide online community sponsored by Metasystems Design Group, "we use Caucus to host conference centers for the public, for our corporate customers all over the world, and for a variety of federal agency clients," reported Peter Tuddenham, a principal in the Arlington, VA firm. "The applications supported in these conferences range from distance learning to project management. Conferencing promotes organizational effectiveness and community growth. Caucus promotes both facts and musings, points of view and values, decisions and results."

Caucus software is installed on a site's World Wide Web server. A Caucus conference center at a Web site may be accessed with any industry-standard Web browser, such as Netscape, Mosaic, or Internet Explorer.

A conference participant may review all new material since his or her last visit, navigate an individual conference from its home page, or do text searches of a conference. Each user may provide a flexible amount of personal information, and edit this information at any time. It is easy to respond to a conference participant in an email where appropriate. Conference center participants may keep a personal "hot list" of favorite conferences, and will be notified automatically of new items and responses in these conferences each time they enter the conference center.

Caucus conference centers may host numerous conferences, each with multiple items of discussion. Each item is presented as a visual scroll of responses by individuals participating in the discussion. Responses in a Caucus conference may include virtually any Web data type - images, live links, Java applets, etc. - in addition to text. Based on 10 years of experience in conferencing and organizational design, Caucus has been designed to feel natural, flexible and involving.

"Before Caucus, conferencing environments seemed to fall into two camps," comments Screen Porch CTO Charles Roth. "Either they were highly customizable and programmable environments like Lotus Notes which unfortunately depended on proprietary messaging technologies and complex - and again proprietary - client software. Or, they have been closed and limited products, deriving from the model of a bulletin board. A bulletin board is not a powerful conversational medium, and typically cannot be scaled to meet enterprise needs."

Unlike Notes, Caucus conference centers require no client software except a browser, and are implemented on standard Web servers. Yet, unlike limited, BBS-style Web conferencing applications, Caucus is completely customizable. Visual appearance, functionality, scale are all within control of the site developer.

"My Web site, In Our Path, documents the construction of the Century freeway in Los Angeles," said Caucus beta tester Jeff Gates, an artist and president of the Washington, DC Web development firm *Eye to I*, LLC. "In Our Path is an art project, and my Caucus conference center looks very much like the rest of my site - and not very much like a corporate conference center. Using Caucus, I am able to offer my visitors an interactive experience - while keeping a consistent look and feel throughout the site."

The Web interface to Caucus is created entirely in CML, the Caucus Markup Language. CML is an extension of HTML, the Hypertext Markup Language. CML scripts or "pages" generate dynamic "on-the-fly" HTML pages which then appear in the user's Web browser.

Screen Porch distributes with Caucus a default set of CML pages, the templates that make up the standard Caucus interface. These can be used as is, or with simple changes to the HTML framework. These CML scripts also can be modified more extensively, and new CML scripts can be written, to create entirely custom conferencing applications.

CML is completely compatible with HTML, adding approximately ninety (90) new functions, including conditional logic and control flow. It also provides access to the Caucus database.

Caucus 3.0 was developed on the basis of the Caucus API, an exceptionally feature-rich computer conferencing engine that has been in world-wide use for nearly a decade. Caucus runs under Unix, including HP-UX, SunOS, Solaris, DEC-UNIX (OSF/1), SCO, Unixware, Linux, AIX, SunOS, IRIX, BSDI, and other Unix varieties. A version of Caucus for Microsoft NT will be available later this year. Caucus will work in conjunction with any CGI-compatible Web server, including NCSA, Apache, CERN, Netscape and others.

A trial version of Caucus is available for download from the Screen Porch Web site at



<http://screenporch.com>

where product information, documentation, and a demonstration conferencing center also may be accessed. An unlimited user license to install Caucus on a single server is available at an introductory price of \$1,795, until December 31, 1996.

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Screen Porch LLC., founded in 1995, has offices in Washington, DC and Ann Arbor, MI, and distribution partners in the United States, Canada and Japan. A privately held company, Screen Porch LLC. creates innovative software to help people and organizations share ideas and experiences online.

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